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Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology

PROMOTING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES WITHIN INFORMAL  
STRUCTURES AND INFORMAL NETWORKS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Roslynn Almas

June, 2018

Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

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under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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## DEDICATION

To my loving and supportive parents, I will forever be thankful to both of you. At times when I wanted to slow down or felt overwhelmed you both were there reminding me to keep my eyes on the prize. You both taught me the value of hard work, kindness, and wisdom. My doctorate in part is to honor the sacrifices you made for my two brothers and me. I love you both dearly, and appreciated the daily text messages, prayers, home cooked dinners (when I did not have time to eat balanced or healthy meals), and the bouquet of fresh flowers you routinely gave me to brighten my day. You both are the best!

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Having the opportunity to meet and speak with each of you was insightful and gratifying. Your participation was the icing to my dissertation cake.

## VITA

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2016	Augmenting Informal Learning Environments: Exploring the use of informal learning networks within organizations to strengthen problem-solving skills. (IOSSBR) Conference
2012	Guest presenter at the International Online Dispute Resolution Forum in Prague on The Role of the Fourth Party Neutral in Online Dispute Resolution. Presenter and panelist on Cyber Ethics at the 13th annual Association for Conflict Resolution Conference.

## ABSTRACT

Conflict typically is associated with negative and destructive connotations within organizations. However, a shift is taking place in workplaces to view conflict through a positive frame and to consider conflict as an opportunity to establish an environment that is more creative and innovative while identifying ineffective policies, behaviors or actions. This study was developed to examine how organizations can enhance conflict management competencies to empower leaders and employees to manage conflict by employing problem-solving tactics and collaborative approaches. Furthermore, this study was designed to understand what strategies and practices leaders and specialists in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution utilize to promote conflict management skills. Additionally, the research sought to identify the challenges these individuals encountered when implementing conflict management interventions in organizations, understand how success was measured, and determine recommendations to develop conflict management competencies. Fifteen Alternative Dispute Resolution leaders and specialists participated in this phenomenological study by voluntarily responding to 12 semi-structured interview questions. Based on the participants' responses 46 themes emerged across the four research questions. Strategic conflict management planning, engaging stakeholders in the process, consensus building, and convening and inquiry were the top strategies and practices mentioned by the participants in the study. When facing challenges during an implementation of conflict management interventions the theme commonly mentioned was lack of stakeholder engagement and how participants managed obstacles was through being agile and emphasizing positive communication. Measurements of success used by the participants that ranked highest were receiving feedback on process and outcomes, metrics on conflict/issue, and organizational performance metrics. The top theme that surfaced among all participants was how they

developed conflict management competencies through a combination of experience and various formal training. The participants indicated the desire to have further conflict management training and education earlier in the career. Based on the research the following three frameworks were developed to enhance conflict management competencies in organizations (a) problem-solving culture framework, (b) conflict management intervention model, and (c) conflict manager competency paradigm.

*Keywords: conflict, conflict management, organizational structure, informal networks, informal learning, competencies, engagement, communication, conflict assessment, training, matrixed teams, transformative mediation, emotional intelligence, problem-solving.*



## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Introduction

Conflict occurs at many levels within organizations and businesses resulting in a host of differing scenarios uncovering disconnects in systems, process gaps, and ineffective communication (Lipsky, Seeber, & Fincher, 2003). Commonly the notion that conflict is connected to adverse, undesirable, or even harmful experiences in organizations is a belief frequently agreed upon ; however, conflict is necessary for organizational and team effectiveness (Clercq, Thongpapanl, & Dimov, 2009; Gladstein, 1984; Meluch & Walter, 2012; Salas, Shuffer, Thayer, Bedwell, & Lazzara, 2015; Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). A typical response when dealing with conflict is to avoid, the incident, individual, or the issue connected to the dispute (Bullis, 1983; Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). Not dealing with or avoiding conflict gives way to people or organizations to forego prospective opportunities to resolve recurring patterns or behaviors which promote discord (Folger, Bush, Delia, Association for Conflict Resolution, & Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation, 2010; Lipsky et al., 2003). Consequently, such responses towards conflict impact workforce productivity and employee motivation within organizations (CPP, 2008; Jehn, 1997; Jehn, Greer, Levine, & Szulanski, 2005; Robbins & Judge, 2015).

CPP, Inc. is a firm that consults with organizations internationally and offers a range of personality assessments and tools to improve workplace performance. A survey administered by CPP, Inc. determined that 85% of employees who participated in the study had experienced some level of conflict at work. Additionally, the survey revealed that U.S. workers averaged approximately 2.8 hours a week managing conflict. The amount of money organizations lost associated to the time spent dealing with conflict was estimated to be 359 billion based on hours paid (CPP, 2008).

Furthermore, workplace conflict has been noted to alter organizational effectiveness and culture (Di Pietro & Virgilio, 2013). Literature on conflict, conflict styles, and strategies developed to manage conflict in the modern workplace is extensive (Di Pietro & Virgilio, 2013; Jehn, Rispens, & Thatcher, 2010; Lee & Yu, 2004). However, additional research in understanding the link between promoting conflict management competencies to reduce conflict and enhance organizational success is needed. Organizational structures, the role of technology, and cross-functional and self-managed teams have transformed how employees interact and communicate in the workplace (Bergiel, Gainey, & Bergiel, 2015; Lederach, Neufeldt, & Culbertson, 2007; Meluch & Walter, 2012; Robbins & Judge, 2015; Wellins, Byham, & Wilson, 1991). An organization's approach to manage conflict rely on these specific aspects of organizational design.

### **Organizations and Conflict**

**Structure.** As organizational structures become increasingly leaner, the levels of management have flattened (Kotter, 2014; Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993). Structural and environmental characteristics have added to the complexity of conflict in businesses (Solaja, Idowu, & James, 2016). Robbins and Judge (2015) propose that organizational structure is designed by the subsequent six key elements, “work specialization, departmentalization, chain of command, span of control, centralization and decentralization, and formalization” (p. 432). These pillars delineate how work tasks are categorized and allocated (Robbins & Judge, 2015). Structural conflict is generated by the grouping of relationships and power distribution in systems (Bau, 2016; Lederach et al., 2007). Tiers of hierarchy, bureaucracy, ineffective communication flows the pace of organizational change, and sheer size of corporations attribute to the layers of conflict created in work settings (Dahlin, Weingart, & Hinds, 2005; Di Pietro &

Di Virgilio, 2013; Kotter, 2012; Robbins & Judge, 2015).

Restructuring of an organization can also attribute to conflict in the workplace. During organizational realignments executive leadership focuses on the formal layout of the enterprise to repurpose the entity's structure to meet changes and demands of the organization (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993). Despite the emphasis on redesigning the formal structure, social connections devised of informal networks receive less attention (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; Toni & Nonino, 2010). Typically, social structures constitute the informal relationships of the organization that have developed across teams and departments (Barreta, 2008). Often these informal networks come together to accomplish assignments and objectives, having a stabilizing effect during organizational transitions (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2002; Cross & Parker, 2004; Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; Morton, Brookes, Smart, Backhouse, & Burns, 2004).

Advantages of work groups and teams is through advancing problem-solving skills (Bergiel et al., 2015; Simons & Peterson, 2000). The collective knowledge and resources within an informal network can speed up the time to discover a plausible solution emphasizing emotional intelligence and team learning to garner a decision (Clarke, 2010; Tam, 2010; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). Although the benefits of group interactions can be beneficial in bringing about resolve to issues within an organization there are disadvantages as well (Barreta, 2008). Stalemates, opposition, and roadblocks can transpire through informal networks (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993).

**Team structure.** The traditional militaristic top-down hierarchy has shifted to more of a cross-functional and matrix structure that centers on project and task related work (Branden, 2011; Robbins & Judge, 2015). This environment has created the formation of teams that are self-managed versus manager-led (Barreta, 2008; Erez, LePine, & Elms, 2002; Mayer, Davis, &

Schoorman, 1995; Wellins et al., 1991). Studies on self-managed teams have shown that overall effectiveness is not concurrent with such work teams (Robbins & Judge, 2015). Team performance decreases and conflict arises that is managed unsuccessfully (Langfred, 2007). To counter these negative aspects of self-managed teams, group members need to feel empowered to speak up freely in a safe and open environment (Bradley, Postlethwaite, Klotz, Hamdani, & Brown, 2012).

The interactions between managers and their teams have also changed through technology. Administrative tasks and relaying messages to employees have drastically shifted through the use of software and online communication methods (Branden, 2011; Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993). As the role of the manager has been redefined in leaner work settings, teams and groups rely less on direct supervision from their leader and have become more self-directed (Branden, 2011; Mayer et al., 1995; Wellins et al., 1991). This has increased the need for trust, communication, and interpersonal interactions to occur within groups to complete tasks and perform as a team effectively (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011; Mayer et al., 1995; Salas et al., 2015).

**Technology.** As corporations scale or function as a multinational organization the use and dependency of technology has become more apparent (Mao & Hale, 2015). Thus altering work environments and the interactions amongst team members (Rule & Sen, 2015). Organizations have implemented technological innovations that have allowed individuals and teams to work together who are in different locations and time zones (Rule & Sen, 2015). Groups are capable of working and collaborating with each other online, forming virtual environments (Leonard, 2011). Technology has also generated flexible settings supporting the possibility for individuals to perform jobs and tasks remotely (Meluch & Walter,

2012). Resulting in employees having the capability to work off-site or not in an office location; consequently forming virtual teams (Robbins & Judge, 2015). In essence, expanding informal networks and structures in organizations so individuals do not need to be in the same physical space or reporting hierarchy (Branden, 2011). De Dreu states that conflict management strategies are vital for the effectiveness of virtual teams since intragroup conflict is more likely to occur due to various factors (De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, & Nauta, 2001; Hinds & Bailey, 2003; Martinez-Moreno, Zornoza, Orengo, & Thomposon, 2015). Limitations that may occur within virtual teams include expressing verbal and nonverbal communications, and weakened social interactions that can cause a delay in recognizing conflict (Draft & Lengel, 1986; Griffith, Mannix, & Neale 2003; Martinez-Moreno et al., 2015; Robbins & Judge, 2015; Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976).

Systems, software, and electronic messaging have streamlined communication channels and removed the traditional chain of command and corresponding information flow (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; Meluch & Walter, 2012). Knowledge is shared more freely through various conventional modes of communication such as FTF (face-to-face) communications, while CMC (computer-mediated-communication) takes place via textual interactions like emails, texting, and social media forums (Branden, 2011; Martinez-Moreno et al., 2015; Meluch & Walter, 2012). The introduction of CMCs has altered how individuals communicate and interact with each other, and in turn how persons interpret and engage in conflict.

### **Conflict Management in Organizations**

Prior research has suggested that there is a connection with an organization's culture and environment and how conflict is managed (Friedman, Tidd, Curall, & Tsai, 2000; Jameson, Bodtker, Porch, & Jordan, 2009; Poitras & Le Tareau, 2008). With that in mind, leaders of

organizations have invested to develop conflict management programs and trainings to alleviate costs associated with litigation, employee turnover, and low morale (Furlough, 2005; Lipsky et al., 2003; Spector & Jex, 1998; Veasey & Brown, 2015). In addition to providing basic conflict management education, companies have taken the initiative to develop internal Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) processes and methods to manage conflict using mediation, arbitration, and negotiation (Lipsky et al., 2003; Pincock & Hedeem, 2016).

While having a structure in place to address conflict is essential to handle disputes within an organization, the need for individuals and teams to proactively manage conflict should be leveraged and considered a viable option. Relying on effective communication, self-awareness, and emotional management to recognize and prevent potential conflict from escalating enhances employee and team performance (Clarke, 2010; Riggio, Riggio, Salinas, & Cole, 2003; Robbins & Judge, 2015). The idea of conflict transformation is highlighted when emotions in conflict are attended to versus solely seeking resolution between the disputants (Bodtker & Jameson, 2001; Jameson et al., 2009). Secondly, utilizing an informal network of peers, mentors, and coaches fosters the development of conflict management competencies and supports workable solutions that can be acted upon (Salas et al., 2015; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

The dynamics of conflict has been researched in various fields such as psychology, sociology, and communications (Folger et al., 2010). In these areas of study, human behavior was a focal point related to intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational conflicts (Di Pietro & Virgilio, 2013; Donais, 2006). Based on corresponding inquiry, researchers have theorized and modeled key drivers that cause conflict which include information, relationships, structure, interests, and values (Furlough, 2005). Many workplace disputes can be categorized in one of the five areas previously indicated. Quite often, a dispute can be aligned with more than one

driver which contributes to the intricacy of the conflict and at times requiring a more nuanced approach to find practical solutions.

In instances which conflicts need a more evolved process to come to a solution, the knowledge capital of an informal network or social system can prove invaluable (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). This network will be a point of reference in situations that require more insight, guidance, or direction (Kotter, 2014). Having an environment that focuses on relationship building and cooperativeness aids in conflict prevention, but also can be a mechanism that yields a culture which adopts conflict management strategies as a sustainable competency (Di Pietro & Virgilio, 2013; Salas et al., 2015).

### **Learning in Organizations**

Complex organizations have formed teams to manage assignments that have become increasingly challenging within the structure (Mathieu, Heffner, Goodwin, Salas, & Cannon-Bowers, 2000). The ability to anticipate the needs of team members and respond effectively is commonly found in high performing teams (Mohammed, Ferzandi, & Hamilton, 2010). This concept has been labeled as a team's shared mental model, or SMM (Bergiel et al., 2015). Being adept in sharing knowledge and information within teams has proven to be an obstacle in organizations. Not sharing a similar SMM can cause conflict within a team, negatively impacting team coordination, understanding, and communication (Jehn, 1997). This is relevant to the extent of conflict experienced in the team, as well as the perceptions of conflict (Jehn et al., 2010).

Social learning approaches have been implemented to handle the change in knowledge and competency needs in organizations. Stakeholders have a “greater reliance on team, project, and informal network” (Clarke, 2010, p. 125) groupings to promote the learning and

development for an organization's workforce (Gray, 2001; Marsick & Watkins, 1997). Participating in formal and informal communities has lent to the notion that situated learning is central to learning in the workplace (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Learning in organizations takes place in a social environment that centers on relational processes and activity (Clarke, 2010). To enable teams to be productive and efficient the capacity to learn in a social setting in an interconnected unit is paramount (Chan, Lim, & Keasberry, 2003; Jonassen & Land, 2012; Van Hootegem, Benders, Delarue, & Procter, 2005). Social learning occurs when knowledge is shared and work groups strive to attain a collective understanding to meet objectives or create solutions to issues, therefore lessening potential intragroup conflict (Robbins & Judge, 2015; Clarke, 2010).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The presence of conflict in work situations should not be perceived as a negative occurrence, but as a potential opportunity to identify ineffective policies, behaviors or actions that result in outcomes which can be destructive or counterproductive (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). Organizations invest in formal training and development programs targeted to coach employees on handling workplace conflicts by strengthening communication methods, employing creative problem-solving tactics, and utilizing fundamental collaborative approaches (Bingham, 2004; Cloke, 2008; Folger et al., 2010). In conjunction, corporations have designed ADR programs that center on conflict viewed from a process focus as in the Interests, Rights, and Power (IRP) Model (Furlough, 2005).

The IRP Model is grounded on the numerous processes that people use to resolve disputes rather than evaluating the conflict itself. Viewing conflict based on party interests tend to be internal by nature, assessing their desires, needs, and apprehensions (Furlough, 2005). This



approach places attention on finding an agreement that is consensual, and successful if both parties get enough of their interests met to achieve a settlement. Power and rights based approaches offers minimal flexibility and creativity when resolving conflict. In these circumstances decisions are determined by rules, policies, and through authority figures minimizing the involvement of individuals resolving the conflict (Cloke, 2001). Although rights and power based methods are necessary in some situations, giving individuals the chance to come up with solutions to problems can be an optimal option (Jameson et al., 2009). As a result of using informal means to managing conflict a higher degree of effective outcomes that are cost-effective are possible.

Organizations align corporate strategies with the future needs of its business by preparing employees for organizational changes, new projects assignments, and to acquire specialized skills. A key educational component recognized to strengthen workers' talents for employability and corporate competitiveness is social and informal learning (Skule, 2004). Implementing a strategy that will grow conflict management strategies utilizing internal talent and knowledge via informal structures and networks can be highly efficient apparatus to manage and prevent conflict.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this study is to determine how organizations can enhance conflict management competencies. In addition, the intent of this study was to understand what strategies and practices leaders and specialists in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution have used to promote conflict management skills. Furthermore, the study sought to identify the challenges these individuals encounter implementing conflict management strategies and practices in organizational systems, and how they measured success in what they did.

Although this research intends to identify new approaches to managing conflict in organizations, there are Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists that have introduced distinctive strategies for employees to deal with conflict. Bush and Folger developed a transformative mediation framework that focuses on the conflict transformation process during mediation (Folger et al., 2010). A central component of this model which stands out is the emphasis of empowerment and recognition shifts of the mediating parties (Jameson et al., 2009) that allows disputants to have more autonomy in the decision-making process. The U.S. Postal Service designed the organization's conflict management program (REDRESS) based on Bush and Folger's transformative mediation model to address employees' communication and relational issues (Bingham, 2004; Folger et al., 2010; Jameson et al., 2009).

### **Research Questions**

To achieve the objectives set above, the following research questions (RQ) are addressed in this study.

- RQ1: What strategies and practices do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists employ to promote conflict management?
- RQ2: What challenges are faced by Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in implementing strategies and practices to promote conflict management?
- RQ3: How do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists measure the success of these strategies and practices to promote conflict management?
- RQ4: What recommendations do Alternative Dispute Resolution experts have for enhancing structures and networks to develop conflict management competencies?

## **Significance of the Study**

Impacts of this study will characterize conflict management strategies and practices collected from ADR scholars, leaders and/or practitioners that organizations can implement to enhance conflict management competencies within the workplace. Practical applications resulting from such research would support an informal learning network that could be employed to improve learning initiatives focused on advancing conflict management proficiencies in organizations. Groups experiencing changes, going through a transformation, or facing turmoil can benefit leveraging innovative ways to reduce or prevent conflict among stakeholders. Educational institutions can use the findings to develop or revise conflict management curriculum to better prepare ADR professionals in the field (F. Madjidi, personal communication, July 11, 2016). Based on the findings an informal network framework can be modeled for organizations to introduce problem-solving mechanisms and improve conflict management skills.

Lave's (in preparation) examination of apprenticeship stressed the significance for modifying learning objectives based on the various stages of skill acquisition. This specifically correlated to the sequence and activity of each phase of learning. Three principles which were identified to direct the progression of expert problem solving skills as a part of the cognitive apprenticeship model are increasing complexity, increasing diversity, and teaching global before local skills (Collins, Brown, & Newman, 1987). These principles align to the various group environments accelerating the association of informal networks.

## **Limitations of the Study**

The following statements identify potential limitations of this research study. The list below detail areas that the researcher could not control for the purpose of this study:

1. Participants were intentionally selected, which may not reflect the larger population of ADR professionals.
2. It is indicated in the methodology section that the participant group will consist of at least 15 ADR professionals. This moderately small sample size may constrain the generalizability of the findings.
3. Researcher may have biases to the participants' responses.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

The premise of the assumption statements is to offer the researcher's presumptions of the possible outcomes of this research that is based on the purpose of this study:

1. An assumption of the study is that conflict management best practices and informal learning networks will enhance conflict management competencies.
2. The sample of interviewees will include ADR specialists with diverse experiences and backgrounds located in various countries. It is assumed that in spite of disparate roles, education, and level of expertise in the ADR field the participants of the study will be able to provide best practices in implementing strategies and techniques to promote conflict management within organizations.
3. It is assumed that the qualitative data collected and examined for this study will enhance conflict management strategies and practices in organizations.
4. The researcher assumes that the study will offer data that will derive a framework that organizations can employ to enhance conflict management competencies.

### **Definition of Terms**

The purpose of this section is to provide additional insight for the terms listed below that are mentioned in this research study. The below definitions will be referred to throughout this

study:

- Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR). An established set of processes, procedures, and systems organizations used to manage conflicts that are removed from the traditional legal processes of litigation (Lipsky et al., 2003).
- Coaching. Guiding individuals through employing leadership competencies to develop specific actionable goals and directing the coached person to achieve the set objectives (Hackman & Wageman, 2005; Morgeson, DeRue, & Karam, 2010; Salas et al., 2015; Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2001).
- Conflict. An expression of opposing intrinsic and extrinsic goals, values, interests, or actions from at least one member of a group (Bradley et al., 2012; Salas et al., 2015).
- Conflict Management. A comprehensive approach that includes a series of processes and procedures to proactively manage problems or issues productively (Lipsky et al., 2003). Strategies and practices that are acted upon at the lowest levels of an organization to allow all individuals the ability to take preventive measures to manage conflicts (Lipsky et al., 2003). Acquiring a competency to change behaviors, actions or habits to resolve, mitigate, contain, or relieve tensions caused by conflict in work teams (De Dreu, Harinck, & Van Vianen, 1999; Martinez-Moreno et al., 2015; Wilmot & Hocker, 2011).
- Competency. The ability to demonstrate one's skill level successfully through a situation (Austin & Larkey, 2004).
- Communication. The process of information flow through various mediums (Beebe, Beebe, & Ivy, 2004). The back and forth movement of messages or "information that forms and reforms a team's attitudes, behaviors, and cognitions" (Salas et al., 2015, p. 603).

- Community of practice. The formation of a group of individuals that have joint interests, experiences, or other commonalities with the intent to learn to develop those shared elements through interactions (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).
- Destructive conflict. Conflict in which parties are unsatisfied with the results from a conflict and feel as though each side has lost (Deutsch, 1973)
- Informal Learning. A learning process which is typically unstructured or unplanned in that individuals self-manage (Jubas, 2011) using the lens of social learning or learning that is self-directed.
- Informal Network. Groups or relationships constructed without a formal structure that operates in a flexible and adaptive manner (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993). These social bonds are formed based on patterns and communication flows and after levels of trust have been established (Balkundi & Harrison, 2006; Barreta, 2008). These are the partnerships in which collaboration occurs and more complex problems are dealt with (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; Toni & Nonino, 2010).
- Intrapersonal conflict. Intrapersonal tension or pressure prompting a state of confusion, lack of clarity, divergent internal discourse, or mental or emotional conflict in a person's thoughts or feelings (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011).
- Interpersonal conflict. An expressed struggle between two or more individuals' desired needs, wants, or goals (Barreta, 2008; Beebe et al., 2004). In an organizational setting this can be viewed in instances involving harassment, discrimination, and communications gaps (Di Pietro & Virgilio, 2013).
- Organizational conflict. Conflict or expressed struggle between individuals in differing hierarchical levels or divisions and departments (Di Pietro & Virgilio, 2013; Xin &

Pelled, 2003).

- Social learning. Working together collectively in a group with the motive of bringing solutions to problem-based issues (Clarke, 2010; Wals, 2007).
- Trust. The willingness to demonstrate vulnerability in relationships through behaviors and actions to encourage transparent communication, reciprocity, interactions, and mastery (Mayer et al., 1995; Reina & Reina, 1999).

## Chapter 1 Summary

The workplace is a complex environment comprised of countless factors that can produce conflict between colleagues and management. Wilmot and Hocker (2011) defined conflict 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" (p.

11). When assessing the definition the phrase expressed struggle can mean that communication has or has not taken place between the dependent parties, but through imposed settings conflict can develop. A corporation is an example of how separate areas are interwoven and functions of the various parts of the enterprise can create unnecessary conflict due to silos, communication gaps, and failed processes.

Conflict has the ability to bring about tremendous awareness, transformation, and insight. Providing the appropriate atmosphere and group environment individuals can openly deal with situations that are producing conflict instead of pushing aside issues or challenging conversations. Conflict management programs have been a strategic response to organizations undergoing an internal crisis, potential threats, or legal proceedings, to lessen the negative impact conflict may have on institutions. The potential to empower employees to deal with disputes, disagreements, and obstacles increases when enhancing conflict management competencies.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction

Research has shown that conflict style preferences are developed throughout a person's life based on a combination of genetics, culture, life experiences, family background, and personal philosophy (Beebe et al. 2004; Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). These conflict styles can affect how people deal with conflict in the workplace. However, why conflict occurs and what the conflict is about in organizations can be attributed to a host of factors. This spectrum of causation is a major challenge organizations face when designing and implementing programs to manage conflict.

The review of literature is fundamental to acquiring an understanding and awareness of the theoretical frameworks of various types of conflict management practices. An overview of common conflict styles, conflict models, emotional intelligence, and learning theories will be explored for the purpose of this study. This chapter will also explain the impact conflict has within organizations due to issues related to structure, technology, and team dynamics.

This examination will be comprehensive in nature to understand how the areas of conflict management, transformative conflict tenets, emotional intelligence, and adult learning approaches intersect to empower employees to handle conflict in the workplace (Folger et al., 2010; Goleman, 2000; Knowles, Holton, & Swanson, 2012). A brief background of Alternative Dispute Resolution will be discussed, along with describing how technology has influenced the field forming the area of Online Dispute Resolution (Lipsky et al., 2003; Rule, 2002). An analysis of conflict theory, conflict styles, and transformative mediation will be provided. Additionally, this chapter will assess how organizational structures, team dynamics, and technology have had an influence on conflict that occurs in the workplace (Robbins & Judge,



2015).

### **Conflict Overview**

M. Esther Harding, an American Jungian psychoanalyst, emphasized that conflict is derived from the consciousness of an individual (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). Conflict should not always be perceived as a negative episode, but a potential opportunity to gain insight while also identifying ineffective behaviors or actions that result in outcomes that can be destructive or counterproductive. The ability to understand what drives conflict and a knowledge of skills that supports a process of constructive conflict is essential to creating positive resolutions to disputes (Cloke, 2001). Wilmot and Hocker (2011) state that power is interpersonal and the dynamics of power are fluid, changeable, and dependent on each situation. Power is dependent on the resources a party possesses and how this control affects the other party. Each party has some degree of power and a shift can occur within a conflict (Folger et al., 2010).

Conflict is inevitable, surfacing within family structures, workplace environments, and at all levels of society (Meluch & Walter, 2012). Various settings generate intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural conflict. The three pieces that form an interpersonal conflict and attribute to constructive or destructive conflict are communication, interdependence (relational), and perceptions (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). Emotions play integral part in conflict. Whether or not emotions are addressed during the conflict management process can impact not only the outcome but also have lingering effects. This could result in either counterproductive interactions and communications, or turn out to support conflict transformation (Jameson et al., 2009). Jones (2000) states that conflict surfaces through feelings derived from negative emotion. According to Jones's (2000) interpretation on how emotions are engineered, three elements compose the picture of emotions. First, is the physical experience that is

sensed. Second, is the cognitive flow that aids in the analysis and comprehension of what is being felt. Third, is how the emotional response is shared by way of nonverbal and verbal expressions (Jameson et al., 2009; Lazarus, 1991).

Being able to identify the differences and similarities between opposing viewpoints is fundamental in resolving conflict (Bergiel et al., 2015). Understanding basic beliefs, customs, values and traditions is needed to help build trust and rapport with others (Mayer et al., 1995). This enables the process of conflict resolution to occur in which people are able to communicate freely, while decreasing chances of misinterpretation and chaos. Communication and conflict are undeniably connected, and how a person expresses themselves in conflict can have a determining factor of the outcome. Conflict is culturally and socially formed, and is a central force that drives social change (Cloke, 2008; Wilmot & Hocker, 2011).

**Narrative and conflict.** The concept of the narrative story is a notion that individuals tend to live their life in narrative form and tend to live in a world they have constructed. It is important to look for gaps or paradoxes in a story to create questions that will provide you with information that will give you a better understanding of the conflict from the other person's perspective. Through this process you are able to build trust in the relationship (Mayer et al., 1995). By separating the person from the problem, it allows the focus to move from the conflict being afflicted on the parties to an external conflict (Cloke, 2008).

One needs to separate the conflict from the person and externalize the problem (Barner & Ideus, 2017). This changes the location of the problem and separates the issue from the person, creating room to address the problem itself. It is here where a third party perspective is crucial to understanding the interests and expectations of the parties (Jameson et al., 2009; Thompson & Kim, 2000). The ability to ask the right questions would offer some insight about the conflict

and make the person feel as though you are engaged in the process. This leads to respectful inquiry in order to develop a useful conversation. It is imperative to look for a perpetual shift and change destructive conversations into constructive ones.

By opening up space in a tightly woven story you can introduce options or alternatives in a difficult situation. Applying this to a conflict can bring out underlying concerns and issues that would otherwise remain dormant and untouched. This also can be a face saving measure for another person if approached in a delicate manner (Lee, 2003). Since in some cultures individuals will not communicate what the actual problem is directly, it is beneficial to allow the person time to tell their story (Lewis, 2006). It should not be suggested the person is sharing information that is not pertinent or unrelated to the conflict.

**Conflict styles.** Research has shown that a combination of factors influence an individual's conflict style. A variety of aspects guide a person's inclination to handle conflict from personal and family experiences, to an individual's values (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). These conflict styles are patterned responses, or clusters of behavior, that people use when in conflict. The communication choices and behaviors we display in conflict are interpreted as tactics that are usually unplanned. If these tactics are repeated in various situations, it is then referred to as a pattern response or a style (Brockman, Nunez, & Basu, 2010).

These styles are found in both work and personal situations among all generations. Self-awareness of one's conflict type and having the ability to recognize how other conflict styles interact with each other can be highly beneficial (Meluch & Walter, 2012). Particularly when leading teams or working with a diverse group of individuals. The five styles that The Kraybill Conflict Style Inventory discusses, which most trainers and researchers rely on when

categorizing individual conflict styles, are (a) avoiding, (b) competing, (c) compromising, (d) accommodating, and (e) collaborating (Meluch & Walter, 2012; Thomas, 1976).

### **Generational Conflict**

Research conducted explains that effective communication is crucial for individual and organizational success, employee retention, financial performance, increased productivity and job satisfaction (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011). The ability to effectively communicate has been listed as one of the top skills needed for manager success and a skill that has been lacking in workers hired from college. The Association of Business Communicators conducted a survey that found CEOs acknowledged proficient communication skills provided a return on investment of 235% (Dodd, 2004; Hartman & McCambridge, 2011). Workplace conflict is influenced by factors such as communication, sharing of knowledge, and information flow (Bergiel et al., 2015; Hartman & McCambridge, 2011; Lipsky et al., 2003).

Organizations have recognized that intergenerational differences to be one factor that can present challenges and conflict in a corporation. The workforce has had the chance to get to know Generation X for the past two decades and is now being introduced to the next generation of Millennials. With three active generations in the workplace it has become crucial to understand the key characteristics that are commonly found in each generation, what each group values, and the commonalities among them (Lancaster, 2002).

Being able to recognize communication differences among the generations can provide an opportunity to spot potential conflicts, as well as build bridges between the generations (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011). Education, employee development, rewarding constructive conflict management, and early resolution processes should be administered as the shift in generations occur to reduce or prevent disputes that may have been a problem in the past. The

mix of generations are an opportunity to introduce change within a company's culture (Lancaster, 2002).

## **Emotional Intelligence**

Initially, Salovey and Mayer (1990) conceptualized emotional intelligence based on Thorndike's definition of social intelligence, which is the capability to understand and manage individuals (Barreta, 2008). Salovey and Mayer advanced the idea of social intelligence to describe individuals who obtain awareness of self and others and the aptitude to manage emotions and relationships. Additionally, they discovered that persons who scored high in emotional intelligence were adept at dealing with change in their social settings and capable of forming healthy social bonds (Barreta, 2008; Zeidner, Matthews, & Roberts, 2004). Goleman later expounded on Salovey and Mayer's emotional intelligence framework and created mixed model classifying the following five components:

- Self-awareness – being aware of the connection between one's emotions and individual goals, actions, beliefs, and achievements (Zeidner et al., 2004)
- Self-regulation – ability to manage one's emotions, communications, and reactions irrespective of experiencing situations that are positive or negative (Zeidner et al., 2004)
- Social skill – aptitude to lead others through influence that incorporates effective communication and motivation skills (Goleman, 2005)
- Empathy – capacity to understand the feelings and perspectives of others and (Goleman, 2005; Zeidner et al., 2004)
- Motivation – an intrinsic drive to realize and achieve one's expectations (Goleman, 2005)

Organizations have a diverse group of individuals that work and interact together enabling conflict to occur through contrasting styles and personalities (Di Pietro & Virgilio,

2013). The communication choices and behaviors we display in conflict are patterned responses that can be interpreted as tactics (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). This concept of self-awareness is one of the components of emotional intelligence, according to Daniel Goleman (Barreta, 2008). Mastering the capability of understanding one's own emotions in addition to the feelings of others increases the propensity to respond to and manage conflict.

### **Trust in the Workplace**

The notion of trust is generally associated with a feeling between people rather than an act that has taken place between individuals/groups. Trust is defined as “a charge or duty imposed in faith or confidence or as a condition of some relationship” and “something committed or entrusted to one to be used or cared for in the interest of another” (Merriam-Webster, 2017, Section 1, para. 4). Not understanding the act of trust can influence how relationships form and function, and potentially create interactions that are unproductive, harmful, or irrelevant. Lack of trust impacts relationships in all facets of society, and in particular within organizations among team members. An absence of trust in work environments, project teams, and departments forms unnecessary barriers to complete projects and produce timely and successful outcomes (Peelle, 2006).

These types of instances are not uncommon in the workplace. The interdependence between coworkers has the potential to generate a high degree of conflict if trust is not established in the relationship (Mayer et al., 1995). Theories that have developed were designed to minimize the risk inherent in working relationships. These methods were intended to regulate, enforce, and encourage compliance (Mayer et al., 1995).

The Dynamics of Trust Model can be deemed as the relationship piece of the Circle of Conflict Model and it focuses on two areas. First, the risk that someone is willing to take relative

to what they want or need. A valuation of the risk versus reward will happen. Second, assessing how much you trust someone's motives or intentions. As conflict surfaces there is a tendency to determine the cause and assign blame. Whether the intentions or motives of the individual are good or bad will govern if a person determines the other party is responsible for the conflict.

When using this model it is important to work on the procedural conflict first, and then move to the interpersonal conflict. It is fundamental to objectify the situation, then diagnose and analyze the problem. There is a tendency to apply the problem to the other person if you do not look at the situation itself (you see the person as intrinsic). To build trust between the parties confidence building measures (CBM) should be used. A CBM is an action that demonstrates a party is placing trust with the other side (Furlough, 2005).

### **Alternative Dispute Resolution**

Alternate Dispute Resolution consists of proxy mechanisms to handle disputes without employing litigation. A few of these procedures include mediation, arbitration, and negotiation (Folger et al., 2010). Organizations have offered different avenues to manage workplace conflict with the intent to reduce time and resources spent on conflict and minimize risk related to employee productivity and workforce engagement (Lipsky et al., 2003). ADR programs are generally designed to have multiple access points to diminish the reluctance and hesitation of utilizing the system. The goal is to offer a platform that is able to support a variety of entry points to gather further information, file a claim, or raise a concern (Lipsky et al., 2003). Electing to provide a menu of choices to manage various disputes gives employees a robust conflict management system. Often options include the choice to report a dispute to an individual's immediate management, Human Resources, compliance officers, or in-house legal counsel (Lipsky et al., 2003).

## **Interests, Rights, and Power (IRP) Model**

According to Furlough the Interests, Rights, and Power (IRP) Model focuses on the numerous processes that people use to resolve disputes rather than evaluating the conflict itself. The IRP Model is derived from the original research on negotiation principles and strategies of Fisher and Ury (1991). Interests can be categorized as a party's desires that relate to their concerns, expectations, aspirations, and needs. This approach tends to be more consensual and is successful when both parties get enough of their interests met to achieve an agreement. A rights-based process focuses on the dominance of one party's right over the other. The power-based process is when parties bring all the resources they have to oppose the other party in attempts to win, and usually is highly adversarial. This model demonstrates as parties move up the stairway (from interests, to rights, to power) two things tend to occur, (a) the costs rises, and (b) control goes down (Cloke, 2008; Furlough, 2005).

**Interest-based process.** This process is more time intensive and does not bring about resolution every time. In these instances, the interests of individuals and groups are the central themes to build consensus and agreement among the parties. The interest-based approach emphasizes the intrinsic elements of the parties such as their wants, desires, fears, and needs (Cloke, 2008). The intent is to optimize the end result so all entities walk away believing their interests were addressed or met. These agreements tend to encourage relationship building, employ more collaborative and problem-solving approaches, and foster sustainable solutions (Furlough, 2005).

**Rights-based process.** The rights-based process uses formal means which concentrate on one person/group's rights versus another. This approach is inclined to be adversarial in nature with an emphasis on win/lose outcomes, as opposed to win/win outcomes found in the interest-



based process (Fisher & Ury, 1991). The process tends to be slower to achieve resolution, less flexible, and accrues more cost. Maintaining or building relationships are not stressed with a rights-based approach, unlike in the interest-based method. This process compliments the formalities in a legal system and relies on laws, policies, contracts, and statutes (Furlough, 2005). Typically, a rights-based process is viewed as being fair, consistent, and objective.

**Power-based process.** This process is even more combative than the rights-based approach and can result in win/lose outcomes, however, frequently ends in lose/lose situations. Often resistance ensues and losing parties can feel they have been treated unfair and possibly repressed. Decisions could be made unilaterally as opposed to reaching collaborative and consensual agreements. Although there is the benefit that resolution could be attained in a short amount of time, there is a downside that relationships could be harmed (Furlough, 2005).

### **Dispute Resolution System**

Businesses consider the IRP Model when designing a dispute resolution system. As disputants move up to the next step in the model there is a higher risk that the parties have less say in what will be the potential outcome. With groups staying in the power segment of the model, costs have the potential to increase and can move people to the level where threats are being made against the other (Furlough, 2005). In some instances, resulting in a lose-lose outcome. Employing only power-based and right-based processes in an organization will incur costs for the resources needed to deal with conflicts. There will also be costs associated if conflict is handled incorrectly. This could result in loss of productivity, stress, decreased morale/focus, damage to relationships, and harm to the reputation of the company (Cloke, 2008; Lipsky et al., 2003). Offering collaborative choices permits people to move from a power process to a rights-based or interest-based one (Furlough, 2005).

The purpose of the multiple options is to allow the workers the chance to loop back to the interest-based process, and to go below the line to identify the interests of the participants, or a rights-based process to remedy a violation of one's rights (Fisher & Ury, 1991). All three categories are essential in resolving conflict. Designers of a program do not want to limit the scope by tagging specific cases to undergo a certain process. Some issues will need to go through particular methods regardless of the existing alternatives present, such as mediation, negotiation, facilitation, or coaching (Lipsky et al., 2003; Salas et al., 2015).

### **The Circle of Conflict**

The Circle of Conflict is a model that focuses on the various causes, or drivers, that aid in diagnosing a conflict. This model is depicted by a pie chart that is divided into six parts, and states the most common drivers of conflict are (a) values, (b) relationships, (c) externals/moods, (d) data, (e) interests, and (f) structure. The values, relationships, and externals/moods drivers are at the top half, while the data, interests, and structure drivers appear in the bottom half of the graph. According to Furlough (2005), addressing the drivers in the bottom half of the chart (data, interests, and structure) will provide more chance of resolution than the top half of the chart (values, relationships, and externals/moods). The drivers below the line present issues that the parties will have some control, unlike the drivers above the line that can potentially escalate the conflict (Furlough, 2005). Generally, these drivers represent areas that are not within a party's control, so it is best to avoid them. The following provides further description of each driver.

**Values.** The values driver is associated with the beliefs and tenets individuals or groups carry that trigger a conflict. These values can vary from being identity based such as a person's religion or ethical and moral disposition, to the values held in business and workplace environments. Value driven conflict occurs when different belief systems are opposing each

other and parties are not finding agreement. Positions tend to be viewed through a lens of right and wrong or good and evil. Disputes driven by this driver can be intense and personal, and generally seen in conflict related to political and religious matters (Furlough, 2005).

**Relationships.** Conflict derived by a prior negative experience between individuals or parties falls under the relationship driver. A failure to communicate or disengagement often occurs when conflict is formed from a poor relationship. Furthermore, if repeated adverse behaviors are displayed stereotypes are generated that can impact current conflict (Furlough, 2005). This can also lead to retaliation if people believe they are being treated unfairly causing an ongoing cycle of conflict.

**External/moods.** Another driver that plays a role in conflict is external factors or moods that are outside the scope of an issue. This can occur at macro or micro levels. For example, regulatory changes that impact operations in an organization or the decision-making of leaders. Also, psychological or physiological aspects can create conflict or escalate an existing dispute. An individual's personal situation or physical well-being has an influence on how conflict is managed (Furlough, 2005). Understanding this driver will enable one to identify possible dynamics on the periphery.

**Data.** The flow of information and interpretation of data is a potential cause of conflict. Incorrect data or lack of information can pose a problem as ideas are formed and decisions made based on data accessed. Also, having more information than what is needed can be a drawback as well (Furlough, 2005). In addition, the interpretation of information varies on the individual. Groups reviewing the same data can assess and analyze the information in opposing viewpoints and can shape differing assumptions.

**Structure.** There are four characteristics linked to structure that drive conflict. This first facet is connected to the limitation of resources in organizations (Furlough, 2005). The lack of available resources in terms of time and money can be problematic when implementing changes to reduce conflict (Robbins & Judge, 2015). Second, conflict can manifest from restrictions caused by different geographical settings (Rule & Sen, 2015). Workers located in various offices, time zones, or who are remote rely on technology to communicate and interact with peers and team members (Meluch & Walter, 2012). Although technology and collaborative tools enhance communication of geographically disparate teams, it can also prove challenging due to limited in person exchanges. Additionally, not having the decision-making power or authority to resolve a dispute can be a challenge. While individuals are involved or tasked with managing a conflict they may not have the authorization to determine or confirm an outcome. Lastly, how an organization is designed and structured can present issues that produce conflict. Competing priorities from different areas in the organization can introduce internal and possibly outward facing conflict (Furlough, 2005). Furthermore, inefficiencies can also create such disconnects, miscommunication, and duplication of efforts.

### **The Triangle of Satisfaction**

The Triangle of Satisfaction model identifies interests by taking the interest segment out of the Circle of Conflict model, and applying a more meticulous approach to analyzing the concept of interests. Interests related to Models 1 and 2 are categorized as a party's "wants, needs, fears, hopes, or concerns" (Furlough, 2005, para. 2). According to Furlough (2005) each side of the triangle represents a broad type of these interests, which can be grouped into the following (a) results/substantive/problem (WHAT), (b) process/procedural (HOW), and (c) emotional/psychological (WHO).

## **The Social Style Model**

The Social Style Model is a tool that assesses personality and communication styles based on observable behavior and not internal processes. The four groups are directing, expressive, amiable, and analytical (Furlough, 2005). It relies on and measures two aspects of behavior, assertiveness and emotional responsiveness. It is not centered so much on self-assessment, but on peer assessment (Furlough, 2005). This model can be a functional and effective method in conflicts. Identifying which social style you are can provide you with a better understanding of how you and others communicate with one another (Hartman & McCambridge, 2011).

## **Online Dispute Resolution**

In recent decades the legal system and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) has experienced changes driven by the advancements from technology and an evolving global economy. One factor that has allowed legal and ADR professionals to incorporate online tools in their practice is through emerging software and platforms that enable disputes to be handled in a virtual setting. The second aspect that has created a shift in the area of Dispute Resolution is how products and services are bought and sold online via e-commerce sites. These virtual transactions have shaped new channels of Information and Communication Technology (ICTs) to transpire, and have exposed how interconnected cross-border markets have become through e-businesses and online start-ups (Rule & Sen, 2015).

The internet offered an alternate business model that introduced corporations and entrepreneurs to a feasible method to reach new customers and enter foreign markets on a larger scale. With the growth and expansion of e-commerce those working in the domain determined that solutions needed to be constructed to manage complaints and disputes in cyberspace, since

conventional in person dispute resolution practices were not a viable option (Fowlie & Rainey, 2015). With the onset of additional types of transnational commercial disputes Online Dispute Resolution formed a way to solve and manage B2C (business to consumer) claims. Due to the nature, geography, language, and high volume of claims these online disputes required another process outside of the traditional legal procedures established (Vilalta, 2012). Online Dispute Resolution mechanisms also have been instituted in some governmental agencies to alleviate similar issues private entities encountered related to time, distance, and quantity of cases needing to be handled.

Due to various disruptive technologies the landscape of Dispute Resolution has moved to incorporate online tools that have formed what is known today as Online Dispute Resolution (ODR). For the past two decades ODR has evolved over time from comprising of document handling programs and case management systems (CMS) to e-filing platforms that were used by law firms then court systems (Fowlie & Rainey, 2015). The third wave developing for ODR affects the justice system by altering the legal process allowing cases to be handled before entering litigation using technology. This can provide underprivileged groups instances to access legal systems via informal and formal methods virtually. This allows for a legal socialization and online communities to prevent and manage conflict.

Although, present day ODR systems lack the complexity that future state ODR platforms and development promises, the current position of ODR has made a substantial impact thus far (Fowlie & Rainey, 2015). An example of this was eBay's early adoption of a feedback system and dispute resolution program applying technology based tools, which proved effective. By 2010, eBay dealt with over 60 million disputes, demonstrating the effectiveness of integrating dispute resolution and technology to handle business to consumer disputes (Katsh, 2012). EBay,

Amazon, and Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) are examples of entities that have leveraged technology to handle online transaction disputes between businesses and consumers. Taking advantage of the technological progress that had been made in the 1990s with desktop computers becoming more powerful and the internet attracting more users, start-up and existing businesses had to adapt with not only offering new services and products but needed to come up with a modern way of conducting business.

ODR is commonly referred to as the Fourth Party, which is the technology that aids the third party neutral in providing “communication capabilities that allow tasks to be performed more quickly or at a distance” (Katsh, 2012, p. 32). Fourth Party platforms, progress in software development and functionalities, and the increase in usage of mobile applications have created an ideal situation to promote the next phase of possibilities for ODR (Katsh, 2012). One of the opportunities ODR practitioners and scholars foresee is how technology could provide an option to be represented for those individuals who do not have access to the justice system.

For the past two decades ODR has evolved over time from comprising of document handling programs and case management systems (CMS) to e-filing platforms that were used by law firms and then court systems. The third wave developing for ODR affects the justice system by altering the legal process allowing cases to be handled before entering litigation using technology. Several characteristics of ADR fall in line with ODR such as the speed, flexibility of solutions, informal process, and lower cost (Vilalta, 2012). However, ODR offers three distinctions, which differentiate it from ADR (a) disputants do not need to be in the same physical location, (b) geography and time disparity is no longer a barrier in the process, and (c) asynchronous communication can occur (Vilalta, 2012).

The blending on Dispute Resolution and technology has created a new method of dealing

with various types of disputes which were nonexistent before the introduction of e-commerce. Some ombudsman offices have begun using ICTs to conduct dispute resolution work. Fowlie and Rainey (2015) outline two branches that ombudsman agencies have implemented using ODR technology. One facet refers to technology-based ODR which is “systems where technology plays an active role in conducting dispute resolution” (Fowlie & Rainey, 2015, p. 62). Technology-based ODR consists of instances applicable in e-commerce platforms and blind-bidding systems used for negotiations. The second part is technology-assisted ODR that implies technology applications enhance existing stand-alone ADR processes (Fowlie & Rainey, 2015). Through developments in emerging technologies and the integration of seamless online environments, the creation of virtual communities, online market economies, and new methods of digital communication channels has had an impact on traditional legal systems and the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution.

### **Motivational Aspects in the Workplace**

Organizational Studies have continually examined the subject of motivating adults in the workplace, and has pulled research from array of disciplines such as management, psychology, sociology, and economics to understand the various factors which keep employees motivated in an organizational setting. However, the notion of highly engaged workforce and a decrease in conflict in work environments have been studied (Spector & Jex, 1998). With companies facing an increasingly competitive market, the focus of attracting and retaining top talent while keeping them engaged has placed greater emphasis on motivation in the workplace (Lebas & Euske, 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2015).

Numerous approaches including leadership engagement techniques, reward programs, and performance incentives are used to motivate employees. Providing an assortment of



motivational attractions demonstrates the variance among individuals' personal ambition. Due to the range of motivational elements, organizations are challenged to evaluate what motivates employees. Additionally, how can employees remain engaged and excel in their position. Understanding an employee's motivational factors and fundamental needs in the workplace are vital in generating an environment that provides intrinsic and extrinsic motivation so employees feel valued and engaged (Benabou & Tirole, 2002). As organizations pivot and restructure based on market demands employees' engagement and performance can be affected, creating conflict.

Motivation has been widely researched in psychology and through studying the differing aspects of motivation a better insight into human behavior has been reached. Robbins and Judge (2015) define motivation consisting of measureable qualities as "the process that account for an individual's intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal" (p. 184). This definition is geared towards motivating people in the workplace. Simply stated Robbins and Judge (2015) describe the following three strategies as evaluate how hard someone works (intensity), when a goal benefits the organization (direction), and how long a person can continue working (persistence). If motivation is inherent within an individual it is essential that companies bring on employees who not only have the necessary skill set and experience for the position, but embody the organization's core competencies along with the ability to be immediately engaged in the learning process (Austin & Larkey, 2004). The employee's willingness to share his/her talents, along with an aptitude to learn in their new role displays an intrinsic motivation towards achieving proficiency (Benabou & Tirole, 2002; Fowler, 2014).

Here are two types of motivation commonly referenced (a) intrinsic, and (b) extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation reveals the desire to do something because one finds it

pleasurable. In these instances an individual is not concerned with external rewards and would be satisfied to perform a task based purely on intrinsic motivation (Calder & Staw, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1980). Writing a novel simply because a person enjoys writing is an example of motivation derived intrinsically. Extrinsic motivation indicates the desire to do something because external rewards are valued, such as money or recognition. In these cases a person may not be fond of the activity, however, seek to attain the external reward (Benabou & Tirole, 2003; Osterloh & Frey, 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2015).

**Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory.** Abraham Maslow categorized two facets of human need as physiological and psychological, and notes a person's instinctual urge to satisfy those needs are based on a hierarchy. If these needs are not satisfied then strain can form in the life of an individual. The five needs are separated into two segments. The first section is made up of needs that are listed at the bottom of the hierarchy. These consist of the basic human needs (physiological and safety needs) which is referred to as the lower-order needs (Robbins & Judge, 2015). The second element is called the higher-order needs and is composed of an individual's social needs (social, esteem, and self-actualization needs). Once a certain need has been satisfied on the hierarchy then an individual moves to the next level (Robbins & Judge, 2015). When a person reached the top of the pyramid or hierarchy then they reach the level in which they are motivated by intrinsic values or a self-purpose. Through realizing which need motivates an employee the manager can address fulfilling that need.

**Herzberg's two-factor theory.** Another motivational theory constructed by Frederick Herzberg investigated the relationship between the employee and his or her working environment. He classified two sets of factors which influence motivation in the workplace. The first set is labeled as hygiene factors. These are elements which include the

ability of management, income, working conditions, company practices, and job security (Robbins & Judge, 2015). Hygiene factors do not affect motivation, but can cause dissatisfaction. The second set of factors is referred to as satisfiers or motivators. The satisfiers consist of promotion, increased responsibility, recognition, and development opportunities. Herzberg research revealed removing dissatisfying aspects of a person's job does not necessarily translate to a feeling of satisfaction, but determined satisfiers are central to job satisfaction and motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2015).

### **Organizational Structures and Conflict**

Organizations have adopted strategies which have transformed the structural landscapes in present day workplaces. However, during the process of structural change conflict can inhibit employee productivity, performance, and engagement. This has required workers to possess specific skills and competencies to navigate realignments and restructures. Structural shifts in organizations can be both beneficial and unfavorable to workers.

Systems theory is a trans-disciplinary approach that considers a system as a set of independent and interacting parts. The objective is to examine the general principles of how systems function and apply it to all types of systems in varying fields (Lipsky et al., 2003). One of the concepts relating to the theory is homeostasis, a natural response in which all living systems naturally resist change. For example, leaders have adapted to remain competitive and maintain growth of the organization by augmenting employment practices to include remote workers (Garicano & Wu, 2012). While some individuals will value and prefer to work remotely, others will find it challenging not to interact with their team in a face-to-face space (Garicano & Wu, 2012).

Two opposing models applied in organizational design are mechanistic and organic. The

mechanistic model is more formalized, and is driven by standards and processes. This prototype is viewed to be more bureaucratic in nature (Robbins & Judge, 2015). The second structural paradigm is the organic model that incorporates fewer tiers of management and levels that are flexible and flat. In an organic model processes are more relaxed and the decisions are not made by a few central figures, but rather multiple members. This decision-making process is more inclusive and encourages empowerment of the various stakeholders involved in the determination (Courtright, Fairhurst, & Rogers, 1989).

Differing aspects influence the decision to select an organizational design that is mechanistic or organic. Organizational strategy, size, technology, and environment are factors that reflect how an entity should be structured (Robbins & Judge, 2015). Three common strategies some organizations utilize based on overall objectives needed to be accomplished are innovation, cost-minimization, and imitation. An innovation strategy is intended to generate original and inventive achievements. Although innovation is well positioned in an organic model, mechanistic elements can be integrated within a flexible structure which can also support innovation goals. Setting guidelines, establishing communication flows, and having a straightforward reporting structure are ways to combine mechanistic approaches in an organic design to heighten innovation practices (Katila, 2004; Robbins & Judge, 2015). The cost-minimization strategy concentrates on monitoring and curtailing expenses, while devoting less effort on policies to encourage commitment of the workers. On the other hand imitation strategy follows the philosophy of reducing risk in conjunction with boosting profits. In this situation, organizations are not first to market with products; they follow the innovators that test the market or experiment with a proof of concept. Examples of organizations following the imitation strategy are Hewlett-Packard and Caterpillar (Amburgey & Dacin, 1994; Miles & Snow, 1978;

Robbins & Judge, 2015; Toh, Morgeson, & Campion, 2008).

Another strategic model that examines six elements of an organizational strategy is the SPELIT Power Matrix Leadership Tool. This framework evaluates the succeeding aspects of the organization (a) social, (b) political, (c) economic, (d) legal, (e) technological, and (f) intercultural facets of an organization. The SPELIT Power Matrix Leadership Tool enables a leader to assess the six environments before designing a strategic plan and vision (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007). From this assessment, leaders are able to develop a comprehensive plan that considers competing and corresponding aspects within an industry and organization (Schmieder-Ramirez & Mallette, 2007). The six pillars also contribute to the density and interconnectedness of potential workplace conflict.

An organization's size also shapes structure. Larger organizations comprising of more than 2,000 employees are generally mechanistic, retaining more specialization, top-down levels, procedures, and departmentalization. A shift to a mechanistic structure from an organic model occurs as smaller organizations expand in significant numbers, such as doubling in size (Robbins & Judge, 2015). On the contrary situations of downsizing in an organization also causes restructures to take place. Creating leaner organizations by downsizing through reducing staff, closing offices, or eliminating segments of the business that no longer provide value can bring immediate monetary benefits. In addition, it can generate higher efficiency and promote quicker decision-making in the organization. However, downsizing can have a destabilizing impact on organizational performance and employee engagement (Robbins & Judge, 2015).

### **Team Structures**

To manage assignments that are increasingly challenging and complex organizations have formed teams to handle these tasks (Mathieu et al., 2000). The ability to anticipate the

needs of team members and respond effectively is commonly found in high performing teams (Mohammed et al., 2010). This concept has been labeled as a team's SMM, which is the group's shared mental model (Bergiel et al., 2015). Being adept in sharing knowledge and information within teams has proven to be an obstacle in organizations. Not sharing a similar SMM can cause conflict within a team, negatively impacting team coordination, understanding, and communication (Jehn, 1997). This is relevant to the extent of conflict experienced in the team, as well as the perceptions of conflict (Jehn, et al., 2010). When an individual perceives incompatibility with another team member this is referred to as intragroup conflict, which can appear on multiple levels and in varying degrees (Bergiel et al., 2015; De Dreu et al., 1999). According to Jehn (1995), three common types of conflict are relationship, task, and process.

### **Transformative Mediation**

Transformative mediation is a conversation in which a third party works with the disputants to facilitate change in the quality of their interactions. The idea is to shift from destructive and negative interaction to a more constructive and positive interaction, while exploring various topics and possibilities for resolution (Folger, Bush, Delia, & Institute for the Study of Conflict Transformation, 2001). Transformative mediation corresponds to a relational ideology, which focuses on improving the quality of the parties' interaction. The transformative methodology fosters empowerment and recognition shifts, and centers on the parties determining the process and the outcome (Folger et al., 2001).

This approach considers that each party has the capacity to decide what they want to do, what risks they can/will take, and whether they want to end or keep a relationship (personal or professional). Therefore, it is important to begin the session having a conversation with the

parties to decide how they want to proceed with the mediation. For example, the parties can establish what will be acceptable ground rules (Folger et al., 2001). The transformative practice begins with relational premises and therefore believes parties in conflict want to change (transform) their interaction with each other.

The tendency to control the process and interactions between parties can possibly hamper the potential for the parties to experience the shifts, and move from a state of weakness to strength, and from being self-absorbed to responsive (Folger et al., 2001). There is a cycle of empowerment and recognition shifts that take place in a mediation session that play out when the parties begin their interaction with one another. Conflict resolution processes that promote empowerment and recognition provide the opportunity for people to restore their capability to make decisions and consider other perspectives (Folger et al., 2001).

### **A Third Party's Role in Transformative Mediation**

A third party's view of human nature has a definite impact on his/her approach to conflict intervention. Mediation is a kind of intervention that is designed to assist parties engaged in conflict. There are varying approaches third parties take during mediations that are driven by one's own perspective of human nature and conflict. An individual's worldview is comprised of their beliefs, values, and assumptions, which allows a person to construct a personal view of the world. As a result, third parties have differing opinions about what parties need or are capable of when in conflict (Cloke, 2008).

The belief that each party is capable of knowing what is best for them, and are adept at deciding what is the most suitable resolution for them shapes how a third party conducts a conflict intervention. Three contrasting approaches currently in the field of conflict resolution are evaluative, facilitative, and transformative. Evaluative is a directive style in which a third

party structures the process, and openly influences the outcome for the parties. The facilitative approach encourages interest-based bargaining and allows the third party to be in charge of the process, while the parties are in control of the final outcome. Finally, the transformative methodology fosters empowerment and recognition shifts, and centers on the parties determining the process and the outcome (Folger et al., 2001). The latter approach believes each party has the capacity to decide what they want to do, what risks they can/will take, and whether they want to end or keep a relationship (personal or professional). This can be referred to as a party's moral development (Folger et al., 2001).

### **Third Party's Ideological Bias**

A third party's underlying ideology defines his/her sense of what successful intervention is because fundamentally a third party's purpose drives how a third party practices. Ideology is a system of beliefs that guide thinking and shapes behavior, while also forming ideological frameworks that create personal and professional identities. These identities influence why (orientation) and how (practice) a third party intervenes, and what (purpose) their theoretical assumptions are about what his/her goals should be (Folger et al., 2001). The third party's goals for intervention and concept of productive conflict determine what is considered a successful intervention.

Three contrasting examples of this reflect three different ideologies, which are relationships, relational, and individualistic. Relationship ideology focuses on repairing/preserving the relationship, and views maintaining the relationship as a successful intervention (Folger et al., 2001). The goal of relational ideology is to improve the interaction between the parties, not necessarily fix the relationship. While an individualistic ideology targets settling or solving the problem/dispute. The difference between the first two ideas and



the third, is that relationship and relational tend to be measured by qualitative change in the parties' interaction. The third notion is measured quantitatively, using the rates of closure/agreement/settlement (Folger et al., 2001).

### **Relational versus Relationship Ideology**

Relational ideology (or referred to as Transformative Practice in the Conflict Resolution field) occurs through empowerment and recognition shifts in which the parties strive to improve the quality of their interaction. There is a balance between focusing on self and the other, and being able to grasp another's perspective while expressing your own. Relationship ideology (or referred to as Harmony Practice in the Conflict Resolution field) concentrates on maintaining the relationship and centering on the other only. It is an organic model that is trying to preserve the whole through the commonalities of the groups, such as values, beliefs, interests and ideology. The shift from destructive to constructive interaction, and exploring various topics and possibilities for resolution is a main principle of the transformative ideology.

### **Conflict Spirals**

Obtaining a solid understanding of the negative conflict spiral prepares mediators when working with parties in conflict (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). The ability to grasp the progression of a conflict enables the mediator to identify and label when parties are moving through recognition and empowerment shifts in an intervention. When mediators are able to acknowledge an empowerment and recognition shift they are better able to facilitate the conversation between the parties (on both macro and micro levels). The ability to understand this cycle will also enable the mediator to step back from the process oriented model and not assert control over the conversation flow.

The tendency to control the process and interactions between parties can possibly hamper

the potential for the parties to experience the shifts, and move from weakness to strength, and from being self-absorbed to responsive. Third parties should anticipate that people will be in states of weakness and self-absorption. Through understanding what is happening during the parties' interactions an individual can pinpoint the position parties are in within the conflict spiral, and be supportive during positive or negative shifts (Folger et al., 2001). Awareness will allow the mediator to maintain composure and remain calm as tensions rise and fall.

### **Content and Process**

Essentially conflict is an interaction among parties. Understanding the interconnection between content and the process is important in conflict. In a mediation session the conflict is the interaction that unfolds between the parties. How process rules are determined and decided on, can strongly impact the content in mediation. At the beginning of, or during a mediation session any decision a mediator or party makes directly influences the conflict at any point in time in the mediation.

For example, if a mediator decides that each party should not interrupt the other while they are talking, then this has a direct implication on how the interaction and conflict progresses during their ongoing engagement. The mediator's role in transformative mediation is to support the parties' empowerment and inter-party recognition (Folger et al., 2001). Process and content are intertwined, and are at the center of any issues the parties are having with interacting with each other. This realization hands over control to the parties (empowerment), and allows parties to discuss issues related to the parties' interaction/communication, and creating opportunities for empowerment and recognition shifts.

## **Understanding Context**

The ability to read context is important when understanding the choices mediators make to avoid becoming directive. The context of parties' interactions and communication is a determining factor whether a mediator is directive or not. As a mediator it is crucial to be aware of context. The ability to self-monitor in a session is a way to avoid directive communication towards either party. Taking opportunities to reflect, summarize, and check-in with parties provides the mediator with additional insights to the parties' interactions. This also allows for further clarifications of what is being discussed, and inhibits the tendency to become directive and limiting the parties decision-making power (Folger et al., 2001).

## **Method and Flow**

A phased approach of the mediation process is inconsistent with the ideology of the transformative practice because it centers on mapping out the problem solving process (Folger et al., 2001). It takes away from focusing on the micro level and draws attention to the macro level. The phase model tends to put the mediator in the driver seat since he is the only one that has knowledge of the phases. This can limit the topics and areas the parties want to discuss or highlight. The transformative framework does not include phases and tends to be more organic, and promotes a free flow of interaction and conversation (Folger et al., 2001). Parties dictate where they are going and draw or negotiate how their own mediation will unfold.

## **Reflection and Summarizing**

Reflection and summarizing are two methods when communicating with others to support active listening skills (Beebe et al., 2004). The ability to listen to parties is essential to managing conflict. Reflection is repeating almost exactly what one party is saying in mediation. Reflecting mirrors the energy level of each party through restating what was

discussed after a segment of information was expressed. Reflection provides clarity for the mediator and parties, particularly when a subject is vague or multifaceted (Folger et al., 2001). Hearing the words back can bring about a feeling of affirmation, and support an empowerment and recognition shift. Having the chance to hear your own words repeated back to you in a similar tone can be a powerful experience for either party (Folger et al., 2001).

A summary occurs when the mediator gives an overview of what was discussed by both parties, while making eye contact and addressing all parties in the room. Summarizing is capturing themes (topics) of what both parties expressed and breaking them down in each party's point of view, then offering back a general idea of each round of topics discussed (Folger et al., 2001). With a summary the mediator is identifying the major themes shared, then putting the decision-making back on the parties. You are giving control back by asking where the parties want to go from here, and pointing out what the parties agree and disagree about (Folger et al., 2001).

### **Adult Learning**

Social learning approaches have been implemented to handle the change in knowledge and competency needs in organizations. For example, project teams rely more on informal network groupings to promote the learning and development of adults in the workplace (Clarke, 2010; Gray, 2001; Marsick & Watkins, 1997). In addition to utilizing traditional resources and methods to develop their employees' conflict management competencies organizations can take more of a holistic view to develop their employees' conflict management competencies and informal learning networks (Salas et al, 2015).

According to Matthew Knowles, informal adult education was initially “organized ideas around the notion that adults learn best in informal, comfortable, flexible, non-threatening

settings” (Knowles et al., 2012, para. 1). Organizations commonly construct learning programs for adults (i.e. employees, volunteers, and clients) incorporating informal learning methods into their training design. When studying the evolution of adult learning it is difficult to highlight a primary theory or method to attribute to the effectiveness of learning in the workplace. The andragogical model places the focus on the learner which is in contrast to the traditional approach of pedagogy (Knowles et al., 2012). Malcolm Knowles’ six principles of adult learning identified the following differences between adult and child learners:

- the learner needs to know why they should learn something;
- self-concept which means the learner is involved in the planning and evaluation of their instruction;
- the experience level of the learner is the basis of learning activities;
- readiness to learn things that the learner can apply immediately;
- orientation to learning is problem based;
- motivation of the learner is internal versus external (Sink, 2014).

This implies that the learner is responsible for his/her own learning and generally this type of learner has more life and professional experience with the basis of learning related to a particular task or goal (the learning must have relevance for the learner).

Lave evaluated learning from the perspective of the learner regardless of the position, role, or station of the learner, and focuses on gained implicit knowledge versus achieving designed learning outcomes established by the instructor (Brown & Duguid, 1996). The concentration on situated learning and student center learning has allowed the learner to obtain additional knowledge and information outside of the educator’s set goals. Johnson and Taylor (2006) refer to the brain as a social organ and cite studies which support the view that positive

social relationships foster particular types of learning and can stimulate neural plasticity.

The role that sociological interactions play in learning environments is key for the novice learner to attain expert knowledge or personal mastery; these interactions also enable individuals to attain a level of competency. In 1991, Lave and Wenger devised the concept of community of practice. The cornerstone of communities of practice relies on the actions and experience connecting individuals to communities. These communities award validity to individuals' actions (Jonassen & Land, 2012).

### **Informal Learning Communities**

As organizational structure, processes, and policies have formalized, the role of informal networks and learning play a central part in achieving specific objectives to bypass such formalities that can be viewed as barriers (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993). Informal learning is viewed as an internal process which occurs outside of a formal process and can be referred to as “the experiences of everyday living from which we learn something” (Ziegler, Paulus, & Woodside, 2014, p. 61). It has become more common for employees to go to peers or colleagues than management to resolve issues or find information (Watkins & Marsick, 1992; Zhao & Kemp, 2012). This is often how on the job training takes place (Paradise, 2008). As leaders have become more removed from daily tasks and routines of employees it is important for individuals to build a supportive social circle at the workplace (Branden, 2011; Oommen, 2014).

Sociological aspects that have been highlighted in learning environments include situated learning, the culture of expert practice, intrinsic motivation, and exploiting cooperation and competition. These five elements allow learners to attain applicable experience, build learning communities and community of practices, identify what strategies an expert utilizes to carry out tasks, and encourage cooperative teamwork. According to Barab and Duffy, “learning in these

contexts centers on participation and the ways that newcomers progressively enter into a more central role in the community. As a result of participation, both practices and identities advance” (Jonassen & Land, 2012, p. 17).

One of the four characteristics of learning communities emphasizes “mechanisms or technologies for sharing what is learned are central” (Jonassen & Land, 2012, p. 17). Social media has been a popular medium to create informal learning environments. Initially, recognized social media tools (i.e. Facebook and Twitter) have been used in academic institutions to encourage learning methods. In recent years, organizations have assimilated and become more accepting to internal platforms that form online learning communities which can be monitored in-house. One of the components to create a learning organization is having learning-oriented leadership that supports workplace learning and “a learning culture that encourages open-minded attitudes toward learning and has sufficient financial resources and time for employee learning experiences” (Jeon & Kim, 2012, p. 211).

Two professors from the University of Kentucky College of Pharmacy conducted an experiment using informal learning and online tools. An informal learning strategy was designed to utilize a Facebook group page to achieve two main objectives: (a) to expose students to contemporary subjects related to pharmacy management, leadership, and business; and (b) to expose students to the viewpoints of outside pharmacy management and leadership experts (Cain & Policastri, 2011). Cain and Policastri (2011) conducted the study through a mixed-methods approach using questionnaires, exams results, and a student focus group. The authors concluded that having no mandates to participate allowed for an informal learning experience to manifest organically. The researchers also reported this learning environment proved successful resulting from the student involvement and feedback as well as giving the learners exposure to pertinent

real world issues through external professionals (Cain & Policastri, 2011).

Providing online learning environments would not only mitigate issues that may arise due to multiple physical locations of learners but also offer a platform that will facilitate a Knowledge Forum. This is commonly referred to as a learning community that “emphasized collective building and improvement of ideas” (Jonassen & Land, 2012, p. 17). This occurs through the use of technology tools that “support students to post their ideas and notes, comment on and add to others’ ideas, organize their own and others’ ideas according to different conceptual frames” (Jonassen & Land, 2012, p. 17).

Informal learning is viewed as an internal process which occurs outside of a formal process and can be referred to as “the experiences of everyday living from which we learn something” (Ziegler et al., 2014, p. 61). Simply stated informal learning is contrary to formal or traditional learning. The process of informal learning differs from formal learning styles since there are no defined learning outcomes established and tends to occur organically outside of instructor led trainings. Formal learning entails structured trainings given to achieve set objectives, generally within an educational setting. Typically, informal learning is directed by the learner with no arranged curriculum. The learning can take place in group environments through learning communities and community of practices.

### **Informal Learning in Organizations**

An early categorization of informal learning given by Knowles (1950) states that this learning method occurs outside of a structured environment and is typically self-directed. So the learner is accountable for the learning process and outcomes (Zhao & Kemp, 2012). While formal learning entails that it is held in a set location like a classroom and content is selected for the learner with assigned learning tasks (Knowles et al., 2012). Eraut (2004) proposes that



reflection is a principal theme in informal learning, along with characterizing informal learning void of an instructor and offers more flexibility for the learner (Zhao & Kemp, 2012). The learning can take place in group environments through learning communities and community of practices (Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015).

Another concept to consider when assessing informal learning is the aspects of social learning systems. According to Wenger (1998) there are two factors to consider when understanding a social learning system. The first aspect relates to social competence and personal experience of the individual, and the second area entails three distinct modes (engagement, imagination, and alignment).

Informal learning can be categorized in the following three modes, individual, group, and organizational. Berg and Chyung (2008) explain that each has defining attributes and play a part in the success of a learning organization. Senge has been accredited with promoting the concept of the learning organization, which is defined as “an implicit set of shared meanings and values amongst its people that yields learning and knowledge transmission” (Berg and Chyung, 2008, p. 229).

Is it agreed that informal learning is one the most commons forms of adult learning in the workplace. However, Ellinger (2005) an assistant professor of Human Resource Education suggested further studies are needed to explore best practices on how informal learning should be supported, encouraged, and developed in organizations. Ellinger authored a study to examine contextual factors that positively and negatively impact informal learning, and identified recommended practices. Ellinger (2005) cited Watkins and Marsick’s definition of informal learning which guided her research assessing contextual factors,

based on learning from experience; embedded in the organizational context, oriented to a

focus on action; governed by non-routine conditions; concerned with tacit dimensions that must be made explicit; delimited by the nature of the task, the way in which the problems are framed, and the work capacity of the individual undertaking the task; and, enhanced by proactivity, critical reflectivity and creativity. (p. 391)

Through studying the correlation between contextual factors and employee informal learning Ellinger's (2005) intent was to understand how this type of learning is facilitated, promoted, and nurtured in organizations. The Teaching Firm Project, a study of informal learning revealed contextual factors "such as incentives, promotion criteria, and job security" (Ellinger, 2005, p. 392) had a substantial influence. Ellinger (2005) led a qualitative case study sampling organizations that were: (a) dedicated to employee development; and (b) employed learning strategies to encourage individual, team, and organizational learning.

After conducting her research Ellinger (2005) derived several themes which led her to the following findings related to the influence of contextual factors and organizational informal learning. She determined leaders and managers needed to improve facilitation skills connected to informal learning, develop employees' team and collaborative proficiencies to foster collective learning, and provide a physical infrastructure that will motivate informal learning (i.e. designing open spaces and offering networking opportunities for employees to meet each other). Considering the constructs and implementing the appropriate contextual factors is "fundamental to building networks and communities of practice that foster conditions for informal learning" (Ellinger, 2005, p. 412).

The school of thought from learning theorists and practitioners states that informal learning is the principal way individuals acquire skills, information, and knowledge in the workplace via "talking, observing others, trial and error, and simply working with people in the

know” (Cross, 2014, Chapter 25, Section 1, para. 1). Informal learning is closely associated with learning by experience. Lucas and Zilliox (2014) describe experiential learning as the process of learning through experience based on the learner’s activity, reflecting on the act of learning, and ability to apply what the participant has learned in the real world. Cross (2014) compares the event of learning to ride a bike to informal learning and describes this activity as a natural experience in which learning takes place. Formal learning has been described as “riding a bus, as the route is preplanned and the same for everyone” (Berg & Chyung, 2008, p. 230).

Informal learning in a workplace environment can be achieved through providing documentation, case studies, guided tours, and mentoring for employees (Cross, 2014). The literature agrees that no single method of learning exists in organizations and a blended approach is needed to meet the needs of complex systems and establishments. As organizations commission employees to be more accountable for their own learning and development in the workplace a “focus on creating learning-oriented organizations that promote cultures, policies, and procedures conducive to fostering continuous learning” (Ellinger, 2005, p. 390) has occurred.

When assessing the relationship between organizational and task factors Jeon and Kim (2012) studied the effectiveness of informal learning through peer interaction and learning by doing tasks. Through studying the effectiveness of informal learning Jeon and Kim (2012) sought to determine if job competencies improved in the workplace. Scholars have identified employees get value from interacting with others. Peers and management may serve and act in the capacity of informal workplace trainers which assist in employee learning. Further research can be done regarding the task factors, but the complexity and frequency of tasks have shown to be significant characteristics for informal learning. The records surveyed was secondary data

taken from the 2007 Human Capital Corporate Panel and collected by the Korea Research Institute of Vocational Education and Skill Training (KRIVET).

Jeon and Kim (2012) found that senior leadership in human resource development (HRD), along with open communications bolstered the effectiveness of informal learning. There was not a statistically significant relationship between an innovative culture and informal learning. However, this study displayed a positive aspect in increasing effectiveness from “three task factors: (a) frequency of new task situations as task characteristics, (b) satisfaction with the task itself, and (c) utility of knowledge and skills obtained from a task” (Jeon & Kim, 2012, p. 209). When employees comprehended that knowledge and skills attained from doing current tasks were beneficial to other organizations informal learning proved more effective.

### **Informal Learning Models**

The 70-20-10 Model was introduced in the 1980s by Robert Eichinger and Michael Lombardo from the Center for Creative Leadership (Pontefract, 2014). Eichinger and Lombardo constructed the 70-20-10 Model by interviewing senior executives to examine where they derived meaningful learning, development, and growth in their skills (Pontefract, 2014). The researchers reviewed how the executives managed or led from collecting the individual's' experiences and designed three aspects comprising the 70-20-10 Model. They categorized 70% of learning comes from on-the-job experience, 20% comes from learning from others, and 10% comes from formal training (Pontefract, 2014). Pontefract (2014) emphasizes the study was administered in the 1980s before corporations had access to the internet. So Eichinger and Lombardo were unable to capture newer methods of informal learning in their study such as online mediums that have transformed present day learning environments. Pontefract (2014) argues that the 70-20-10 Model did not offer concrete empirical evidence supporting the notion

that learning in the workplace happens per the 70-20-10 rule. He further explains Eichinger and Lombardo only interviewed executives who make up a small group of an organization's workforce.

Another framework that showcases informal learning is the 3-33 Pervasive Learning Model which suggests learning ensues in three equal parts (a) formal, (b) informal, and (c) social. According to Pontefract (2014) "the modes a leader should utilize to enhance the behaviors of connecting, participating, and collaborating" (Chapter 24, para. 3) transpire through pervasive learning. Further explanation of the 3-33 Pervasive Learning Model includes the below tactics:

- Thirty-three percent formal learning — eLearning, conferences, rotations, performance reviews, virtual classroom, forums, conferences
- Thirty-three percent informal learning — mentoring, shadowing, coaching, books, articles, websites, workshops, podcasts, webcasts, case studies
- Thirty-three percent social learning — wikis, user generated content, ratings, comments, blogs, videos, friending, videos, tagging, micro-blogging, discussions (Pontefract, 2014)

The Pervasive Model defines informal learning as an "opportunity without conventionalism that provides guidance, inspiration, expertise, or acumen in a non-formal environment" (Pontefract, 2014, Chapter 24, section 4, para. 3). In particular, informal learning through this framework allows leaders to play a role in the learning process of an organization through sharing short pieces of content with employees. This can relate to various subjects connected to the business or upcoming company changes.

## **Informal Learning in the Workplace**

A study conducted by Berg and Chyung (2008) investigated the relationship between informal learning engagement and learning organization characteristics such as personal factors like education, age, and gender. The researchers' used anonymous survey questionnaires sent through five professional listservs relating to L&D and attained a total of 125 volunteer participants. The findings revealed that differences associated with gender and educational level did not affect the informal learning engagement. However, the study concluded as an "employee's age increased, so did the degree of informal learning engagement" (Berg and Chyung, 2008, p. 238). The data collected highlighted that as age increased so did the informal learning activities related to searching the web and referencing professional journals and articles.

## **Informal Learning and Culture**

As most learning theories and practices used in the workplace originate from the United States and other Western societies Kim and McLean (2014) researched what affect differing cultural factors had on informal learning. They reviewed studies and generated a literature review analyzing national culture and the following five Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in relation to factors of informal learning (a) Power distance, (b) Collectivism/individualism, (c) Femininity/masculinity, (d) Uncertainty avoidance, and (e) Long-term/short-term orientation. Below are five of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions that Kim & McLean (2014) selected to compare when reviewing informal learning in organizational settings:

- Power distance — attitudes on feedback, involvement in knowledge sharing, self-directedness, and preference for learning source may be different by the degree of sensitivity in the relationship with people who have power
- Collectivism/individualism — collective prefer group activities to activities focused

- on individual values and goals compared with people from individualistic culture
- Femininity/masculinity — feminine individuals tend to care about social approval within the team, learning group, or organization, whereas, in masculine cultures, they are usually goal oriented and tend to emphasize learning outcomes
  - Uncertainty avoidance — individuals may show a different level of anxiety about the self-controlled learning environment
  - Long-term/short-term orientation — long-term motivations and goals for learning are generally for future success or change/short-term learning motives in present problems or imminent work performance rather than self-development (Kim & McLean, 2014, p. 51)

Further emphasized by the researchers was the importance of considering cultural perspectives when evaluating workplace settings and needs (Kim & McLean, 2014). Some of the findings suggest that “adult education and workplace learning professionals need to attend to cultural influences and efforts at indigenization when foreign theories or practices are adopted” (Kim & McLean, 2014, p. 39). The authors note that outcomes of informal learning in one culture may differ from those with varying cultural dimensions; individual variability is apparent so instances of different behaviors will be evident.

**Informal learning tools.** Bielaczyc and Collins describe, “the defining quality of a learning community is that there is a culture of learning in which everyone is involved in a collective effort of understanding” (Jonassen & Land, 2012, p. 16). The role in which sociological interactions play in learning environments is key for beginner students to attain expert knowledge. Poll Everywhere enables the learning process to move from just sharing content to reflecting upon what was learned in that situated environment.

Poll Everywhere is a web-based tool that supports real-time polling experiences which can be employed in a range of settings and different environments (Poll Everywhere, 2017). Online polling can be accessed through mobile devices instantly with the audience able to respond concurrently to live presentations. According to Poll Everywhere's website, almost 75% of Fortune 500 companies use Poll Everywhere as an engagement tool that is used for marketing presentations, training, and tradeshow events (Poll Everywhere, 2017). They also state that tens of thousands of educators around the world use Poll Everywhere in a various classrooms environments. This ranges from settings in elementary schools to lecture halls in higher education (Poll Everywhere, 2017).

Poll Everywhere uses humor and a unique language and terminology that introduce a distinct philosophy which is quickly apparent. The community of Poll Everywhere users connect on the official website and twitter. A certain culture that has supports educational initiatives and innovative ways to engage learners and audience participants has manifested. Various poll types include open-ended poll, the multiple choice poll, a poll that can use images instead of worded answers, the ability to import existing quizzes from Word, and a poll that can add mathematic equations (Poll Everywhere, 2017).

### **Formal Learning Environments and Cognitive Apprenticeship**

According to the 1987 report titled Cognitive Apprenticeship: Teaching the Craft of Reading, Writing, and Mathematics, written by Allan Collins, John Seely Brown, and Susan E. Newman, schools have been fairly effective in transferring sizable amounts of conceptual and factual knowledge, but have failed to place proper emphasis on “processes that experts engage in to use or acquire knowledge in carrying out complex or realistic tasks” (Collins et al., 1987, p. 2). Traditional apprenticeship methods which center on mastering skills in physical settings,



such as work creating products or building artifacts (i.e. tailoring and carpentry) have also found to be suitable in present learning environments. However, the concentration is now placed on cognitive and metacognitive facilities instead of physical skills and processes. Cognitive apprenticeship is meant to develop expert skills to deal with complex tasks.

The writers recognize that before the establishment of formal schooling, apprenticeships were how learning and knowledge was shared, allowing students to attain expert knowledge. The paper identifies that the specialization of learning in schools has disconnected the knowledge and information taught to students with real world application (Collins et al., 1987). Also highlighted in the article is the issue of procuring surface knowledge. This occurs when the learner becomes familiar only with problems and material referenced in textbooks and class presentations, but is unable to solve problems he/she has not previously encountered. Another downside of formal learning environments addressed in the report is the inability of students to develop their skills by not utilizing accessible resources. The authors suggest that a model of processes is needed to offer students with strategies and a set course of actions to improve their abilities (Collins et al., 1987).

The framework designed by Brown and his two colleagues took into account various learning theories and evaluated three success models when designing their proposed paradigm of cognitive apprenticeship. The authors' research targeted examples of students' forming thinking and problem solving skills in the areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. It was commonly found that all three methods briefly detailed in the following section used modelling, coaching, and fading to move the novice learner closer to the expert level.

### **Three Success Models.**

1. Reciprocal teaching of reading from Palinscar and Brown

“The basic method centers on modeling and coaching students in four strategic skills: formulating questions based on the text, summarizing the text, making predictions about what will come next, and clarifying difficulties with text” (Collins et al., 1987, p. 5-6).

2. Scardamalia and Bereiter’s procedural facilitation of writing

“This analysis provides the basis for a set of prompts that they call procedural facilitation, designed to reduce students’ information-processing burden” (Collins et al., 1987, p.

8). This method is aimed to accomplish complex tasks through limiting the number of problem-solving statements to choose from, along with providing a model which includes five processes with specific prompts to assist students in planning their writing assignments (Collins et al., 1987).

3. Schoenfeld’s method for teaching mathematical problem solving

“This method is based on a new analysis of the knowledge and processes required for expertise” (Collins et al., 1987, p. 10). Schoenfeld compiled a set of heuristic strategies taken from Polya’s problem-solving heuristics, as well as control strategies and productive beliefs (Collins et al., 1987).

**A framework of cognitive apprenticeship.** Based on the research from Collins, Brown and Newman the four dimensions that comprise any learning environment are (a) content, (b) method, (c) sequence, and (d) sociology. They detailed these four aspects relating to designing or assessing learning environments related to the studies on reading, writing, and mathematics.

**Content.** According to the authors there are four types of knowledge needed to achieve an expert proficiency in an area. This includes domain, problem solving strategies and heuristics, control strategies, and learning strategies. The four types of content can be divided

into explicit (strategic) or tactic knowledge. Domain content is based on conceptual, factual, and procedural knowledge. The report argues that the basis of domain knowledge used solely in educational learning is not an adequate mode to attain expertise in a field of study. To gain tacit knowledge the three strategies listed above (problem solving, control, and learning) are advocated (Collins et al., 1987).

**Method.** The authors developed six teaching methods of cognitive apprenticeship to be applied in learning environments, which are the following (a) modelling, (b) coaching, (c) scaffolding, (d) articulation, (e) reflection, and (f) exploration. These six techniques were grouped into three categories by the writers. Central to the theory of cognitive apprenticeship are modelling, coaching, and scaffolding, “designed to help students acquire an integrated set of cognitive and metacognitive skills through processes of observation and of guided and supported practice” (Collins et al., 1987, p. 16). Articulation and reflection are the subsequent methods explained to aid students in their observations of problem solving and conscious awareness and control of their problem solving strategies. Exploration is the last approach which supports the learner in performing processes desired for expert problem solving, as well as identify and frame problems to be solved (Collins et al., 1987).

**Sequencing apprenticeship by Lave.** Jean Lave’s (in preparation) examination of apprenticeship stressed the significance for modifying learning objectives based on the various stages of skill acquisition. This specifically correlated to the sequence and activity of each phase of learning. Three principles which were identified to direct the progression of expert problem solving skills as a part of the cognitive apprenticeship model are increasing complexity, increasing diversity, and teaching global before local skills. Following a sequencing pattern allows the learner to construct a theoretical framework before exploring the details of a skill

(Collins et al., 1987).

## **Chapter 2 Summary**

This review of literature provided a comprehensive overview of conflict, conflict models and transformative mediation practices. Chapter 2 also discussed how conflict between individual stakeholders is central to breaking continuous cycles of conflict (Furlough, 2005) and has the potential to prevent future clashes. Examining the underlying forces of conflict allows individuals and organizations to assess destructive motivators which cause barriers that can limit organizational performance, innovation, and efficiency (Bergiel et al., 2015; Jehn et al., 2005; Tjosvold, 1997; Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). As organizations have increasingly become denser with added tiers of hierarchy, creating change can be challenging in environments which have formed silos that work independently of one another instead of collaboratively (Kotter, 2012). Applying various learning approaches, open dialogue, and collaborative techniques allows individuals to proactively manage existing conflict, along with preventing impending struggles. Chapter 3 will offer a detailed account of the research design and methodology for this qualitative study exploring the best practices, strategies, and challenges of ADR practitioners when promoting conflict management competencies in organizations.

## Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

### Introduction

This is a qualitative research study that gathered the personal experiences of Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in relation to best practices associated with Conflict Management strategies used in organizations (Creswell, Hanson, Clark, & Morales, 2007). Within this chapter, the methods for data collection will be explained in detail, laying out the reasoning for choosing a phenomenological design for this study. Chapter 3 will also describe the processes for selecting human subjects for the study while adhering to the standards established by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Additionally, the process of deciding on the appropriate population and participation sample will be featured. In terms of the methodology and procedures for data collection, the techniques and protocols that have been employed to conduct the participant interviews will be listed. The processes for testing validity and reliability will be illustrated as well. Furthermore, the researcher's bias as an Alternative Dispute Resolution scholar will also be reflected in the chapter. In part, this section will encapsulate the data analysis activities administered in the study and recognize themes derived from the data collected (Creswell, 2014).

### Re-Statement of Research Questions

In this chapter the following are the central research questions that are core to the purpose of this phenomenological study:

- RQ1: What strategies and practices do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists employ to promote conflict management?
- RQ2: What challenges are faced by Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in implementing strategies and practices to promote conflict management?

- RQ3: How do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists measure the success of these strategies and practices to promote conflict management?
- RQ4: What recommendations do Alternative Dispute Resolution experts have for enhancing structures and networks to develop conflict management competencies?

### **Nature of the Study**

The qualitative approach chosen for this study was designed using a phenomenological framework to investigate the shared experiences of a selected group of leaders and experts in the field of Conflict Management (Polkinghorne, 1989). Qualitative research is a method that is commonly applied in the fields of social sciences and psychology and is an approach for investigating and grasping (Creswell et al., 2007; Giorgi, 1997) “the meaning individuals and groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). The forte of qualitative inquiry falls in the blending of the proposed research question, information collected, and analysis of the data gathered (Nuttall, Shankar, Beverland, & Hooper, 2011; Richards & Morse, 2013).

Several key distinctions construct this approach and offer a framework that adds rigor to the research (Conklin, 2007). Qualitative studies include an overall explanation of actions and viewpoints of a specific set of individuals using variables, theories, and assumptions that are guided by the researcher’s theoretical lens. In turn, these speculative principles befit both deductive and inductive processes of “building data to broad themes to a generalized model or theory” (Creswell, 2014, p. 65), resulting in differing end points. Thus, this would result in a transcribed research study or report that presented the accounts of the participants interviewed, the researcher’s reflexivity, a multifaceted description of the issue, and furthered the body of literature or sought a change for reform (Creswell, 2014). In some instances, qualitative research

does not apply overt theory, as it would in phenomenology, which seeks to understand the experiences of the participants being studied.

Agreement has been formed to establish several common characteristics in qualitative research. One component involves qualitative researchers conducting and gathering data in a natural setting (Andrade, 2009). This takes place when a researcher collects data at the location where the participants being studied encounter the problem researched. Carrying out in-person inquiry allows for the researcher to observe the participants in their actual environments and witness behaviors and actions otherwise not examined through instruments or artificial scenarios (Creswell, 2014). Another feature connected to this method is the researcher's position as the central instrument in the data collection procedures. The researcher acts as the primary channel for amassing information as s/he investigates material, examines literature, conducts interviews, and views behavior.

Qualitative research is indicative of requiring multiple sources of data that includes an array of information obtained to be interpreted, categorized, and grouped in themes that represent all the data sets (Creswell, 2014). A subsequent characteristic of qualitative research entails the practice of inductive and deductive data analysis that structures the research into themes. The inductive flow groups related themes and data, while the deductive process involves the researcher reviewing data to see if further evidence is required to back the established themes (Creswell et al., 2007). Another factor of qualitative research involves the researcher understanding the meanings that the participants have connected to the problem in order to exclude any meaning or bias that the researcher would offer the study.

There also exists the assumption that emergent design demonstrates how various phases of the research study might evolve and change from an original research plan once the data is

gathered. Modifications would include altering questions or substituting study participants (Creswell, 2014). Another consideration is reflexivity, which occurs throughout the research process. Reflexivity takes place when the researcher contemplates their role during the research activities. Through these periods of reflection, the researcher can recognize how their own personal perspectives, background, and experience can impact how they interpret the data collected and the themes they construct (Creswell, 2014). Finally, qualitative research assembles a representation of various perspectives that form a broad overview of the problem studied based on the information harvested (Creswell, 2014).

Qualitative research can be directed through any number of the following methods (a) grounded theory, (b) case study, (c) phenomenology, (d) narrative, and (e) ethnography (Creswell, 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Based on the subject area of study, one of the preceding research designs can be applied to explore the identified issue. Grounded theory is when a researcher focuses on theoretical processes, activities, or content centered on the viewpoints of the participants; grounded theory encompasses several levels of information gathering and revisions to themes (Creswell, 2014). A case study framework relates to the grounded theory design, although in a case study, the researcher collects specific data by employing a range of procedures to attain information that are limited by time and activity (Creswell, 2014). Narrative design integrates the views of the participants with those of the researcher's through storytelling (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2014; Riessman, 2008). Phenomenological design is similar to narrative studies with the focus on interviewing individuals; however, phenomenological design concentrates on the shared experiences of a core group of individuals (Creswell, 2014; Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). In an ethnography design, the researcher, through observations and interviews, investigates the attitudes and



behaviors of individuals or a unit within a distinct culture.

A key staple of qualitative research involves exploring a phenomenon that has not previously been studied in depth; thus, at the initiation of the study, the researcher lacks knowledge of the core variables that need to be investigated. Along with investigating new research on an understudied problem, qualitative research is also valuable when a particular sample group has not been tapped to be studied for a specific issue. Additionally, this approach can be utilized if certain theories do not correlate with a precise sample group (Creswell, 2014; Morse, 1991). Qualitative research gives the researcher more flexibility to work with additional research design models, along with offering a space that allows creative and innovative methods and procedures to be used. However, some researchers prefer to work with established parameters and structured procedures that are provided through a more conventional research approach generally found in quantitative studies (Creswell, 2014; Shah & Corley, 2006).

While qualitative research has numerous benefits depending on the subject area of study, the problem or issue identified, and the methods applied to enhance rigor of the research process there are some limitations. Some quantitatively-preferential researchers denounce qualitative research as lacking accuracy and thoroughness due to the small sample size, researcher's bias based on personal beliefs and views, and the unsystematic process that supports research that is subjective (Chowdhury, 2015). Furthermore, the methods of qualitative analysis use observations and interviews that retrieve personal knowledge and comprehension of the individual. This can expose disparities between what the participant describes, believes, and actually demonstrates through behaviors and actions (Deutsch, 1973). In addition, the act of observation during research can weaken the reliability of the data and in turn impact the validity of the study. This can be caused by the researcher's bias or attendance during the interview

process, which has the potential to influence the participants (Chowdhury, 2015). Lastly, Richards and Morse (2013) suggest that the effort and time the researcher spends on data gathering procedures (e.g. conducting interviews, transcriptions, and research analysis) possibly extends the time it takes to complete qualitative research comparative to quantitative studies (Chowdhury, 2015).

Chowdhury (2015) emphasizes that regardless of the fallbacks associated with qualitative research, there is a substantial amount of proof that supports the “authenticity, robustness, validity, and capacity” (p. 1138) of the approach. In this study, the data gathered from the lived experiences shared by Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists will commission the characteristics of qualitative research to examine how this group of participants promotes conflict management strategies and practices in organizational settings. The nature of this study will use a qualitative approach to build a framework to enhance conflict management standards and competencies within organizations.

## **Methodology**

The research method selected for this study is a phenomenological design. This method originated in the fields of psychology and philosophy (Giorgi, 1997; Moustakas, 1994) “in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals about a phenomenon as described by the participants” (Creswell, 2014, p. 13). Husserl founded this methodology that was influenced by a 20th century philosophical movement, called hermeneutical phenomenology (Richards & Morse, 2013). Richards and Morse (2013) explain the hermeneutical phenomenology from the vantage point of being a “descriptive, reflective, interpretive, and engaging mode of inquiry” (p. 67) that captures the essence of the experience from the subjects’ studied (Creswell et al., 2007). Conklin (2007) states that phenomenology is a complex

approach to comprehend complicated issues that apply interpretive inquiry to elicit academic insight. The ability to deduce using a thoughtful nature and an aptitude to message research relating to the human sciences through skilled prose is also a characteristic of phenomenology (van Manen, 1990). In relation to this study, a phenomenological design will be applied to determine how organizations can implement conflict management strategies and practices by understanding the experiences of leaders and specialists in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution.

**Structured process of phenomenology.** Eliciting the responses of a small group of participants' experiences who share a common phenomenon provides an explanation that the researcher can report on applying this method. Phenomenology emphasizes philosophical qualities and characteristically gathers data through interviews (Creswell, 2014; Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). This is in line with hermeneutical and transcendental features of phenomenology (van Manen, 1990).

**Appropriateness of phenomenology methodology.** This study was designed to identify the strategies and practices employed by Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders to enhance conflict management competencies. Furthermore, the study sought to identify what challenges these individuals encounter when implementing conflict management strategies and practices in organizational systems. Additionally, how success is measured.

### **Research Design**

Research designs, also referred to as strategies of inquiry, can be achieved using either a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed methods approach (Creswell, 2014; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). The intention of this qualitative study is to investigate and identify best practices and strategies that Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists utilize to promote conflict management

competencies to alleviate organizational conflict. The following details the various components needed to obtain data during the participant selection and interview process.

**Analysis unit.** The participant interviewed for the paper will be a leader and expert in the Alternative Dispute Resolution arena who has worked with organization(s) related to conflict management. The objective of the research study is to explore common standards and challenges Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists experience when implementing conflict management strategies to handle an array of disputes inside a professional environment. The characteristics identified for unit of analysis are as follows: (a) not gender specific; (b) can be a male or female between the ages of 30 to 75; (c) have experience in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution for at least three years in the private, public, or educational sectors; and (d) can have a minimum of a two-year gap not practicing in the Alternative Dispute Resolution field.

**Sample size.** The sample size for the study consisted of 15 participants who met the criteria outlined in the unit analysis section. Creswell (2014) explains that the average number of participants for qualitative research ranges from two to thirty human subjects dependent on the research design selected for the study. The standard for phenomenology is typically between three to ten participants (Creswell, 2014). In previous writings, Creswell supported that the count should be from five to twenty-five, while Morse (1994) stated that a minimum of six participants would suffice. A saturation point is what regulates the number of participants engaged in a qualitative study (Richards & Morse, 2013). Generally, saturation is reached when the researcher no longer extracts new information based on the small sample size (Chowdhury, 2015; Creswell et al., 2007; Creswell, 2014). For the purposes of this phenomenological study, there was 15 participants interviewed who met the unit analysis criteria through methods of purposeful sampling.

**Participant selection.** A key characteristic of qualitative research is the selection process of the participants (or sites) for the study (Richards & Morse, 2013). This selection process is purposive sampling. The process entails choosing the most appropriate examples connected to the researched phenomenon. Miles and Huberman (1994) detailed four factors that may need to be determined during data collection procedures. These factors include the researched setting, participant, activities observed, and the process undertaken by the individuals studied within the environment (Creswell, 2014). The intent of this study was to recruit human subjects that exemplify the traits required to participate in the study, as well as the participants' contribution resulting from their expertise, time, and acknowledged relevance to the phenomenon (Richards & Morse, 2013).

**Sampling frame to create a master list.** Establishing the sampling frame for this study was initiated by adhering to the following steps:

- An initial list was created by the principal researcher using three public websites. The first website was the 15th annual Online Dispute Resolution Conference webpage. This website publishes the names and a brief professional biography of each of the speakers and presenters of the 2016 conference. The second website reviewed was the Southern Methodist University's Center of Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management. A list of the names and biographies of scholars and practitioners associated with the Center is publicly available on the website. The third website was Mediate.com, which is an online directory of Alternative Dispute Resolution practitioners that includes the names, contact information, and expertise of the professionals listed. Additionally, the principal researcher searched for participants on LinkedIn groups relevant to Alternative Dispute Resolution professionals.

- If further participants were needed, then the researcher applied the snowball sampling technique. This practice recruits potential participants that meet the criteria of inclusion through recommendations from the human subjects already participating in the study (Richards & Morse, 2013). Based off this information the researcher constructed a preliminary sample list.
- The researcher conducted a public search of the individuals added to the preliminary sample list to obtain an email address utilizing public websites such as LinkedIn, businesses, or educational institutions. Once an email address was acquired a recruitment script was sent to the persons recorded on the initial sample list.
- The sample list was saved as an excel spreadsheet. To protect the document a password was created to access the electronic file and saved on the researcher's personal computer. The electronic file was backed up on a USB drive that is locked in a desk drawer of the researcher to protect the identity of potential participants and promote confidentiality and safekeeping standards.
- The sample for this study was determined by utilizing inclusion and exclusion criteria to produce a final list of 25 possible human subjects to be interviewed. The participants were identified by using the unit of analysis criteria.
- To narrow the sample size to 15 participants, inclusion and exclusion criteria were followed. Then the criterion for maximum variation was employed.
- Ten alternate participants were selected if for any reason (e.g. scheduling differences or geography) the initial 15 participants could not participate in the study.

**Criteria of inclusion.** The inclusion criteria are comprised of the following directives:

- Not gender specific; can be a male or female between the ages of 30 to 75.

- Have experience in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution for at least three years in the private, public, or educational sectors.
- A minimum of a two-year gap not practicing in the Alternative Dispute Resolution field is acceptable.
- Referred to the researcher by other Alternative Dispute Resolution experts.
- Offers consent to be recorded.

**Criteria of exclusion.** The exclusion criteria consist of the subsequent items:

- Individual does not sign or agree with the terms of the informed consent form.
- Participant must be available to be interviewed within a 30-day window from when the data collection process begins.
- If the participant is not within geographic proximity which prohibits the interview.
- If the participant is not available for in person interview.
- Referred to the researcher by other Alternative Dispute Resolution experts.
- Individual does not confirm that he/she meets the criteria of inclusion requirements.

**Purposive sampling maximum variation.** The study demonstrates the ensuing criteria for maximum variation. In the instance, if criteria for inclusion and exclusion had been applied and there are more than 20 participants the principal researcher would have utilized the criteria for maximum variation. This includes the following:

- The study was available to individuals from either gender or persons of any ethnic, racial, or religious background.
- Participants can reside in and outside of the United States.

## **Human Subject Consideration**

To protect the human subjects that participate in this study, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines and protocols were observed. The reason IRB committees exist at educational institutions like colleges and universities are to meet “federal regulations that provide protection against human rights violations” (Creswell, 2014, p. 95). The IRB mandates that the researcher evaluate the possible risk participants may encounter by being involved in the study. Factors that should be considered are psychological and physical in nature. Further elements that need to be taken into account are social, economic, and potential damage carried out in a legal setting (Sieber, 1998). In addition, the researcher is responsible to consider groups and populations that are disadvantaged and/ or susceptible to being exploited. A few examples of these members of society are the disabled (mentally and physically), adolescents, pregnant women and their fetuses, the incarcerated, and individuals who have been victimized (Creswell, 2014). After concluding that there is minimal risk to the human subjects involved, and meeting all other requirements of the Pepperdine Institutional Review Board (IRB), the primary researcher completed and submitted an exempt application for review. Included with the IRB application was the informed consent form (Appendix A) and recruitment script (Appendix B). When the committee approved the IRB application, the researcher began the recruitment procedures to attain study participants.

Possible risks that the participants might have experienced from their involvement in this study include feeling uncomfortable with the set research questions or follow up inquiry, lack of interest or boredom, and fatigue from sitting for a long period. Potential societal benefits may consist of practical applications derived from this research study, which would support a framework to improve learning initiatives focused on advancing Conflict Management



proficiencies in organizations. Organizations and institutions experiencing transition, going through a transformation, or facing challenges can benefit from leveraging innovative ways to reduce or prevent conflict among stakeholders.

Participants who agreed to partake in the research study were given an informed consent form, along with information related to (a) the purpose of the study, (b) Pepperdine University's IRB protocol, and (c) a copy of the interview questions. Confidentiality of participants was maintained during the research process. To minimize risk and protect the identity of participants, pseudonyms will be used when reporting the results. To further ensure confidentiality, no other specific identifying information was reported in the study such as organization and client names. The researcher will only know the identity of the human subjects. The information collected and analyzed (e.g. recorded interviews, transcriptions, notes, and coding sheet) will only be available to the researcher and secured on a USB drive as described in previous sections for three years. Paper files and notes were destroyed immediately after the study was concluded. Participation in the study is voluntary and the participants had the right to request to be removed from the study at any time. The reported findings will be available for the participants to review after the study has been completed.

After the sample list was identified and the researcher received IRB approval to conduct the study, the official data collection process commenced. Using the master sample list created from the 15th annual Online Dispute Resolution Conference website, the researcher utilized contact information found publicly via online mediums like LinkedIn and other internet sites to reach out to individuals. The recruitment script was shared with persons on the original sample list through email or phone conversations to inform individuals of the purpose of the research and to grasp their interest and fit for the study. Additionally, individual consent forms were

emailed to the potential participants also explaining the purpose of the study, and detailing how confidentiality of names and data will be managed to protect the identity of the human subjects, along with describing how information will be gathered and stored (Richards & Morse, 2013). After participants were recruited and consent had been given, interviews were scheduled based on the participants' availability. Consent forms were emailed or mailed back to the researcher before interviews took place. Participation in the study was voluntary and the human subjects were able to discontinue the interview at any time and opt out of the study for any reason (Richards & Morse, 2013).

### **Interview Techniques**

Letiche (2006) describes phenomenology as comprising of procedural techniques of inquiry and references the four steps to social investigation which explains a framework to understanding the relationship between the researcher and the subject. Semi-structured interview questions were used to explore the phenomenon of the 15 participants that meet the sampling criterion. Twelve open-ended questions were asked, with an opportunity to ask direct follow-up questions. Interviews were conducted face-to-face, using video conferencing and via phone calls. Through interviews and a review of literature, the researcher was able to “discover the structures, logic, and interrelationships that are contained in the phenomenon under investigation” (Conklin, 2007, p. 277). All recorded (written, audio, and video) information given by the participants was stored in secured locations. The ensuing list outlines interview techniques recommended and used in participant interviews (Madjidi, 2016):

- Prepare follow up questions
- Allow for a space that fosters open dialogue
- Adhere to interview procedures and previously validated questions

- Do not interrupt or share viewpoints and opinions
- Do not ask leading questions
- Demonstrate active listening
- Stay unbiased
- Understand that disruptions may take place or feelings may be expressed during the interview
- Refrain from showing emotional demonstrations, or expressing agreement or opposition
- Keep focused during the interview and remain on task

### **Interview Protocol**

The following section will explain the process the researcher underwent to develop the series of interview questions that were used in this study grounded on review of literature and knowledge and experience of the researcher. A three-step process will outline how the researcher established validity and reliability through prima-facie, peer review, and expert review.

**Relationship between research and interview questions.** The literature referenced in the study was leveraged to construct interview questions that directly correspond to the core research questions. From the four main research questions 12 subsequent interview questions were developed with each research question having two to four interviews questions focusing on the research inquiry. The objective of the researcher was to have questions that were designed to be open-ended and categorized in methodical sequence and sensibly formed “to cover the ground required” (Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 127). This semi-structuring strategy is effective when the researcher has a span of familiarity with the subject matter being studied. The risk is to not allow the structuring of questions to limit the quality of information or meaningful data relevant

to the research to be overlooked. Effort to craft semi-structured questions to prompt responses that would broaden the topic through open discussion is important to optimize the interview experience. Introducing and stating questions in a manner that encourages answers that are rich and comprehensive should be taken into account by the researcher (Richards & Morse, 2013).

**Validity and reliability of the study.** Creswell (2014) acknowledges the variance between validity and reliability in qualitative methods versus a quantitative approach (Kuckartz, 2014). The explanation for qualitative validity centers on “checks for accuracy in the findings” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201) through adhering to set protocols, while qualitative reliability is demonstrated by exhibiting uniformity comparative to other researchers and projects. The aspects of validity and reliability in qualitative studies are reflected in the procedures of purposive sampling, data collection, and research analysis (Chowdhury, 2015; Shah & Corley, 2006). According to Richards and Morse (2013) there are two guidelines that need to be followed to ensure validity and reliability measures are met. One is to concentrate on the appropriateness of the questions, information gathered, and methodology. The second tenet is the ability of the researcher to account for each phase of the research process to build credibility in the study and trustworthiness of the results (Conklin, 2007; Richards & Morse, 2013).

**Prima facie validity.** The initial step of validity was assessed via prima facie (by means of the researcher) in which the central research questions were paired with comparable interview questions in a table format. The initial ten interview questions are listed below to the corresponding research question. The process of content validity was administered by the review of literature, peer review, and expert review. In addition, a pilot study was facilitated to test the content validity with a participant that matches the inclusion criteria. The goal is to test if the questions are clearly stated, comprehended, and if questions needed to be added or

removed. Another factor assessed was determining if the amount of time allotted to complete the interview was sufficient. Based on the pilot test no revisions to the amount of time scheduled for the interviews were made.

Table 1

*Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions*

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Corresponding Interview Questions</b>
RQ1: What strategies and practices do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists employ to promote conflict management?	IQ 1: What planning process did you engage in? IQ 2: How did you get various constituencies involved in the planning process? IQ 3: How did you overcome resistance or opposition to your plan?
RQ2: What challenges are faced by Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in implementing strategies and practices to promote conflict management?	IQ 4: What challenges did you face in the planning phase of the implementation? IQ 5: Did anything unexpected happen that you had not planned for?
RQ3: How do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists measure the success of these strategies and practices to promote conflict management?	IQ 6: How do you define and measure your success for your intervention? IQ 7: What final outcome were you willing to settle for? IQ 8: How did you measure and track your success?
RQ4: What recommendations do Alternative Dispute Resolution experts have for enhancing structures and networks to develop conflict management competencies?	IQ 9: How do organizational networks and structures prevent and/or create conflict? IQ 10: What are some the lessons learned? What are some things you would have like to know?

*Peer review validity.* The succeeding step embodies the peer review process through allowing others to evaluate the validity of the research and interview questions for the purpose of

this study. The researcher requested two doctoral students from Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology Organizational Leadership Program to peer-review the initial list of interview questions. The peer reviewers received an electronic communication providing a template with the instructions detailing the peer review procedures regarding the interviews questions as they relate to the research questions. A copy of the research questions and the original interview questions (see Table 1) were also sent to the peer reviewers. The objective for the peer reviewers was to reflect on the stated interview questions and determine the following:

- Indicate if the interview question was relevant to study by selecting "Keep as stated."
- Indicate if the interview question did not pertain to study by selecting "Delete it."
- Indicate if the interview question needed modification and submit a suggestion of how the interview question should modified.
- The reviewer was requested to recommend additional interview questions if they thought further inquiry was needed.

Once the reviewing process was completed by the peer reviewer, the updated template was emailed back to the researcher. The reviewers were able to reach consensus on the suggested revisions so there was no need to seek expert review during this review step. The following describes the specifics from the peer review process:

- IQ3, IQ4, and IQ8 was recommended by both peer reviewers to "Keep as stated."
- IQ1 was suggested by one reviewer to make modifications while the other reviewer selected to "Keep as stated." It was recommended to add language to the question to emphasize the subject area being researched. IQ1 was revised to "What planning process

did you engage in to promote conflict management?”

- IQ2 was suggested by one reviewer to make modifications while the other reviewer selected to “Keep as stated.” It was recommended to add language to the question to emphasize the subject area being researched. IQ2 was revised to “How did you get various constituencies involved in the planning process to promote conflict management?”
- IQ5 was suggested by both reviewers to make modifications to the question. It was recommended to add language from one reviewer. It was also suggested to add an additional probing question by the second reviewer. After discussion, it was decided to update the question with the additional language and combine the probing question to the edited question. IQ5 was revised to “Did any unexpected challenges happen that you had not planned for and if so how did you deal with the unexpected challenge?”
- IQ6 was suggested by one reviewer to make modifications while the other reviewer selected to “Keep as stated.” It was recommended to add language to the question to emphasize the subject area being researched. IQ6 was revised to “How do you define and measure your success for your conflict management interventions?”
- IQ7 was suggested by one reviewer to make modifications while the other reviewer selected to “Keep as stated.” It was recommended to add language to the question to emphasize the subject area being researched. After deliberation, it was decided not to use the modifications suggested but to revise IQ7 as follows to elicit the appropriate responses from the participants: “What final outcome were you willing to settle for when trying to implement your plan?”
- IQ9 was recommended by both reviewers to revise language. After discussion, it was

decided to keep IQ9 as stated, but to create an additional interview question that was suggested by one of the reviewers. The new question is listed as IQ10 and is stated as “What recommendations can you share to enhance organizational networks and structures to develop conflict management strategies?”

- IQ10 was suggested by one reviewer to make modifications while the other reviewer selected to “Keep as stated.” After discussion it was decided to separate the two interview questions stated under IQ10. The language of the questions remained the same but are indicated as the following, IQ11: “What are some the lessons learned?” and IQ12: “What are some things you would have like to know?”

**Expert review validity.** The third step in the validity process was accomplished through receiving expert counsel regarding the interview protocol. The researcher commissioned assistance from her dissertation panel, comprised of the dissertation chair and two committee members throughout the review process. The review procedures encompassed the expert panel overseeing the design and development of the research questions and the corresponding interview questions to ensure that prima facie validity and the peer review validity methods were applied. This was an iterative review process that allowed for multiple reviews to support the validity and reliability of the interview protocol. Based on the consultation and guidance given by the expert panel 12 semi-structured interview questions were finalized and captured in a comparative grid (See Table 2.0).



Table 2

*Research Questions and Corresponding Interview Questions (revised)*

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Corresponding Interview Questions</b>
RQ1: What strategies and practices do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists employ to promote conflict management?	IQ 1: What planning process did you engage in to promote conflict management? IQ 2: How did you get various constituencies involved in the planning process to promote conflict management? IQ 3: How did you overcome resistance or opposition to your plan?
RQ2: What challenges are faced by Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in implementing strategies and practices to promote conflict management?	IQ 4: What challenges did you face in the planning phase of the implementation? IQ 5: Did any unexpected challenges happen that you had not planned for and if so how did you deal with the unexpected challenge?
RQ3: How do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists measure the success of these strategies and practices to promote conflict management?	IQ 6: How do you define and measure your success for your conflict management interventions? IQ 7: What final outcome were you willing to settle for when trying to implement your plan? IQ 8: How did you measure and track your success?
RQ4: What recommendations do Alternative Dispute Resolution experts have for enhancing structures and networks to develop conflict management competencies?	IQ 9: How do organizational networks and structures prevent and/or create conflict? IQ 10: What recommendations can you share to enhance organizational networks and structures to develop conflict management strategies? IQ 11: What are some the lessons learned? IQ12: What are some things you would have like to know?

**Statement of Limitations and Personal Bias**

The paradigm of qualitative research assigns the fundamental instrument of data collection to the researcher (Creswell, 2014). In essence, this relationship between the researcher

and the research study will not be void of biases, and the obligation to discover personal beliefs, values, and biases should occur at the launch of the study. In regards to this study, there is a propensity the researcher's biases exist in subsequent respects. The study was espoused from the researcher's professional background, education, and personal experiences. The researcher holds a Master's degree in Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management, was a volunteer mediator, and participated in and spoke at conflict management engagements. Furthermore, the researcher has held positions in large organizations related to Human Resources, Organizational Development, and People Management, all areas related to incorporating conflict management practices. Based on the preceding aspects conveyed, it is the researcher's resolve to examine the experiences, knowledge, and practical applications that Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists use to promote conflict management practices in organizations. As such, the researcher acknowledges that personal biases may be apparent during the research process. The researcher intends to use the plan described below to restrict personal bias at the various phases of data collection and analysis.

**Epoche and bracketing.** According to Van Manen (1990), research commences from the experiences of the researcher (Richards & Morse, 2013). Understanding the concept of epoche and the utilization of bracketing will be key to managing researcher biases in this study. Such biases are formulated through personal experiences that arise from education, profession, and acquired understanding (Richards & Morse, 2013). To alleviate this occurrence, Giorgi (1997) refers to the practice of bracketing collective knowledge obtained prior to the study that is associated to the issue or phenomenon being examined. This is to encourage the receipt of information through a fresh perspective and to view the data as it was intended. Recommended activities to permit self-reflection and awareness are journaling and transcribing memos so the

researcher can consider probable preconceptions and judgments (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Data Analysis**

The phenomenological design varies compared to other scientific methods in that it places focus on attaining descriptions chronicling experiences related to the problem explored through reflection (Richards & Morse, 2013). Giorgi (1997) offers the following five-step process to analyze data (a) gather spoken data, (b) decipher the data through review, (c) segment data into specific groups, (d) apply organization and explanation according to subject matter, and (e) translate synthesized findings into a report for the academic community. By incorporating the “processes of reflection, writing and rewriting, and thematic analysis” (Richards & Morse, 2013, p. 201) the researcher can deliver data analysis that entails the essence of the participants’ experiences through textual descriptions (Creswell, 2014).

Understanding and applying coding techniques is an integral part to the data analysis phase supporting emergent concepts (Charmaz, 2006). There are three logical coding steps utilized when grouping and categorizing data to be analyzed and interpreted which are open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Creswell, 2014; Richards & Morse, 2013). Open coding aids the researcher to develop initial theories in a flexible manner based on data. Axial coding is a sophisticated coding process that follows the open coding step, linking categories through connections (Kuckartz, 2014). Selective coding is a set process that focuses on a central category and methodically that attaches all other groupings to the principal category (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For the purposes of this study, the open coding procedure will be used to examine various conceptual codes according to the data, along with in-vivo codes based on descriptions from the participants (Kuckartz, 2014).

**Reading, memoing.** During the analysis process, the researcher read and reviewed the

data from the transcripts multiple times to reflect on the perspective of the participants and to warrant that an authentic understanding was realized. Insights, inquiry, and notes were inscribed on each transcript to assist in generating themes and support the emergence of new concepts and themes (Richards & Morse, 2013). The next section outlines aspects to the coding process.

**Describing, classifying, interpreting (coding).**

- Bracketed segments of texts from the transcripts;
- Identified recurrent themes and labeled them based on the review of literature or through in-vivo coding;
- Five to seven themes were constructed and this original set of groupings were documented in an electronic codebook (Creswell, 2014);
- Once data was interpreted, the researcher evaluated the findings against the review of literature to compare variances as well as existing gaps in research to be investigated in future studies.

**Representing, visualizing.** In this stage of the analysis, the researcher introduced connections derived from the textual accounts shared from the participants. Creswell (2014) states the basic concept of putting ideas on paper is essential when sorting through information. Creating a visual map laid out data collected and aided in constructing themes.

**Interrater reliability and validity.** The concepts of inter-rater reliability and external validity are essential components in the research process. External validity is when the results from a study can be replicated in research conducted by others. To improve external validity, the researcher implemented a four step process to establish inter-rater reliability.

- Step One: The initial step was to code the first three transcribed interviews. The principal researcher transcribed the audio recorded interviews unaided. After completing the first

three transcriptions themes that appeared to be substantial were categorized into groupings. This was completed through the process of reading and memoing the data collected from the interviews. This practice was done multiple times to ensure the data was thoroughly reviewed (Creswell, 2014).

- Step Two: The following step was to have a peer review committee consisting of two Pepperdine University's doctoral students from the Organizational Leadership program to be co-raters. The peer review committee involved has experience in qualitative research methods and an understanding of the theoretical design of the study. The co-raters received the initial three transcripts and the themes to examine the coding results for the first three interviews. If the co-raters subscribed to the coding procedures and the validity of the results, then no changes were made. If agreement did not occur on the validity of the coding procedures and outcomes, then the principal researcher and co-raters discussed the disparate views to reach an appropriate solution related to the coding review process. Although, if consensus was not achieved the dissertation committee would need to intervene to determine the ideal approach.
- Step Three: Applying the established protocol from Step Two all 15 interview transcripts used the same coding scheme agreed to by the principal researcher, peer review committee, and dissertation committee. The peer review committee was then asked to review the coding procedures and protocol to determine common themes that appear in the transcribed data. The principal researcher followed the same process to compare both results to ensure validity and accuracy of the data analysis. After the coding review was completed the co-raters were requested to delete and destroy files related to the data collected for this study.

- Step Four: Finally, the last step of the data analysis process is representing and visualizing the data gathered. The data was interpreted and translated into visual charts and graphs to support the validity of study and rigorous design of the study (Creswell, 2014). The participants were provided copies of the data analysis, interview transcriptions, and recorded interviews. After the participants reviewed and approved the data collected and the represented analysis the results were included in the findings of this study.

### **Chapter 3 Summary**

A qualitative study was chosen to study my central research question as this approach often strives for a deep, contextual “emotional understanding of people’s motivations and desires” (Nuttall et al., 2011, p. 153). A phenomenological approach is a “design of inquiry coming from philosophy and psychology in which the researcher describes the lived experiences of individuals” (Creswell, 2014, p. 13) that allows participants to describe a phenomenon. Chapter 3 detailed the qualitative methods, measures, and analysis procedures for this phenomenological study. Specifically outlined was the selection process of the human subjects through purposive sampling, creating an inclusion and exclusion criteria inventory, and the participant recruitment and consent steps (per IRB protocol). Also described was the data collection methods implemented to conduct interviews using semi-structured questions. Additionally, an explanation was provided stating the potential biases the researcher may have related to the phenomenon being studied and the measures taken employing epoche and bracketing techniques to mitigate the possibility of personal biases. Lastly, the process of data analysis was illustrated guiding how the data was coded and the methods of inter-rater reliability employed. Accordingly, Chapter 4 will report on the findings gathered from the

leaders and specialists interviewed in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution to understand what strategies and practices they have used to promote conflict management skills.

## Chapter 4: Findings

Organizations are living systems that are prone to conflict, however the methods and systems entities use to manage disputes, grievances, and dysfunction differ based on the issues companies encounter and the direction of leadership (Lipsky et al., 2003). As organizational structures flatten, technology is increasingly leveraged to communicate information (Branden, 2011). Groups designed into matrix and cross-functional teams have transformed the dynamics of workplace conflict (Robbins & Judge, 2015). Consequently, organizational conflict has a tendency to manifest into negative occurrences reflected through inefficiencies, unproductivity, lack of engagement, and miscommunication (Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). Conflict, is traditionally viewed through a negative lens versus looked as an opportunity to come up with solutions, encourage innovation, or introduce positive change.

The intent of this study was to determine how organizational structures and networks enhance conflict management competencies. This purpose was achieved by understanding what strategies and practices Alternative Dispute Resolution leaders and specialists used to promote conflict management skills. The study further sought to identify what challenges these individuals encountered when implementing conflict management strategies and practices in organizational systems, and how success was measured. The ensuing research questions were developed to examine the purpose of the study:

- RQ1: What strategies and practices do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists employ to promote conflict management?
- RQ2: What challenges are faced by Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in implementing strategies and practices to promote conflict management?
- RQ3: How do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists measure the success of these



strategies and practices to promote conflict management?

- RQ4: What recommendations do Alternative Dispute Resolution experts have for enhancing structures and networks to develop conflict management competencies?

The following 12 semi-structured interview questions were crafted to further explore the four research questions shown above. The interview questions were asked to 15 Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders to gather information on their lived experiences relevant to the research questions. A validation process including two interrater reviewers and three expert reviewers examined, assisted, and finalized the 12 open-ended interview questions provided to the participants. The interview questions for the study are listed below:

- IQ 1: What planning process did you engage in to promote conflict management?
- IQ 2: How did you get various constituencies involved in the planning process to promote conflict management?
- IQ 3: How did you overcome resistance or opposition to your plan?
- IQ 4: What challenges did you face in the planning phase of the implementation?
- IQ 5: Did any unexpected challenges happen that you had not planned for and if so how did you deal with the unexpected challenge?
- IQ 6: How do you define and measure your success for your conflict management interventions?
- IQ 7: What final outcome were you willing to settle for when trying to implement your plan?
- IQ 8: How did you measure and track your success?
- IQ 9: How do organizational networks and structures prevent and/or create conflict?
- IQ 10: What recommendations can you share to enhance organizational networks and

structures to develop conflict management strategies?

- IQ 11: What are some lessons learned?
- IQ12: What are some things you would have liked to know?

The human subjects who agreed to participate in the research study have a minimum of three years of experience in the field of Alternate Dispute Resolution working with organizations and educational institutions. Resulting from the participants' interviews the researcher was able to obtain insight from their expertise in the area of Conflict Management in relation to their lived experiences as Alternative Dispute Resolutions specialists. This chapter will detail the themes that transpired from the participant interviews. Additionally, the preceding sections will showcase the participant profiles, a review of the data collection process, the analysis derived from the 15 semi-structured interviews, and the findings produced from the examined study.

### **Participants**

The following criteria needed to be met to be eligible to participate in this study. Through purposeful sampling employing a phenomenological methodology design, fifteen human subjects were selected to participate in the research. Additional considerations were evaluated in the selection process such as knowledge and expertise levels, availability of time, willingness to contribute, and the variety of roles held within the Conflict Management field. Individuals who matched the unit of analysis criteria described below were chosen to participate:

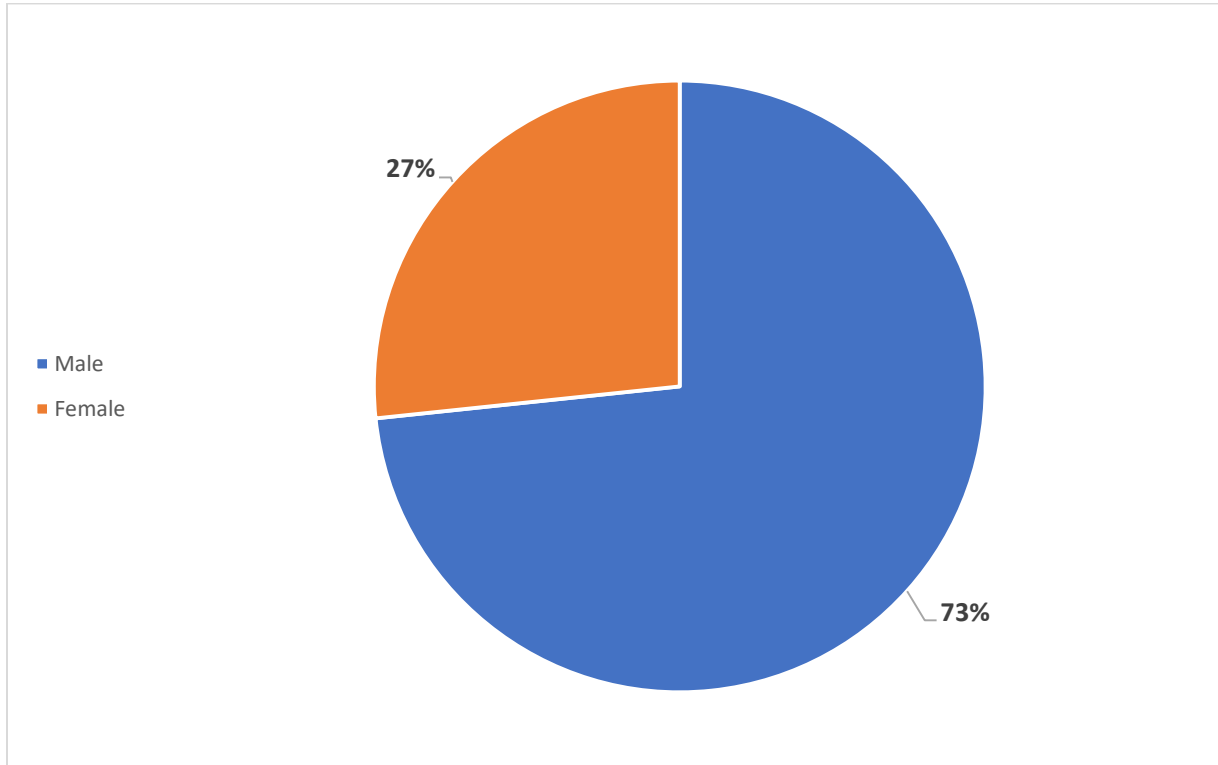
- Be between the ages of 30 to 75;
- Have experience in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution for at least three years in the private, public, or educational sectors;
- Can have a minimum of a two-year gap not practicing in the Alternative Dispute Resolution field;

- Offer consent for the interview to be audio recorded.

The recruitment of human subjects that exemplified the traits, expertise, time, and acknowledged relevance to the phenomenon required to participate in the study began with creating a master list, and thereafter, developing a sample list. The following four sources were utilized to create an initial master list (a) the 15th annual Online Dispute Resolution Conference webpage, (b) Southern Methodist University's Center of Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management website, (c) Mediate.com, and (d) LinkedIn groups relevant to Alternative Dispute Resolution professionals. In addition, the principal researcher applied the technique of snowballing to solicit further participants. Using the inclusion and exclusion criteria espoused in Chapter 3, an original master list of 24 individuals was generated. From there an initial email was sent to the 24 potential participants through either LinkedIn or a direct email message using a public email address. An additional seven potential participants were added to the master list and contacted through the snowballing method.

A total of 31 people were contacted and requested to participate, however, 17 individuals agreed to participate and be interviewed for the study. One individual was not interviewed due to availability so 16 individuals were actually interviewed with one person serving as an alternate if someone chose to be removed from the study at a later time. The alternate interviewer's information will be stored in a secure location and the data protection and privacy guidelines outlined in Chapter 3 will apply to this individual. Ultimately, the 15 participants selected to remain in the study have held various conflict management positions and performed in multiple conflict management roles like Consultant, Trainer, Mediator, Coach, Human Resource Leader, Professor, and Lawyer. The charts below highlight the gender demographics and professional expertise of the 15 participants.

**Gender.** The participants who contributed in the study involved 11 males (73%) and four females (26%). The following graph depicts the demographic data based on gender of the Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists who participated in Figure 1.



*Figure 1.* Participant gender demographic data.

**Participant expertise in conflict management.** Fourteen out of the 15 participants had expertise working as a consultant within organizations related to conflict management. The 15 participants who chose to contribute to the study have held multiple conflict management roles such as Consultant, Trainer, Mediator, Coach, Human Resource Leader, Professor, and Lawyer. The participants have worked in a wide range of industries supporting conflict management interventions but data was not collected related to the type of industry (See Figure 2).

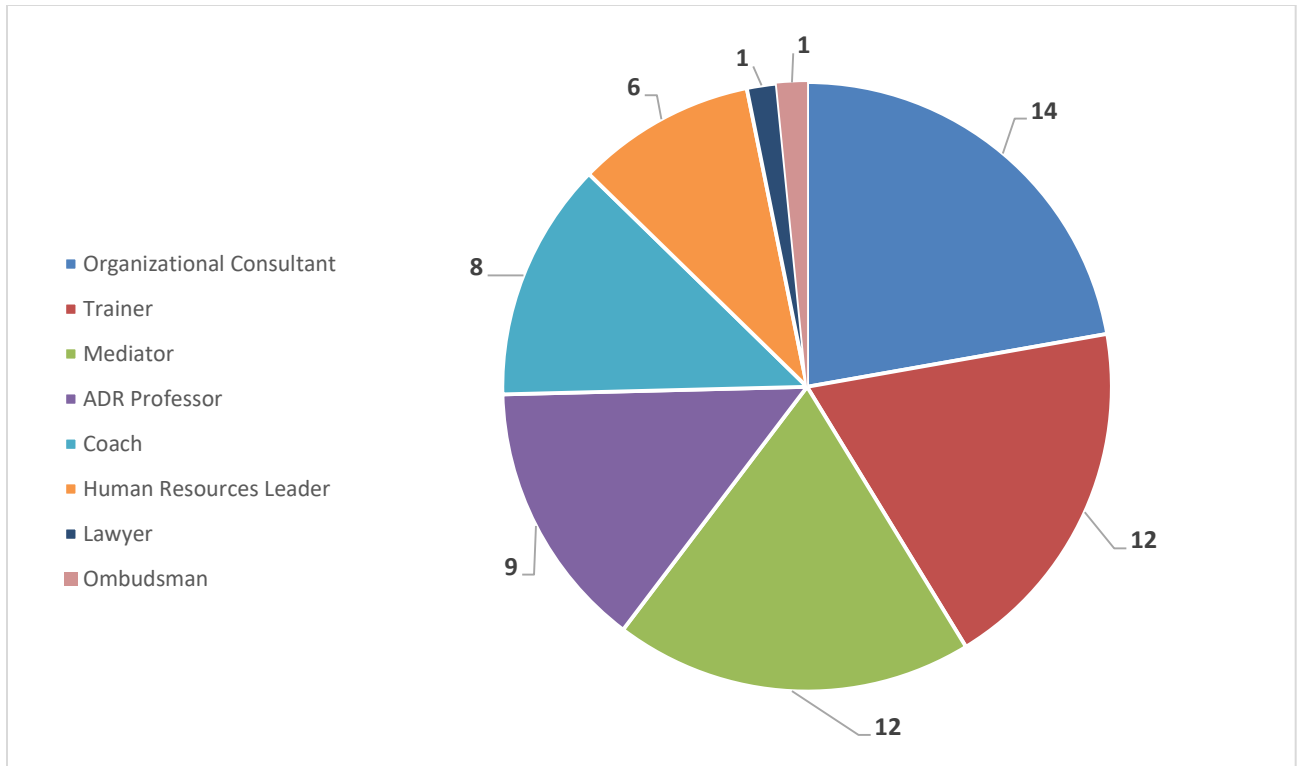


Figure 2. Participant expertise in conflict management by position title.

### Data Collection

Purposeful sampling was applied in the participant selection process. Data was collected from the 15 Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders during the semi-structured interviews that were scheduled between the dates of May 26, 2017 to June 19, 2017. A formal email was sent to the potential participants informing them of the purpose of the study and the criteria necessary to be involved in the study. The Informed Consent Form and interview questions were also included in the email. If the participant met the criteria and agreed to be interviewed for the research study, then the researcher responded requesting several dates and times that were convenient to meet based on their schedule. Participants recommended which communication method would work best for them (a) Skype, (b) Zoom, or (c) phone.

Before the interviews took place the participants were asked (a) to submit the signed consent form prior to interview, (b) to give a verbal consent, (c) if they understood the purpose

of the study and had any questions, and (d) if they had any additional inquiries. All 15 participants were notified when the audio recording started and ended. The longest interview was 94 minutes and the shortest interview was approximately 33 minutes. Two devices were used to record the interviews and notes were taken by the researcher in a notebook. The audio files and notes were securely stored during the transcription process and the digital audio files were erased after the final defense.

Table 3

*Participant Interview Dates, Interview Method, Length of Recorded Interview*

Participant	Interview Date	Interview Method	Length of Recorded Interview (minutes:seconds)
P1	May 26, 2017	Skype	45:09
P2	May 26, 2017	Phone	56:48
P3	May 28, 2017	Zoom	103:27
P4	May 30, 2017	Phone	41:41
P5	June 1, 2017	Phone	35:55
P6	June 2, 2017	Skype	134:07
P7	June 5, 2017	Phone	56:28
P8	June 6, 2017	Phone	47:40
P9	June 7, 2017	Phone	110:48
P10	June 8, 2017	Phone	112:10
P11	June 9, 2017	Phone	41:23
P12	June 12, 2017	Phone	112:31
P13	June 16, 2017	Phone	103:36
P14	June 19, 2017	Phone	40:55
P15	June 19, 2017	Phone	32:55

## Data Analysis

The data analysis in this qualitative study was designed to ensure that a rigorous process was followed while exploring the lived experiences of Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists to address the research questions. Themes emerged through the analysis process based on the data gathered from the participants' shared experiences, knowledge and expertise, and anecdotal lessons they learned relevant to the subject researched. After the semi-structured interviews were completed the initial step was to transcribe each audio recording into 15 separate Microsoft

Word documents. An excel spreadsheet was created to organize the interview questions and categorize the themes based on the participant responses. The spreadsheet contained 12 tabs, with each tab listing one interview question and the corresponding responses that were shared by each participant. Pseudonyms were used to protect the privacy of the participants. During the interview the researcher notated the participants' answers which were later added to the coding spreadsheet. Participant responses were color-coded based on similar groupings and themes. These coded categories were tracked based on the frequency of participants with common themes. Three or more participants needed to share corresponding responses for the theme to be pertinent and significant. Prior to finalizing the groupings and themes the investigator followed this sequence of events: (a) read the transcripts three times while underlining significant text, quotes, and themes in the 15 transcripts, (b) bracketed segments of narrative text with written notes in margins of the transcripts and in the researcher's notebook, and (c) the researcher reflected back to the literature to substantiate the original themes that were coded.

To advocate external validity a multi-step process was followed applying interrater reliability methods. Two doctoral candidates proficient in qualitative research and analysis reviewed the initial coding outcomes for the interviews. The raters reviewed the themes and corresponding responses then made suggestions on renaming specific themes, identifying possible subthemes, or re-categorizing themes into one overarching theme. Throughout this interrater review no personal or identifiable participant information was shared with the raters.

The coding recommendations and final changes are detailed below:

- IQ1: The number of themes was reduced from eight to five; Data Gathering, Organizational Assessment, and Conflict Audit were combined into *Strategic Conflict*

*Management Planning*; Updated Outreach and Engagement to include Conflict Management Training and updated the theme to *Outreach and Education*

- IQ2: The number of themes was reduced from 7 to 4; Combined Communicate Value of the Intervention and Build Trust with *Consensus Building*; Merged Active Listening with *Engage Stakeholders in the Process*
- IQ3: The number of themes was reduced from 6 to 4; Merged Framing Conversations Positively with *Listen and Facilitate Positive Discussions*; Removed Get Commitment
- IQ4: The number of themes was reduced from 6 to 3; Removed Mistrust as a theme; Combined Lack of Leadership Commitment into *Lack of Stakeholder Engagement*; Merged Competing Priorities with *Resource Constraints*
- IQ5: Renamed Be Reflective and Flexible to *Be Agile*
- IQ6: The number of themes was reduced from 6 to 5; Merged Capacity Building with *Sustainability of Conflict Management Intervention*
- IQ7: The number of themes was reduced from 4 to 3; Combined Willing to Walk Away with *Discuss Core Issue*
- IQ8: The number of themes was reduced from 5 to 3; Merged the two following themes, Engagement in the Process and Satisfied with Outcome with Feedback on Process. Then the theme was renamed as *Feedback on Process and Outcomes*.
- IQ9: Changed the theme Communication to *Communication Practices*; Renamed the theme Organization and Team Structure to *Organizational Structure and Policy*
- IQ10: The number of themes was reduced from 5 to 3. Combined Enhance Communication Channels, Self-reflection, and Modeling Behavior with *Create a*



*Problem-solving Culture*. Added two new themes titled *Foster Internal and External Networks* and *Have a Conflict Management System*

- IQ11: The number of themes was reduced from 4 to 3. Added one new theme labeled *Conflict Management Specialist Competencies* and combined this with Be Open and Flexible, and Manage Expectations
- IQ12: The number of themes was reduced from 4 to 3. Merged the theme Know the Subcultures of the Organization with *Understand Organizational Dynamics*

### **Data Display**

The following sections will feature the data and findings from the core research questions and the subsequent interview questions based on the participants' responses. Each interview question will have further explanation of the themes that were developed from the transcribed interviews. A summary of the participants' statements, direct quotes, and phrases given during the interview will also be included. Bar graphs are shown for each theme, which displays the frequency participants shared answers that related to the indicated coded theme. From the 12 interviews questions 46 themes emerged and will be displayed in the following written units. To protect the privacy of the human subjects and to continue the significance of anonymity the participants will be referred to as P1, P2, P3, etc. throughout the analysis.

### **Research Question 1**

**Research question 1.** The following research question was asked, "What strategies and practices do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists employ to promote conflict management?" This research question comprised the following interview questions to enlist responses from the 15 participants involved in the study:

- IQ 1: What planning process did you engage in to promote conflict management?

- IQ 2: How did you get various constituencies involved in the planning process to promote conflict management?
- IQ 3: How did you overcome resistance or opposition to your plan?

**Interview question 1.** What planning process did you engage in to promote conflict management? According to the responses recorded from the participants related to the “strategies and practices” Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders employed five themes to promote Conflict Management. Themes that were indicated by the participants include (a) Strategic Conflict Management Planning, (b) Convening and Inquiry, (c) Design Solutions, (d) Gain Trust and Rapport, and (e) Outreach and Education (See Figure 3)

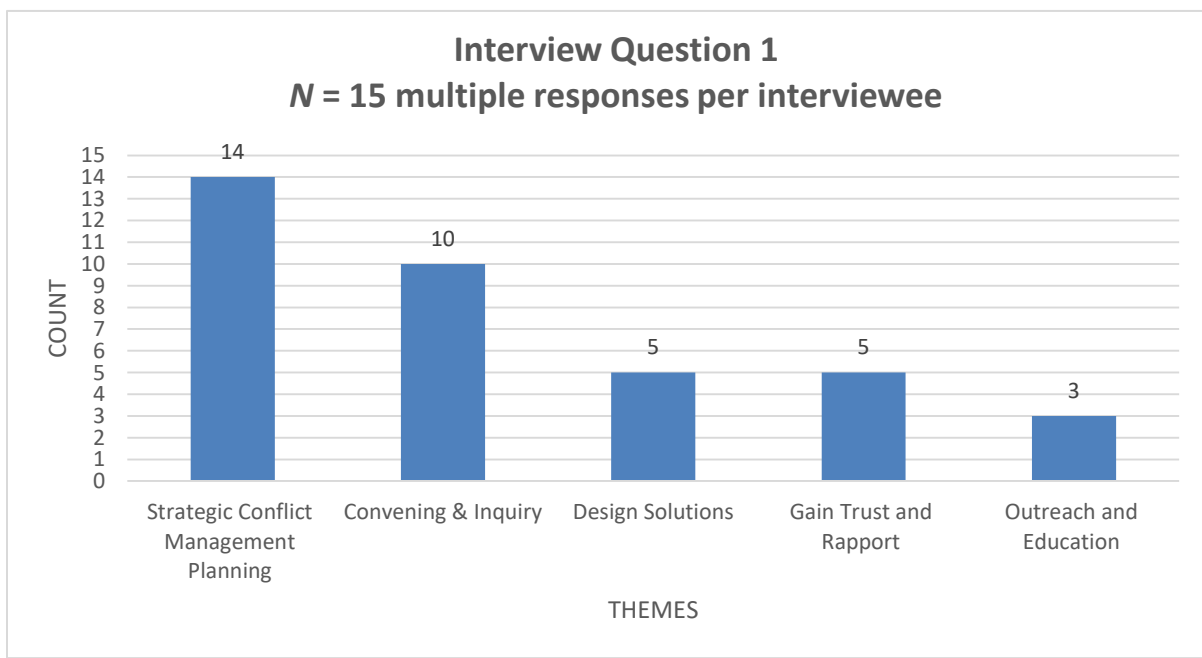


Figure 3. IQ 1: Themes that developed on strategies and practices in planning process.

**Strategic conflict management planning.** Fourteen out of 15 participants (93.3%) indicated that the planning process was vital when trying to understand the problem and make an assessment of the conflict intervention. Various elements were determined by the participants as key to the strategic conflict management planning. Below are the different phases the

participants emphasized in the planning process when leading or facilitating a conflict management intervention:

- Administer research, observe interactions in the organization and examine existing processes (P3, P8, P11, P12)
- Understand organization's mission, culture, and identify who are the participants involved (P1, P2, P3, P9)
- Define problem statement/issue, conduct a conflict assessment, or use a diagnostic profile to determine team strengths and issues (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P12, P13, P15)
- Preparation through gathering documentation, collecting data via anonymous surveys and other metrics (P1, P2, P3, P5, P8, P14)
- Loop back with leadership and discuss next steps based on assessment and feedback collected (P4, P7)
- Establish a framework design using structural documents and charters (P1)
- Determine organization's desired outcome/goals (P2)
- Perform a conflict audit (P7, P13)

Two of the participants highlighted the significance of conducting a conflict audit to emphasize the impact that conflict has to an organization's bottom line, productivity, and employee engagement. The following quote from P7 offers a brief explanation of the reasoning for a conflict audit to occur.

have a conflict audit at the beginning of the systems design process, which is designed to put some numbers together and to say, how much is this costing you? How much is conflict costing this organization? Built into the process is an understanding that conflict is costly and that conflict management means it can produce huge reductions in those

costs (P7, personal communication, June 5, 2017).

*Convening and inquiry.* Ten participants used convening and inquiry in their planning process. Focus/discussion groups and one-on-one interviews were a standard practice with an emphasis on a sampling from various parts of the organization. The following breaks out the theme in further detail:

- Conduct interviews and have informal and formal one-on-one meetings (P2, P3, P4, P5, P9, P14)
- Facilitate focus groups (P3, P5, P9, P12)
- Reflect a wide range of stakeholders and leaders (P1, P13)
- Act as a coach when needed (P2, P14)
- Consensus building (P7) and framing questions in a positive approach and using methods such as appreciative inquiry, positive deviance, world café, and tools like visual explorer (P9)

As participants discussed the planning process a focus on collecting data through interviews, using focus groups, and conducting individual formal and informal meetings with stakeholders and leaders was determined an important phase of the method and was stressed by the majority of participants. P7 stated:

Conduct interviews and those interviews need to be across the organization, horizontally and vertically, so that there are people on the top levels of management and people at the very bottom of the organization. People who are in various departments throughout the organization, and the one hard and fast rule of this is never leave out the secretaries and receptionists because they know more about what's going on than almost anybody. (P7, personal communication, June 5, 2017)

*Design solutions.* Five participants engaged in solution design in the planning process (P4, P7, P8, P13, and P15). After the initial research, assessment, and interviews occur then these five individuals develop future recommendations. The importance of including leadership when creating solutions was highlighted by P4. Designing potential resolutions or outcomes from leadership allows them to be engaged in the process while taking more ownership in achieving the results. P8 noted the following:

I'll do as much initial research. Usually what I'll try to do is, narrow it down to a problem statement or what are you trying to solve for really, even before I take the engagement. Then once I've got that I'll do some research on my own using social media and news articles, things like that. Getting some data from the client on what's going on internally, whether it's quantitative or qualitative, and come up with a recommended approach.

Then ultimately specific solutions to put into place. (P8, personal communication, June 6, 2017)

*Gain trust and rapport.* Five participants seek to gain trust and rapport and believe it to be a necessary component in the conflict management process (P3, P4, P5, P9, and P12). Organizational change needs buy-in at all levels to have long term sustainability. Gaining trust from the individuals and departments within the organization helps with engagement and credibility of the process. Building trust with people is vital, however, having individuals trust the processes and system being implemented is also pertinent. P5 stated that “one of the things that I try to do in the planning process is to find out what would the system have to look like for people to trust it and come to it with their conflicts.”

The emphasis to gain trust and rapport early on was echoed among various participants. P9 expressed this by sharing, “don't wait until an issue arises to create partnerships and

relationships” (P9, personal communication, June 7, 2017). Also, rapport building can happen by having a genuine interest in people. During one of the interviews, P12 cited, “I’m fascinated by content, by people's stories, by the psychology of each individual. It actually fascinates me” (P12, personal communication, June 12, 2017). This participant further explained that through a technique referred to as dynamic listening, the participant engages the parties involved in conflict by actively listening to their narratives to build a rapport.

*Outreach and education.* There were three participants who suggested that outreach and education should be included in the conflict management planning process (P1, P10, and P12) based on the intervention and needs of the organization. Conflict management training and learning (in-person, classroom, or online) was brought up by all three participants as a means for individuals to have a basic awareness of what is conflict management. By offering conflict management training throughout the organization the aversion or avoidance to conflict may be reduced (P10). Several outreach activities were used to communicate and share information on the conflict management initiatives or programs. For example, P1 presented at brown bags, spoke at department meetings, visited different offices to meet with people, and utilized intranet sites to distribute materials and documents.

*Interview question 2.* How did you get various constituencies involved in the planning process to promote conflict management? Based on the data collected from the Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders four themes were comprised. Common themes that were determined by the participants include: Engage Stakeholders in the Process, Consensus Building, Buy-in from Leadership and Stakeholders, and Diversity and Inclusion (See Figure 4).

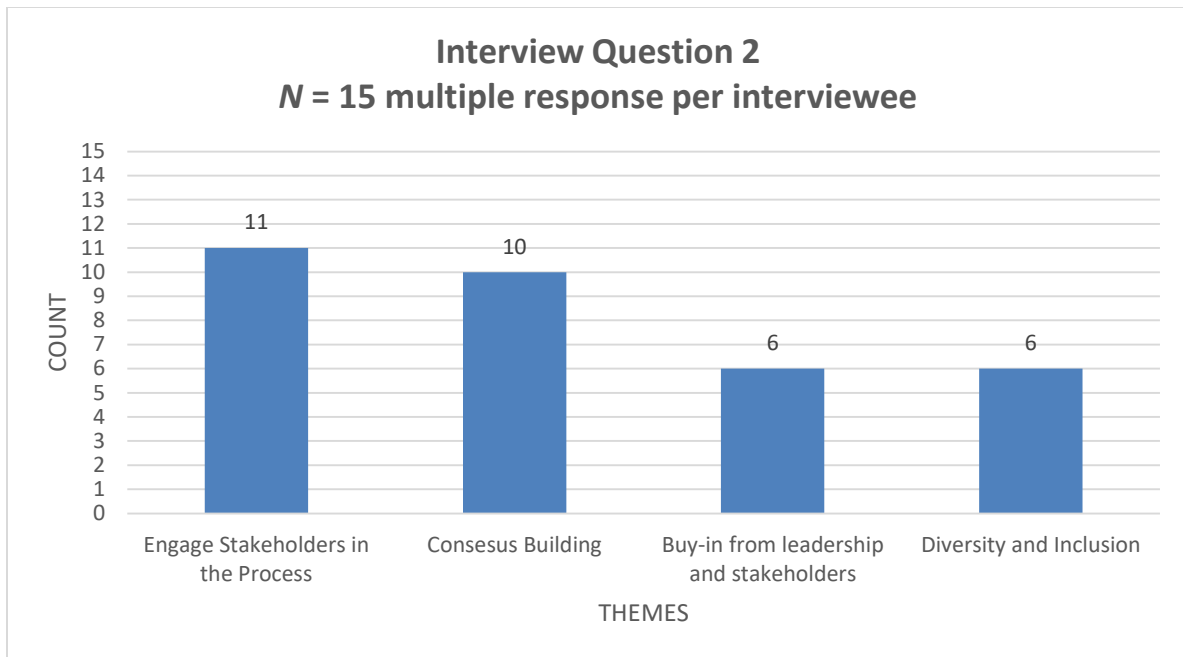


Figure 4. IQ 2: Themes on involving various constituents.

*Engage stakeholders in the process.* Eleven of 15 (73.3%) emphasized the importance of engaging stakeholders in the process for conflict management interventions to be successful. The response of P5 highlighted the following on the engagement process, “get agreement on the process that we’re going to use as a team to work through issues and to put issues on the table, to discuss them, and to seek resolution” (P5, personal communication, June 1, 2017). Maintaining the level of engagement of the constituents throughout the process was underscored by multiple participants (P3, P4, P5, P6, P9, and P13). Obtaining a process that everyone agrees to (P5), providing updates throughout the process (P6), and getting people involved and having them develop solutions (P4) are central aspects of engagement.

Typically, there is a mutual interest among stakeholders when promoting conflict management practices. The Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists who participated in the study expressed how they attempted to get the stakeholders to understand the value of being involved and engaged in the process (P3, P8, and P10). Additionally, P3 discussed the notion of

getting the constituencies invested through being aware of the mutual benefits. For example, creating a conflict environment that is low stress since having some amount of healthy or positive conflict can be productive. The value of engagement was noted by P10 as, “helping stakeholders understand that the sooner and the more productive ways that we can solve problems, the sooner that we can kind of operationalize and monetize the idea that was the original intent” (P10, personal communication, June 8, 2017).

Active listening was another approach to encourage engagement. According to P2, listening is the first step of engagement. Stakeholders can provide the necessary insight into plausible solutions, hindrances, or concerns. Hearing from the various perspectives is part of the process to keep individuals involved. In their interview, P14 expressed the value of “listening to people who have this narrative and bringing those various narratives forward” (P14, personal communication, June 19, 2017). At times comments were made for the need to coach constituents through the process if specific skills were lacking or the discussion faced a roadblock (P12).

*Consensus building.* Ten participants mentioned building consensus early in the conflict management process by sitting down together to facilitate dialogue about the conflict issue (P2, P3, P9, P12, and P14) and to come to understanding about the problem (P4 and P7). In this environment P10 noted that this is a way individuals can figure out how to handle the issue together. This can be especially helpful when the problem may not be clear or it may be complex in nature. P10 points out the benefits of consensus building below:

Often the argument that I will use is it's far more efficient and more productive to do it this way because if you encourage honest, respectful conversations about the things that are bothering you, and you do it quickly, and effectively and compassionately, you can



solve the problem far more rapidly than if you're sidestepping and trying to avoid the issue. (P10, personal communication, June 8, 2017)

Gaining consensus is important because it allows for a feedback loop that encourages stakeholders to be vested in the development and implementation of the solution. Two of the participants build consensus on the decision-making process by asking the group to agree collectively how they want to handle how decisions are determined (P5 and P15).

*Buy-in from leadership and stakeholders.* Six participants seek to gain buy-in from leadership and stakeholders as part of their planning process. Although getting buy-in and commitment from all the stakeholders and persons participating is important, having leadership's support and backing is crucial (P1, P3, P4, P6, P7 and P9). P3 indicated that, "you have to get upper management/leadership to first of all buy into the idea... and secondarily you have to get them invested in it in some way" (P3, personal communication, May 28, 2017). Furthermore, the ability to build trust by respecting the privacy of information shared confidentially and keeping the identity of people anonymous also advances the commitment of others (P3).

*Diversity and inclusion.* Six participants referenced the need for having diversity in the planning process to promote conflict management strategies. P1 stated the importance of having "diversity of people in buy-in process" (P1, personal communication, May 26, 2017) so identify stakeholders in various roles, levels, cultures, different viewpoints, gender, etc. The responses from the participants referenced the following to encourage diversity and inclusion in the planning process: be inclusive and identify who should be partaking in the process (P2 and P8), include people with authority (P7), and invite those persons internally leading the project or initiative (P6). One participant alluded to the idea that diversity represents people who have varied experiences and should be included in group meetings and discussions (P9).

**Interview question 3.** How did you overcome resistance or opposition to your plan?

Input from the Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders constructed four themes.

Common themes that were determined by the participants include: Listen and Facilitate Positive Discussions, Identify the Resistance, Communicate Value, and Legitimize the Process (See Figure 5).

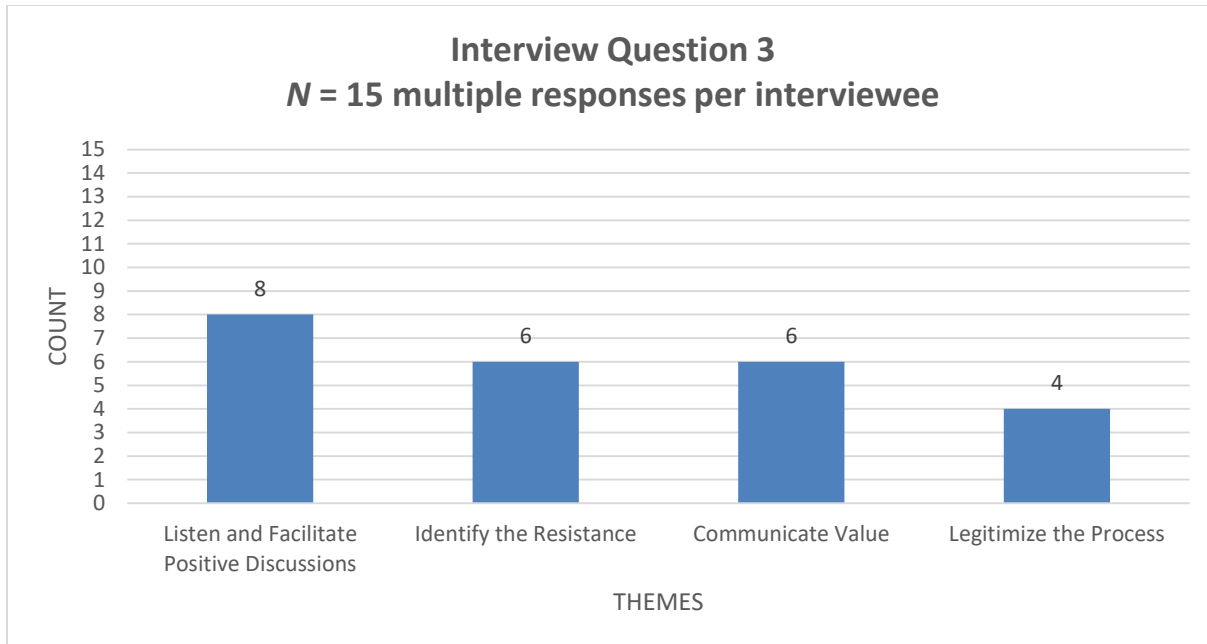


Figure 5. IQ 3: Themes on overcoming resistance or opposition.

*Listen and facilitate positive discussions.* Eight out of the 15 (53.3%) participants indicated that listening and having positive dialogue is a common method to overcome resistance. The following offers how the participants actively approached conversations in positive manner (P2, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, and P12).

- Change the perspective of the conflict so avoidance of the conflict is decreased (P10)
- Employ coaching techniques (P9 and P12), use non-scholarly language (P9), and have one-on-one conversations or break-out sessions to discuss hidden resistance (P2, P6, and P12)

- Reframe the opposition or resistance in a positive or neutral way (P4) through framing questions in positive way (P2) to get to the root of the issue
- Focus on the areas that you have found common ground and agreement on and capture it, then begin examining the parts that you do not have agreement on (P5)

A participant explained that at times you need to manage your way into the conflict by incorporating conflict management techniques such as, "...active listening, collaborative negotiation, and figuring out what people's interests are and helping to satisfy those interests" (P7, personal communication, June 5, 2017).

*Identify the resistance.* The subsequent theme from this interview question found six out of 15 participants who acknowledged that identifying the resistance or opposition is central in the planning process to overcome barriers (P1, P3, P4, P6, P8, and P13). There were several ways participants managed resistance. P1 stated that understanding the power dynamics is one tactic to identify resistance, as people with authority or in leadership can present themselves as barriers during implementation. Secondly, once the resistance is known, the identified person or entity causing the resistance can be removed from that part of the process (P3). At a later phase introduce them back into the process to show that progress has been made. Third, be prepared to ask questions to understand what people are having trouble with, "sometimes it is the organizational design or the budget" (P6, personal communication, June 2, 2017).

*Communicate value.* Six out of fifteen participants referenced the significance of communicating the value of the conflict management intervention to overcome resistance (P1, P3, P7, P8, and P11). The ability to communicate the value of the conflict management intervention was referred to by P1, P3, and P8. Providing some examples of how it will benefit others was mentioned by P3. Another participant brought up the value of reaching consensus

(P7). By demonstrating that agreement occurred can be an indication that advancements are happening, so the role of the interventionist is to emphasize the progress and underline the value of the process. Furthermore, evaluating and reporting data can also assist with overcoming resistance. P11 noted with their experience, “Resistance was essentially overcome through data, because the data showed that this pilot program ... was highly successful in ways that really mattered to the senior management” (P11, personal communication, June 9, 2017).

*Legitimize the process.* Lastly, four of the 15 participants indicated that through legitimizing the process resistance can be overcome in certain instances (P5, P7, P14, and P15). The planning process is typically chosen, agreed upon, or designed by the stakeholders for the conflict management intervention. It is extremely important to the success and execution of the intervention that the process employed is supported and followed by the constituents. To legitimize and build confidence in the process there were several suggestions from the participants. A priority is to let the members know that anonymity and confidentiality will be respected if information is offered that the individuals do not want revealed due to fear of retaliation (P14). P15 advised to, “Explain the risks and contextualize it” (P15, personal communication, June 19, 2017), so individuals understand and feel more comfortable with the process. Establishing and underscoring ground rules at the onset of facilitation will also strengthen legitimacy (P5) of the process since protocol and guidelines will be clear at the initial phases of the planning process.

**Research question 1 summary.** Research question one inquired, “What strategies and practices do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists employ to promote conflict management?” The subsequent interview questions were asked:

- IQ 1: What planning process did you engage in to promote conflict management?

- IQ 2: How did you get various constituencies involved in the planning process to promote conflict management?
- IQ 3: How did you overcome resistance or opposition to your plan?

These interview questions uncovered strategies and practices used by the participants. The top themes that developed were Strategic Conflict Management Planning, Engage Stakeholders in the Process, Convening and Inquiry, and Consensus Building. Strategic Conflict Management Planning was referenced the most as a practice crucial in the planning phase of a conflict management intervention. The response rate of 93.3% was the highest among all three interview questions for research question one. Steps taken to assess and research the conflict issue were repeatedly discussed by many of the participants. Identifying the problem statement early on in the engagement process was emphasized as well. Employing strategies that engaged key constituents and meeting with leaders, teams, and stakeholder groups were also relevant to the Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists planning process. Getting leadership and decision-makers buy-in for the conflict management invention was brought up throughout research question one and again in research question two as a potential challenge they faced. Overall thirteen themes emerged for research question one and are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4

*Summary of Themes for Research Question 1*

IQ1. Planning Process to Promote Conflict Management	IQ2. Involving Constituencies in the Planning Process	IQ3. Overcoming Resistance and Opposition
Strategic Conflict Management Planning	Engage Stakeholders in the Process	Listen and Facilitate Positive Discussions
Convening and Inquiry	Consensus Building	Identify the Resistance
Design Solutions	Buy-in from Leadership and Stakeholders	Communicate Value
Gain Trust and Rapport	Diversity and Inclusion	Legitimize the Process
Outreach and Education		

**Research Question 2**

**Research question 2.** The following research question was asked, “What challenges are faced by Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in implementing strategies and practices to promote conflict management?” This research question comprised the below interview questions to enlist responses from the 15 participants involved in the study:

- IQ 4: What challenges did you face in the planning phase of the implementation?
- IQ 5: Did any unexpected challenges happen that you had not planned for and if so how did you deal with the unexpected challenge?

**Interview question 4.** What challenges did you face in the planning phase of the implementation? The Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders interviewed provided insight into challenges they had not planned for implementing Conflict Management strategies and practices. Three themes that were determined by the participants include: Lack of Stakeholder Engagement, Resistance and Opposition, and Resource Constraints (See Figure 6).

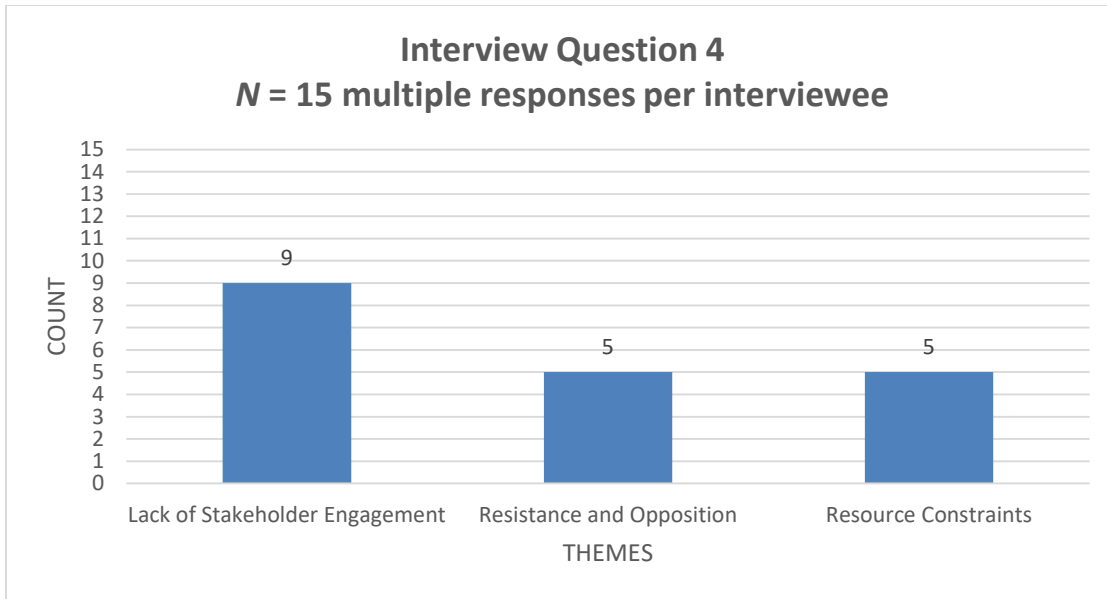


Figure 6. IQ 4: Themes on challenges during the implementation phase.

*Lack of stakeholder engagement.* Based on the responses, nine out of 15 (60%) participants shared that lack of stakeholder engagement proved to be a challenge during the implementation phase (P1, P3, P5, P6, P7, P10, P12, P13, and P14). The lack of leadership buy-in (P3, P5, P7, P10, P12, P13, and P14), leadership not providing the resources needed (P3), and stakeholders not meeting timelines (P6) were mentioned in various responses from the participants. P5 stated that one technique to ensure engagement is obtained is to make clear the significance of it.

I have to sell this to the senior sponsor, team leader, project manager, or whomever. I have to sell this person on the rationale for why I want to spend more time talking to people, building a rapport, building trust, gathering data upfront ... they simply say, “We know what the issues are, and we want to jump into them.” And my answer is, “You may jump into them, you may run down the field with the flag, but no one will follow.” (P5, personal communication, June 1, 2017)

Effectively communicating the objectives of the conflict management intervention also has proven to be a challenge (P1). One of the participants declared the following on the importance of stakeholder engagement:

It's getting people to decide that it's important to them, and amid all of the different things. So I've often argued that the most effective leaders in an organization are those that have the ability to focus on the things that truly matter to the business. (P10, personal communication, June 8, 2017)

The stakeholders need to have an understanding that the phases on the conflict management intervention will be work and to expect delays, challenges, and incremental progress (P7). P5 and P7 both placed emphasis on having a senior sponsor or champion closely involved throughout the process. Additionally, lack of engagement can be due to logistics, such as different office locations and time zones of the stakeholders (P1).

*Resistance and opposition.* Five of the 15 participants expressed that they encountered resistance and opposition to the conflict management plan being implemented (P2, P4, P5, P8, and P11). Several participants discussed how they encountered resistance and opposition during the implementation of their intervention. Low sense of trust, negativity, and historical aspects creating resistance were all brought up (P2 and P4). Individuals showed these behaviors by questioning if the process and systems designed would be successful (P10). Other actions demonstrating resistance and opposition are people not adhering to ground rules. P5 commented on such instances:

So, if you're a team member and you're one of 10 people that I spent three hours brainstorming solutions with, and at the end the manager turns around and says, "Well, all this is fine. But, here's what we're actually going to do." The manager negates



everything we've said, then all trust is destroyed. (P5, personal communication, June 1, 2017)

*Resource constraints.* Lastly, five of the 15 participants shared that resource constraints showed to be a challenge at the time of implementation (P2, P6, P9, P10, and P13). The commitment of time, money, and other resources was repeatedly introduced as an obstacle by these participants. Stakeholders have limited time and typically are managing multiple priorities so getting them to dedicate time during the implementation phase can be challenging. Secondly, attaining the funds needed for implementation was mentioned as a potential roadblock.

**Interview question 5.** Did any unexpected challenges happen that you had not planned for and if so how did you deal with the unexpected challenge? Five themes were developed from the 15 interviews from the Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders. Shared themes determined by the participants' responses include: Be Agile, Positive Communication, Recombitment to the process, Identify the Potential Challenges, and Modeling (See Figure 7).

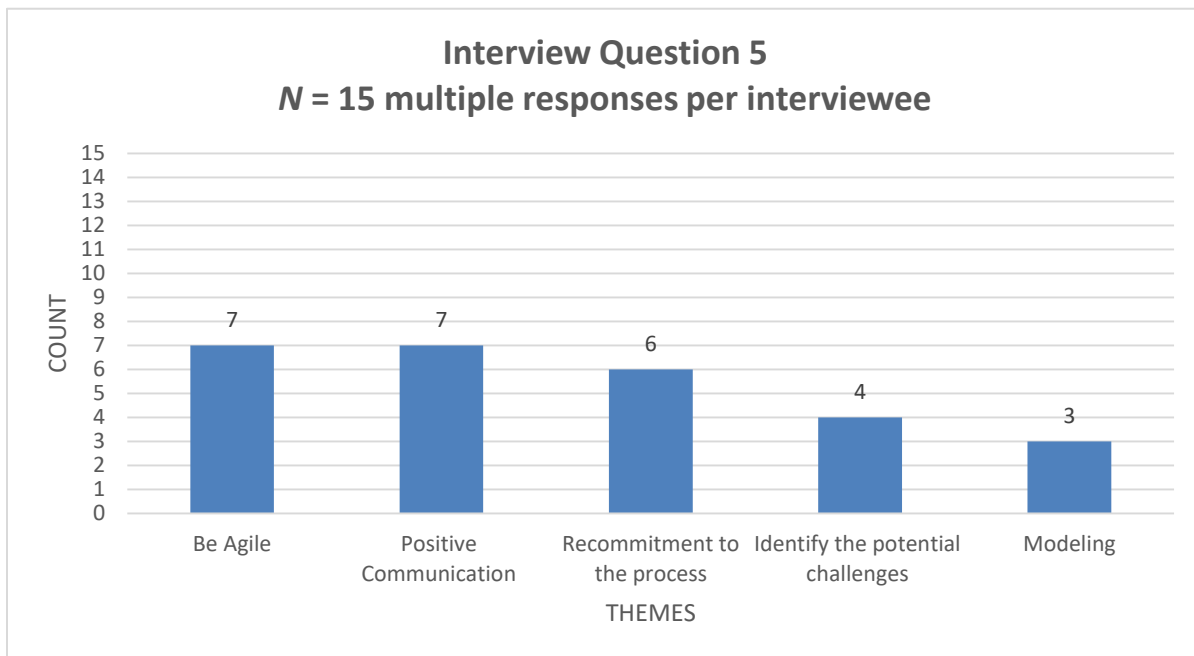


Figure 7. IQ 5: Themes on dealing with unexpected challenges.

*Be agile.* This theme emerged with seven of the 15 (46.7%) participants agreeing that being agile is essential when dealing with unexpected challenges (P1, P2, P5, P7, P8, P9, and P10). The participants touched on a few methods to manage unexpected challenges. There were three elements to being agile (a) be flexible, (b) contingency planning, and (c) self-reflection.

- Ability to be flexible (P1) and include others in the conversation (P9),
- Have a contingency plan (P5) and “be prepared to respond” (P7, personal communication, June 5, 2017) when challenges arise
- Be self-reflective (P1), have a self-check in, and take moments to clear your head (P2)

P8 noted:

In my experience you just have to be nimble and agile and be willing to course correct pretty quickly without overreacting because sometimes when you take a pause and you really think about what this new challenge means, does it really redirect your approach? (P8, personal communication, June 6, 2017)

*Positive communication.* Seven of the 15 (46.7%) participants expressed that positive communication was fundamental when handling challenges that were not anticipated (P1, P3, P7, P9, P12, P14, and P15). As previously stated in prior coding analysis for former interview questions, framing communication in a positive manner is imperative in leading or facilitating conflict management strategies. One technique P14 shared was that, “As a leadership advisor, as a coach, or as a conflict manager you can actually help people understand consequences and develop positive approaches...” (P14, personal communication, June 19, 2017). Looking for opportunities to turn challenges into a positive was mentioned by P1. Being creative, displaying empathy, and showing that you are present are all ways to encourage positive communication

(P12). Arranging one-on-one meetings and group conversations to ask more questions was voiced by a few participants. P7 further explained that having a deeper conversation is a chance, “to show that this is a technique that has incredible power and reach, and has transformational possibilities built into it” (P7, personal communication, June 5, 2017).

*Recommitment to the process.* Six out of the 15 participants implied that recommitment to the process can be another way to manage unexpected challenges (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, and P14). There were various techniques stated by the participants. These tactics would be applied dependent on the challenge that they came across:

- Reflect back to the original structural and framework documents and evaluate the problem statement, and the short-term, intermediate, and long term goals. Examine if you need to make adjustments (P1).
- Bring in a senior sponsor(s) to garner support and reinforce purpose and objectives; “get time commitments from the people involved” (P5, personal communication, June 1, 2017)
- Remind the stakeholders and people involved of why this is being done and the purpose (P4)
- In mediations, team building, or a group facilitation taking a break physically and coming back to begin the process was recommended (P2)

*Identify the potential challenges.* Another theme developed from four of the 15 participants interviewed was being able to identify potential challenges early on in the planning process (P1, P3, P5, and P13). Preparation and identifying challenges at the beginning was shared by P1, P3, and P13 to prevent unexpected obstacles. Although one participant explained that sometimes the unexpected challenge is an issue that, “is much more substantive, and that

there is something that is left off the plate” (P5, personal communication, June 1, 2017) that they were unaware of in the preliminary stages of the process.

*Modeling.* The final theme constructed was labeled modeling, and three of the 15 participants provided input into how this can aid in dealing with challenges (P1, P11, and P12). Sharing examples of what was done in other instances and illustrating how it was successful was mentioned by P1. Also, brought up by P12 was the value of creating a proof concept or piloting the program to demonstrate that the recommendations can be accomplished. P11 described how launching a peer-to-peer training initiative was employed to overcome reluctance to using the conflict management program being implemented in their organization. They selected peer trainers that were initially resistant to the program, but later became supporters. These individuals modeled the desired behavioral change the organization sought to be familiarized.

**Research question 2 summary.** Research question two asked, “What challenges are faced by Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in implementing strategies and practices to promote conflict management?” The below interview questions were asked to the participants:

- IQ 4: What challenges did you face in the planning phase of the implementation?
- IQ 5: Did any unexpected challenges happen that you had not planned for and if so how did you deal with the unexpected challenge?
- IQ 6: How do you define and measure your success for your conflict management interventions?

Central challenges encountered during implementation of a conflict management intervention were identified as Lack of Stakeholder Engagement, Resistance and Opposition, and Resource Constraints. Participants explained that getting individuals engaged and keeping them involved in the implementation phase was an obstacle they came across due to shifts in priority and other

instances that impede stakeholder engagement. Secondly, resistance and opposition were also encountered by the participants due to negativity from historical aspects or lack of support from management. Lastly, limited resources such as time, competing productivity schedules, and budgetary constraints were also mentioned as barriers.

In IQ5, participants stated methods employed to manage unexpected challenges. Five themes were constructed from their input. Being agile, presenting communication in a positive manner, recommitting to the process, identifying potential challenges, and modeling behaviors and attitudes were approaches used to overcome challenges. Demonstrating flexibility through being agile was frequently expressed. Table 5 outlines the eight themes formed for research question two.

Table 5

*Summary of Themes for Research Question 2*

IQ 4: Challenges of Implementation	IQ 5: Managing Unexpected Challenges
Lack of Stakeholder Engagement	Be Agile
Resistance and Opposition	Positive Communication
Resource Constraints	Recommitment to the Process
	Identify the Potential Challenges
	Modeling

**Research Question 3**

**Research question 3.** The following research question was asked, “How do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists measure the success of these strategies and practices to promote conflict management?” This research question comprised the below interview questions to enlist

responses from the 15 participants involved in the study:

- IQ 6: How do you define and measure your success for your conflict management interventions?
- IQ 7: What final outcome were you willing to settle for when trying to implement your plan?
- IQ 8: How did you measure and track your success?

**Interview question 6.** How do you define and measure your success for your conflict management interventions? Based on the responses from the Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders five themes were constructed. Common themes that were determined by the participants include: Designed Metrics on Conflict/Issue, Organizational Performance Metrics, Sustainability of Conflict Management Intervention, Success Defined by Participants, and Informal and Formal Feedback (See Figure 8).

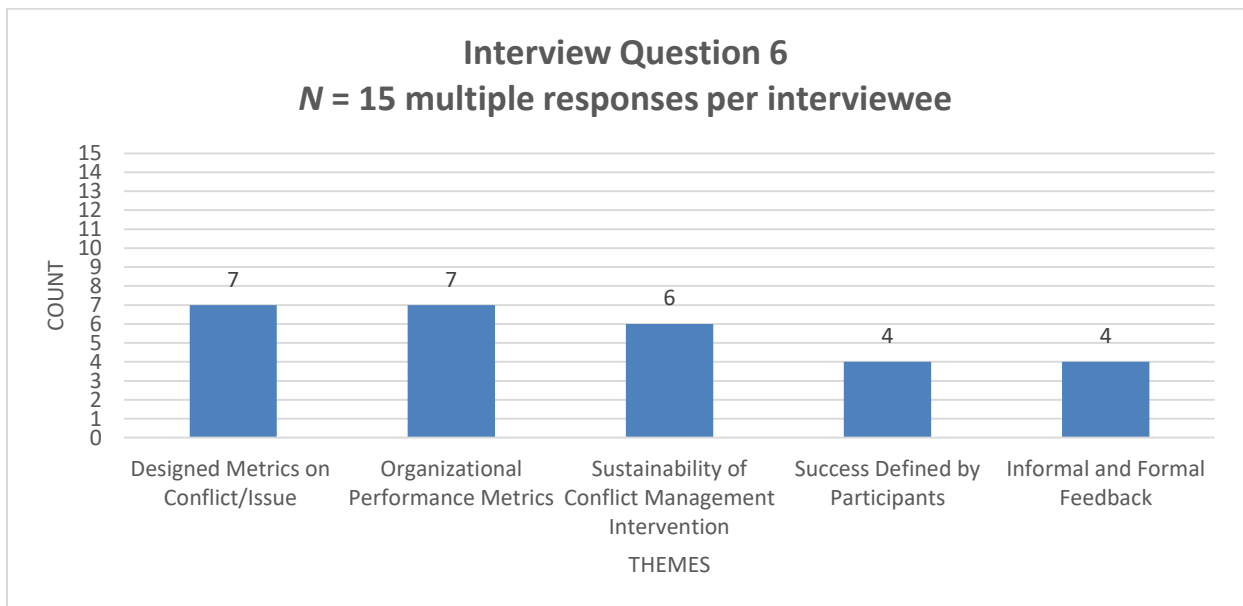


Figure 8. IQ 6: Themes on defining and measuring success on conflict management.

*Designed metrics on conflict/issue.* This theme surfaced with seven of the 15 (46.7%) participants affirming that customizing metrics around the conflict issue or problem statement

should be done (P1, P5, P6, P8, P11, P13, and P15). A fundamental standard described was to identify what you want measured at the onset and have a clearly defined problem that can be measured (P13 and P15). From there then develop metrics that show the benefits that are being achieved that can be comparable to what does not exist or systems currently in place. These metrics can be viewed in terms of dollars, time saved, and productivity (P15). Another way to measure the success of the intervention is to assess if the conflict has ceased (P13). P6 added to that commenting that common metrics to look at in conflict management interventions can include tracking the number of complaints, number of repetitive complaints, turnover, production measurements, review of existing measurements, and speed of time of resolution. Also noted by another participant was to “Understand who your audience is and what are the goals of the program, then your metrics have to be designed around that” (P11, personal communication, June 9, 2017). Lastly, the Alternative Dispute Resolution specialist can evaluate if the intervention impacts employee morale (P13).

*Organizational performance metrics.* Seven of the 15 (46.7%) participants conveyed that examining organizational performance metrics in another method to measure success (P1, P4, P6, P9, P10, P13, and P14). A review of business results was emphasized by P10, “To what degree are we doing and accomplishing the strategic goals that we set forth for the organization” (P10, personal communication, June 8, 2017). In addition to evaluating organizational and business outcomes, P1, P5 and P9 stated that measuring performance improvements within teams, individuals, and processes is another way to quantify achievements and success.

*Sustainability of conflict management intervention.* Six of the 15 participants indicated that the sustainability of the conflict management intervention was a measure of success (P3, P4, P9, P10, P12, and P14). Producing benchmarks offers the organization a mode to track the

sustainability of the intervention and recognize shifts in behaviors. P4 remarked that if an increased understanding of conflict management was observed that is an indication of success. Observing behavioral changes were referred to by P4, P9, P12, and P14. These behaviors can be seen as a new set of skills being used to manage conflict and noticing if there is a relational change between individuals in the organization that influence people's interactions with one another (P12). This is can be viewed in teams when they are in the "performing stage rather than the storm stage" (P10, personal communication, June 8, 2017). Longevity of processes and systems that were implemented can also be an indicator of success (P3).

*Success defined by participants.* A theme that also emerged from four of the 15 participants expounded that success of the conflict management intervention should be defined by the participants involved (P7, P9, P11, and P12). Dependent on the type of conflict management intervention implemented the Alternative Dispute Resolution specialist should assess the following (a) what are the organizational and business goals, (b) how is leadership defining success, and (c) the parties or groups involved define what success will be. P11 further stated:

If you're in an organization, it's going to be up to the senior leadership to decide what they do and what they don't do. As with everything else in the organization, if it's a well-run organization there are goals and there are metrics for determining if those goals are being met. (P11, personal communication, June 9, 2017)

*Informal and formal feedback.* An additional theme based on four of the 15 participants' comments described how informal and formal feedback assists in measuring success (P2, P3, P5, and P14). Anonymous direct and indirect feedback methods are utilized by P3 to review systems and processes. P5 shared a structured approach to get feedback on the success of the



intervention, “I’ll ask if the team is committed to meet during one of their regular staff meetings. That might be a 90 minute briefing over lunch, where we’ll honestly discuss whether we think we’ve made forward progress” (P5, personal communication, June 1, 2017).

**Interview question 7.** What final outcome were you willing to settle for when trying to implement your plan? From the answers correlated from the Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders, three themes emerged. Common themes that were determined include: Discuss Core Issue, Making a Positive Impact, and Achieved Outcome (See Figure 9).

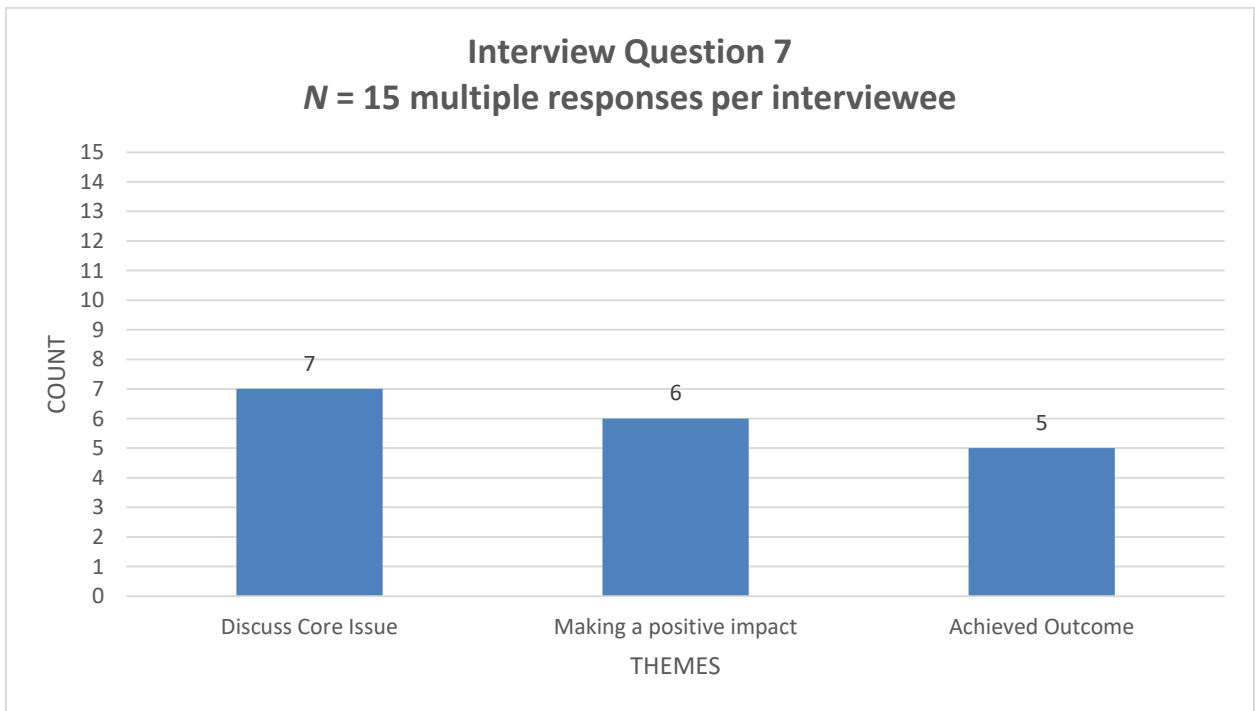


Figure 9. IQ 7: Themes on final outcomes willing to settle for.

**Discuss core issue.** Seven out of 15 (46.7%) participants replied to this interview question indicating that discussing the core issue is an outcome they were willing to settle for during the implementation of the conflict management intervention (P2, P4, P7, P8, P10, P13, and P15). P2 remarked that sometimes more than one session is needed during a conflict intervention but in circumstances that are voluntary multiple sessions do not always occur. Also

noted by another participant on what they are willing to settle for is to establish a rapport and create an environment that encourages people to discuss their interests (P4). Getting time, consideration, energy, and resources from leadership related to the conflict issue is considered by P10 as a partial success and was willing to settle for that outcome. Going back to leadership to revisit the issue later should not be left off the table according to P10.

*Making a positive impact.* The subsequent theme had six of the 15 participants express that making a positive impact was something they were willing to settle for during the implementation (P1, P5, P7, P9, P11, and P13). Positive impacts articulated in the interviews consisted of gaining a better understanding of conflict management, exhibiting changed behaviors, and introducing sustainable practices. Below details comments given by the participants:

- Assess if people are aware and knowledgeable about what they are agreeing to, then it can be handed off to them so they can be accountable to manage the process (P7)
- I look for what would have sustainability, and then my role is to question people to see whether they're knowledgeable about what they're accepting, but I feel that if they are knowledgeable and they understand what it is, they can make the trade-off, and it doesn't belong to me, it belongs to them (P7)
- P5 stated that being able to develop certain methodologies and approaches to ensure a sustainable collaboration is maintained when the Alternative Dispute Resolution professional is no longer present
- An improvement in relationships that brings a forward looking outlook and direction (P9)

- An overarching goal P10 mentioned for their organization was to have a better workplace where complaints were reduced and people displayed a happier disposition, however, this occurred incrementally
- Evaluate if the issue needs an immediate solution or if it can be managed over time; Does the Alternative Dispute Resolution professional guide the organization with the change or have them to manage the change over time (P13)

*Achieved outcome.* The last theme that emerged from five of the 15 participants was that they successfully achieved the outcome when implementing their interventions and did not need to make concessions (P1, P3, P5, P9, and P13). A key component P1, P3, and P5 attributed to achieving the desired outcome was spending the time upfront assessing the conflict and identifying the problem statement in the planning phase. Also discussed was the ability to manage the expectations from the leaders and stakeholders, and to be honest and realistic of what can be accomplished (P9 and P13).

**Interview question 8.** How did you measure and track your success? Three themes formed from the interviews of the 15 Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders. Common themes that were determined by the participants include: Feedback on Process and Outcomes, Trends, and Reduction in Conflict (See Figure 10).

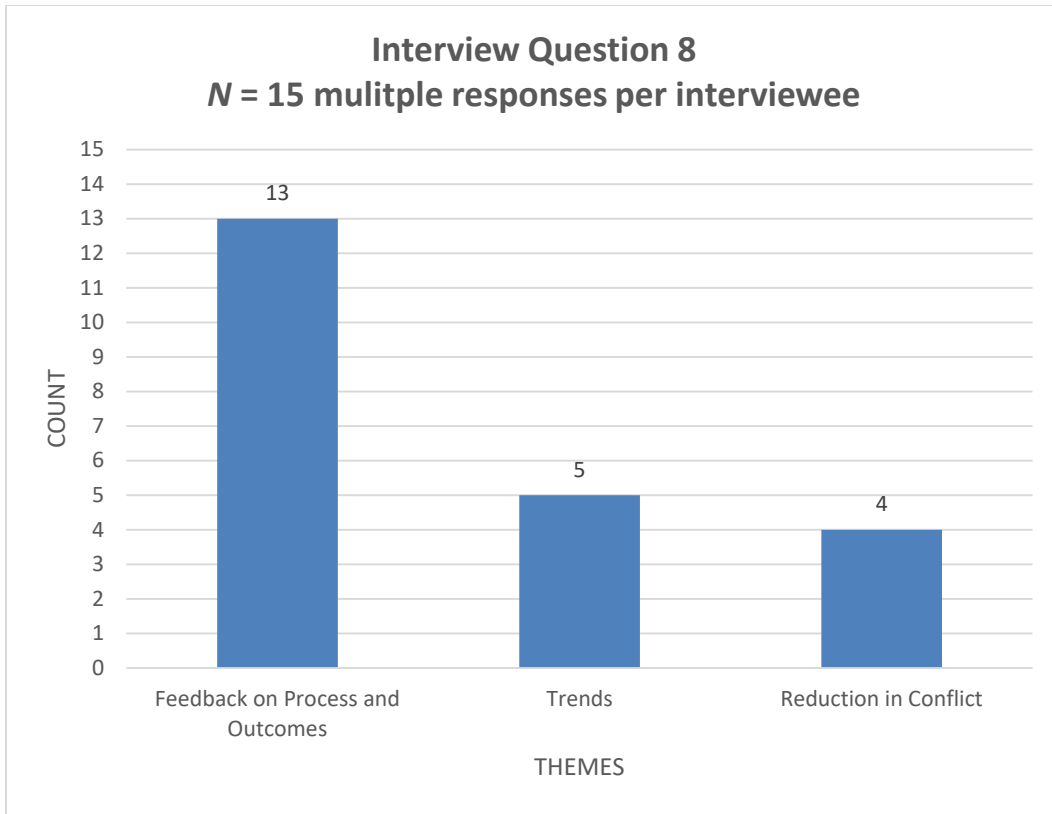


Figure 10. IQ 8: Themes on measuring and tracking success.

*Feedback on process and outcomes.* Of the 15 participants interviewed 13 (86.7%) offered input that developed a theme titled feedback on process and outcomes. All participants except P10 and P12 agreed that they measured and tracked the success of an intervention based on feedback received on process and outcomes. Below are the various methods the 13 participants used to gather real-time and post feedback data on whether or not the conflict management intervention was successful:

- P7 acquires real-time feedback by facilitating a dialogue and capturing on a flip chart what has worked and what has not worked
- Post feedback surveys:

- Inquiring if individuals are happy with the results (P1) or satisfied with the outcome (P11)
- Employ evaluation forms, engagement surveys, pulse surveys (4-5 questions related to the conflict issue), and 360 feedback forms (P3, P5, P7)
- P4 conducted a basic survey with three questions identifying what worked, what did not work, and any additional comments the participant wanted to provide
- Obtain post feedback through interviews (P5, P13, and P14)
- P1 explained, not to only assess metrics but question how people feel about the process and if they felt listened to
- Explore the impact of the intervention in relation to the overall outcomes, well-being, or objectives of the organization (P1)

Two of the participants commented on how they also measured success if the plan was implemented (P8) and if the core issue was resolved (P6).

*Trends.* There were five participants that offered input that related to trends (P3, P6, P8, P13, and P15). Looking at the trends is an indirect measure to evaluate a variety of inputs to gauge if there are improvements that have occurred. It could be noting the number of people using the systems that have been put in place over a period time (P3). Trends can help leaders in organizations see if there is willingness from individuals to express complaints, an increase in output and productivity over time (P13), and a host of other shifts related to the conflict issue.

*Reduction in conflict.* Another theme that resulted from four of the 15 participants in relation to measuring success in conflict management interventions was reducing conflict (P1, P2, P6, and P10). One of the most straightforward means to measure success is to confirm if the

conflict was reduced after the intervention, or stopped from reoccurring (P3). Two of the participants evaluated the number of claims reported or filed by employees (P1 and P10). Another item examined by P10, is the type of conflicts reported and if the conflict has become less arduous over time. Also mentioned was observing an improvement within teams. P10 assesses if teams are working together better, and being more collaborative.

**Research question 3 summary.** Research question three posed, “How do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists measure the success of these strategies and practices to promote conflict management?” The interview questions asked to the participants are detailed below.

- IQ 6: How do you define and measure your success for your conflict management interventions?
- IQ 7: What final outcome were you willing to settle for when trying to implement your plan?
- IQ 8: How did you measure and track your success?

The above interview questions were designed to understand how the participants define, measure, and track success in conflict management programs and initiatives. Establishing specific metrics around the conflict issue and reviewing organizational performance measurements were primary success indicators. In addition, the sustainability and durability of the conflict management intervention and the feedback received were also markers to define success. The intent of IQ7 was to identify what the participants were willing to settle for if they could not accomplish the intended outcome. Two of the themes for IQ7 were to have a discussion about the core issue and have a positive impact. Several participants conveyed they did not need to settle, as they were able to achieve the outcome(s) by being realistic and managing expectations on deliverables. Furthermore, IQ8 focused on the ways to track

improvement or prevent the conflict issue. Three themes that cultivated were feedback received on the process and outcomes, trends, and assessing if conflict was reduced. A summary of the 11 themes for research question 3 is shown in Table 6.

Table 6

*Summary of Themes for Research Question 3*

IQ 6: Define and Measure of Success	IQ 7: Settled for this Final Outcome	IQ8: Measurements of Tracking Success
Designed Metrics on Conflict/Issue	Discuss Core Issue	Feedback on Process and Outcomes
Organizational Performance Metrics	Making a Positive Impact	Trends
Sustainability of Conflict Management Intervention	Achieved Outcome	Reduction in Conflict
Success Defined by Participants		
Informal and Formal Feedback		

#### Research Question 4

**Research question 4.** The following research question was asked, “What recommendations do Alternative Dispute Resolution experts have for enhancing structures and networks to develop conflict management competencies?” This research question comprised the below interview questions to enlist responses from the 15 participants involved in the study:

- IQ 9: How do organizational networks and structures prevent and/or create conflict?
- IQ 10: What recommendations can you share to enhance organizational networks and structures to develop conflict management strategies?
- IQ 11: What are some lessons learned?

- IQ12: What are some things you would have liked to know?

**Interview question 9.** How do organizational networks and structures prevent and/or create conflict? According to the Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders' insights four themes developed. Common themes that were determined include: Organizational Structure and Policy, Social Networks/Relationships, Communication Practices, and Behavior (See Figure 11).

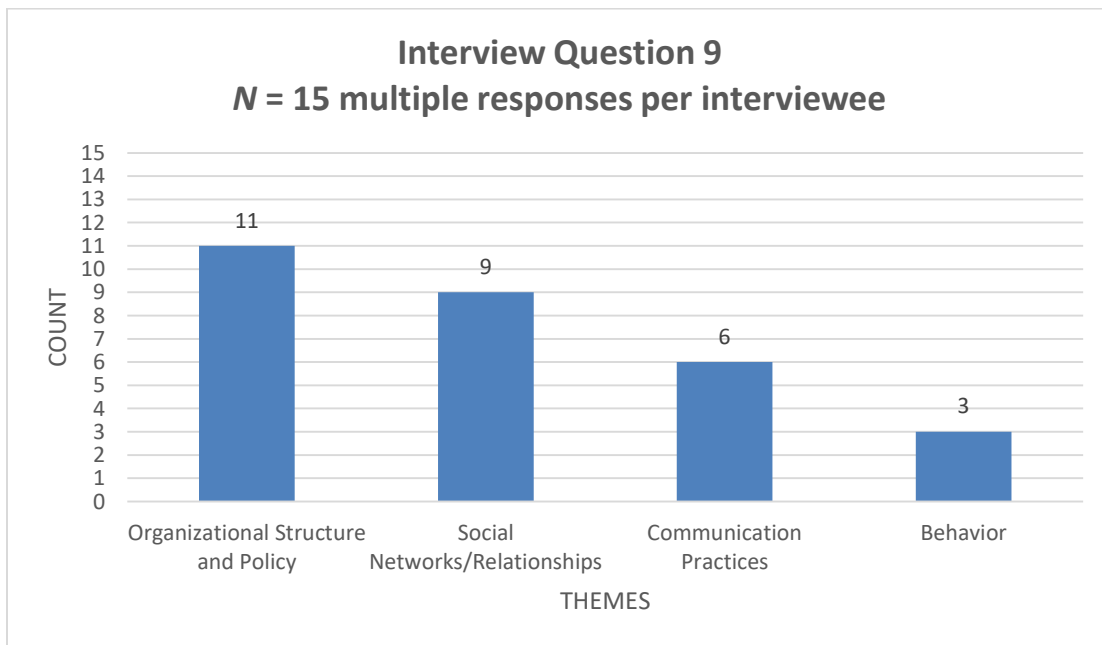


Figure 11. IQ 9: Themes on creating and preventing conflict in organizations.

**Organizational structure and policy.** Eleven out of 15 (73.3%) participants suggested that organizational structure and policy could create and prevent conflict in the workplace (P1, P3, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14 and P15). There was an apparent link between the structure of an organization and policies formed to the creation and prevention of conflict. Many of the insights shared by the participants connected the conflict with the design of organizations and teams. The subsequent table describes the responses from the participants centered on their experiences working on conflict management interventions in organizations.



Table 7

*Organizational Structure and Policy Theme for Interview Question 9*

<b>Creates Conflict</b>	<b>Prevents Conflict</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team interactions - intergroup and intragroup conflict (P3, P5)</li> <li>• Sub-divided teams (P5)</li> <li>• Matrixed teams (P3, P5, and P6)</li> <li>• Organizational structures and networks that extend across national cultures (P5)</li> <li>• Strong subcultures (P5)</li> <li>• Thoughtless policy (P6)</li> <li>• Division between departments and levels of management (P8)</li> <li>• Not having Conflict Management programs/policies in place (P13)</li> <li>• Employee morale (P13)</li> <li>• Different geographic locations/time zones and processes (P9)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conflict Management Training (P1, P13, P14)</li> <li>• Conflict Management Systems (P13)</li> <li>• Coaching and Facilitation (P14)</li> <li>• Diversity &amp; Inclusion efforts (P11)</li> <li>• Awareness of the organizational structure and being able to navigate it (P9)</li> </ul>

*Social networks/relationships.* The second theme for IQ9 had nine of the 15 participants commenting on the role of social networks and social relationships in regards to conflict in organizations (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P11, and P12). According to several of the participants' responses the prevention of conflict can be connected to the interactions and the ability to communicate among employees. Building relationships and having a supportive network in the workplace is essential in preventing conflict within organizations. The following table outlines the observations shared by the nine participants.

Table 8

*Social Networks/Relationships Theme for Interview Question 9*

Create Conflict	Prevent Conflict
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diverse teams having different ideas unable to effectively communicate (P4)</li> <li>• Excluding the other person’s narrative (P8)</li> <li>• Ineffective communication within networks</li> <li>• Informal networks (P9)</li> <li>• Dysfunctional networks (P3)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Form networks of support systems (P1, P2)</li> <li>• Shared understanding within a group (P7)</li> <li>• Informal networks (P9)</li> <li>• Engaging informal leaders and people with influence in conflict management process (P9)</li> <li>• Create a variety of Employee Resource Groups (P11)</li> <li>• Encouraging a culture focused on trust and relationship building (P11)</li> <li>• Understanding the interests of the organization and the individual (P12)</li> </ul>

*Communication practices.* Six of the 15 participants emphasized the importance of communication in organizations (P1, P2, P4, P5, P7, and P13). The communication practices within an organization can either create or prevent conflict. A few comments were made associating the communication patterns of the organization starting from the top-down. P1 noted, “You want everybody to have the same ideas on how to approach conflict” (P1, personal communication, May 26, 2017). Furthermore, the level to which organizations and teams have standard and consistent communication aids in the prevention and resolution of conflict, as well as reducing the chance of misunderstandings (P2 and P5). Effective communication (P2), having

conversations that address conflict (P7), and direct dialogue that moves discussions forward (P2) are communication practices that prevent the escalation of conflict. This is particularly crucial as many organizations “depend on asynchronous communication, rather than synchronous communication” (P5, personal communication, June 1, 2017) so there is a likelihood of miscommunication.

*Behavior.* The fourth theme that developed from the remarks of three of the 15 participants mentioned behaviors relative to conflict (P3, P11, and P12). P3 stated that behavior can both create and prevent conflict, and further added that the behavior of leadership is an important driver of how conflict is viewed and managed in organizations. Additionally, understanding the drivers of behavior is key in conflict. One participant suggested that organizations should review how they incentive employees’ behavior and how that influences a person’s conduct (P12).

*Interview question 10.* What recommendations can you share to enhance organizational networks and structures to develop conflict management strategies? Based on the replies gathered from the Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders four themes surfaced. Themes that were determined by the participants include: Create a Problem-solving Culture, Foster Internal and External Networks, Training, and Have a Conflict Management System (See Figure 12).

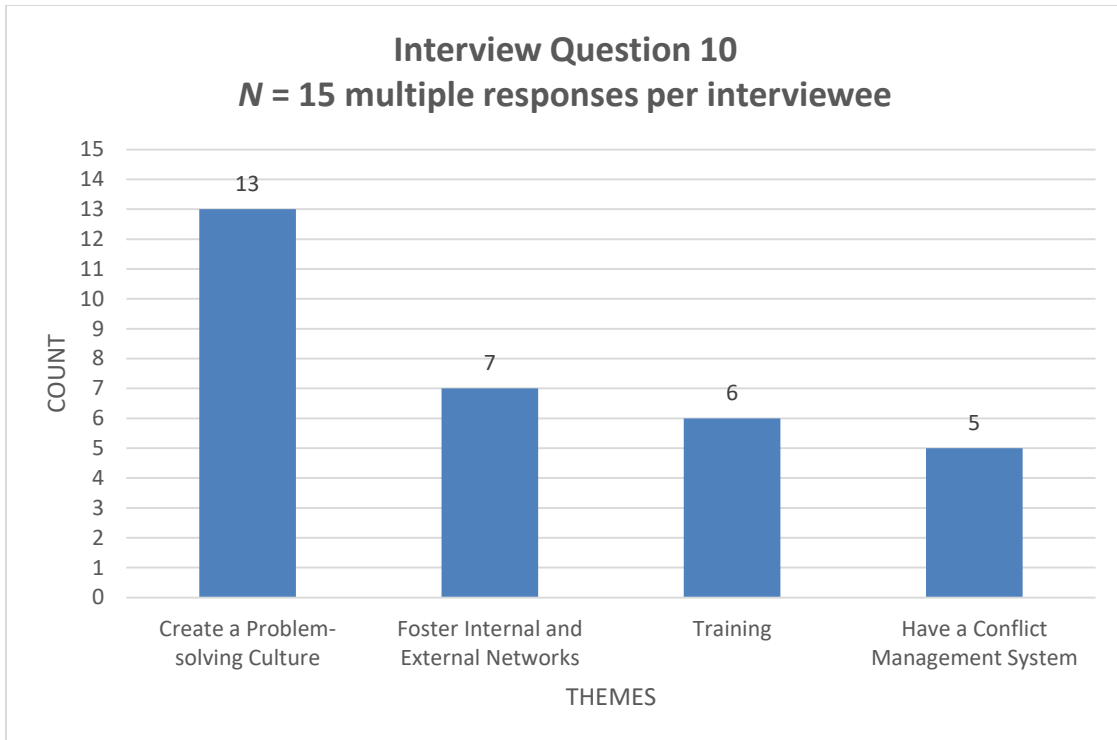


Figure 12. IQ 10: Themes recommending conflict management strategies.

*Create a problem-solving culture.* Thirteen of the 15 participants indicated that organizations should create a problem-solving culture. From the responses to IQ10 there were three sub-themes that developed (a) conflict management and communication, (b) promoting a culture of self-reflection, and (c) processes and structures supporting conflict management.

- Conflict Management and Communication:
  - “Create an entity-wide identity around conflict” (P1, personal communication, May 26, 2017), and make it visible throughout the organization (p14)
  - Encourage communication and dialogue around conflict
  - Have communication channels that support transparent and consistent messages that “occur vertically within the organization, and across silos” (P5, personal communication, June 1, 2017)

- Support different opinions and perspectives being shared and encourage people to listen to others with civility (P11)
- Engage people so they feel as though they were listened to (P15)
- Frame conflict in a positive light and view it as a potential opportunity, as to “take the negative connotation away from the word conflict.” (P14, personal communication, June 19, 2017)
- Promoting a Culture of Self-Reflection:
  - Self-reflection should be encouraged starting from the top levels down (P2)
  - Recognize the role that you play in a conflict (P2) and understand how individual behaviors produce conflict; the focus should begin at the individual versus structural level (P3)
  - Leaders should model behavior for employees to follow on how to manage conflict productively (P4)
  - Begin with making small changes and start with developing skills that build relationships (P9)
- Processes and Structures Supporting Conflict Management:
  - Keeping in mind the ethics, values, and integrity of the organization’s construct, “democratic structures and collaborative systems” (P7 personal communication, June 5, 2017)
  - Create a standard process for problem-solving of asking the right questions and identifying the key stakeholders and experts to contribute to solving the issue (P10)

- Create an incentive structure that promotes conflict management and problem-solving (P11); the organization needs to value problem-solving behaviors
- Train Human Resources and leadership in conflict management so issues are handled quickly (P13)
- Implement rigorous strategic planning meetings to prevent unnecessary conflict down the road (P11)

*Foster internal and external networks.* The following seven participants P4, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, and P15 noted that fostering internal and external networks was fundamental when developing conflict management strategies. Three overarching elements mentioned by the seven participants in regards to fostering internal and external networks were organizational structure, relationships, and communication. P7 responded by laying out the following, “Flatten the organizational structure, build in opportunities for collaborative negotiation for feedback and learning, and create complex self-correcting systems” (P7 personal communication, June 5, 2017). P9 emphasized the effectiveness of “cross functional relationships, and building relationships within and across teams” (P9 personal communication, June 7, 2017). Also noted was to become aware of the different networks, the roles they play in the organization, and when they should be engaged in a process (P8). Another insight shared was the methods of communication being utilized in organizations (P11). P15 advocated increasing real-time and face-to-face communication to lessen misunderstandings caused by electronic communication.

*Training.* A third theme that surfaced from six of the participants was training for leaders and employees on aspects of conflict management (P1, P4, P5, P6, P13, and P14). Three of the participants explained that training can expand the understanding of conflict (P4) along with building communication and collaboration skills (P5 and P6). Several participants agreed that

the same conflict management training should be given to the entire organization consisting of leadership, Human Resources, and employees. Participants stress leadership as a contributor to conflict as well as a solution. Further stated was that individuals are typically put into leadership positions based on specific expertise not often on their leadership ability (P14). Another participant noted that Human Resources should have adequate training in conflict management (P13). P13 also expressed:

I think Human Resources departments, also anybody that works as a Human Resources Manager or Human Resources person ought to be adequately and properly trained to understand conflict management systems theory ... to address and prevent issues of conflict and improve the workforce. (P13, personal communication, June 16, 2017)

*Have a conflict management system.* The last theme emerged from five of the participants suggesting that organizations have a conflict management system in place (P5, P7, P13, P14, and P15). If an organization does not have an existing Dispute Resolution Program, “alternative employee-based conflict resolution system” (P5, personal communication, June 1, 2017), or some kind of process for conflict management prevention versus just a grievance system (P13), then these five participants suggest that the organization implement one. Having a conflict management system set up can address conflict before the issues escalate. This is also a mechanism that allows employees to express concerns or problem within an organization (P3). Additionally, it offers a channel to voice issues without fear of retaliation (P15).

**Interview question 11.** What are some lessons learned? According to the accounts shared by the Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders three themes developed. General themes that were determined by the participants include: Conflict Manager Competencies, Pre-planning & Preparation, and View Conflict as an Opportunity (See Figure 13).

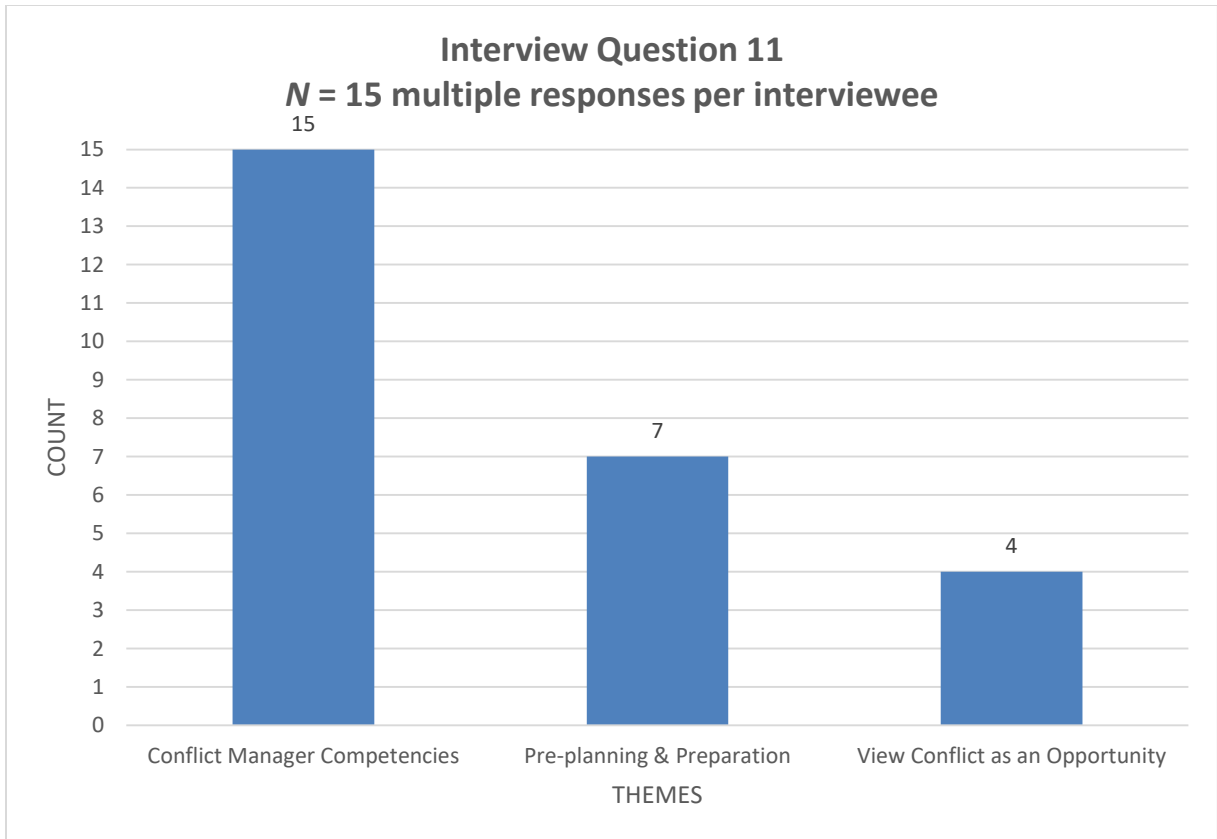


Figure 13. IQ 11: Themes on lesson learned.

*Conflict manager competencies.* All 15 participants provided insight into conflict management competencies they learned over the years working in the field. There were three subthemes that surfaced from their replies that comprised of (a) communication techniques, (b) relationship building, and (c) understand the psychology of conflict. Participants mentioned that the ability to manage expectations, employ active listening skills, incorporate coaching/training/facilitation techniques are competencies they developed. P15 noted:

You know a lot of times, especially in a global environment, there is going to be people from different cultures and they're interacting with each other, as well as people from different generations and different words mean different things to people so you need to make sure that you've heard something correctly. (P15, personal communication, June 19, 2017)



Another competency the participants shared was the need to be able to build relationships. A number of participants commented that demonstrating their capacity to be open, flexible, authentic, and to create rapport and trust supports the aptitude to build relationships. P12 noted the following:

Especially being a consultant the whole idea of building relationships and trust is hard, but absolutely critical because people know that you're in and out. On the surface you don't really have the time to establish relationships, but if you don't make the time then you're not going to be fully informed of what you need to know because people aren't going to trust you and they'll hold back information. (P12, personal communication, June 12, 2017)

To be able to reserve making judgements, assumptions, and to be conscious of your biases assists in understanding conflict through the perspectives of the people dealing with the issue (P2, P3, and P13). Understanding the psychology of conflict was mentioned in a variety of ways from several of the participants (P1, P6, P8, P10 and P14). P7 stated the following in regards to viewing conflict:

Many of the conflicts that take place inside organizations are us-versus-them conflicts, and just like in the world as a whole, there are us-versus-them conflicts. What you can come to as a result of this work is the realization that there is no them, there's just us. Then you approach it differently. (P7, personal communication, June 5, 2017)

*Pre-planning and preparation.* Seven of the 15 participants described the significance of learning the various aspects of the pre-planning and preparation phase of conducting conflict management interventions (P1, P3, P5, P8, P9, P10 and P13). The preparation in the planning phase was repeatedly referenced in RQ1 and was commented on numerous instances in IQ11.

Below outlines the responses shared by the seven participants on the lessons learned in planning and preparing for a conflict management intervention:

- Gain an understanding of the root cause problem statement (P13)
- Be prepared to handle the culture of the organization and the competency level of the people (P1)
- More time spent upfront assessing the conflict (P3, P5, P9) and understanding the concerns of the employees
- Need to have clear cut goals defined by the organization (P13)
- Know the mission of the organization and understand the direction the leaders want to take the organization (P13)

*View conflict as an opportunity.* Finally, four of the participants commented that they learned how to view conflict as an opportunity (P2, P8, P12, and P14). Conflict is not always an adverse experience, ending with negative outcomes. Conflict can be transformational (P12) and aid in growth and development (P8) for the individual, group, and organization. If people allow it, conflict “can turn it into a fluid process” (P12, personal communication, June 12, 2017) in which it is not counter-productive.

**Interview question 12.** What are some things you would have liked to know? From the responses of the Alternative Dispute Resolution experts and leaders three core themes emerged. Common themes that were determined by the participants include: Conflict Management Approaches and Techniques, Politics and Hidden Agendas, and Understand Organizational Dynamics (See Figure 14).

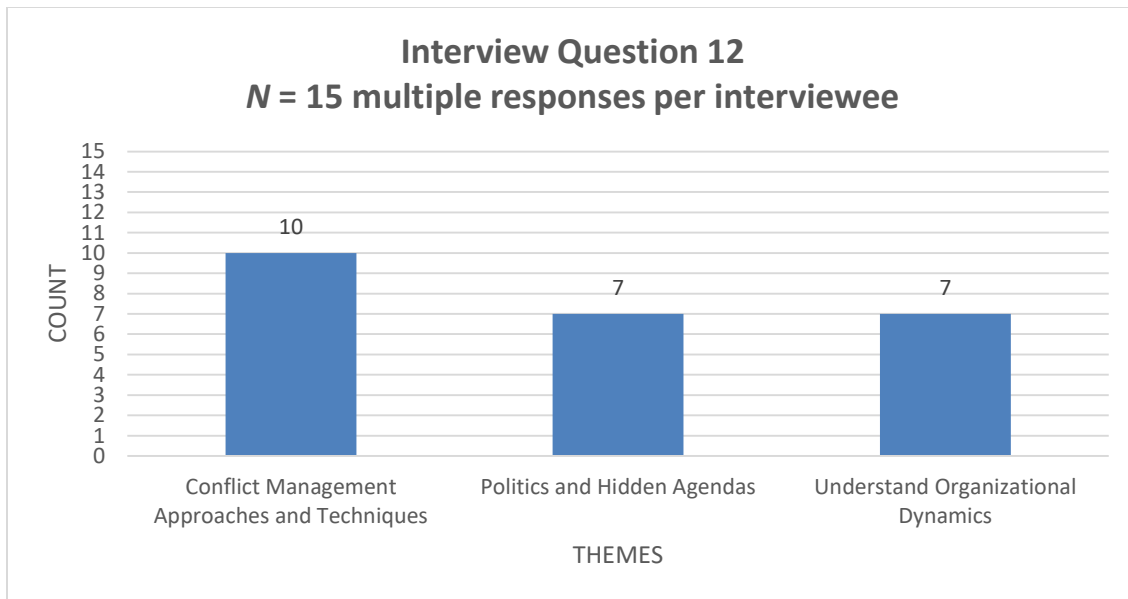


Figure 14. IQ 12: Themes on what the participant would have liked to have known.

*Conflict management approaches and techniques.* This theme developed from 10 of the 15 participants (66.7%) which explain conflict management approaches and techniques these participants would have liked to have known early in their career (P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P11, P12, P14 and P15). Participants described that keeping an open mind to new methods and approaches (P3, P4) has proved valuable. Furthermore, there is not a set standard to use in conflict management interventions. Two of the participants expressed knowing how to ask the right questions (P6 and P15) are techniques they would have like to have known at the beginning of their dispute resolution career. P5 and P12 stated that having formal models, trainings, and methodology on conflict management would have been beneficial versus them learning experientially. Also, P5 added that having a mentor to provide feedback would have been valuable. Finally, P7, P11, and P14 suggested understanding the principles of human behavior and conflict early on would have been advantageous.

*Politics and hidden agendas.* Seven of the participants expressed they would like to know the politics of an organization and any hidden agendas at the beginning of an intervention

(P1, P2, P3, P6, P7, P8 and P11). Participants detailed the following factors that they need to be aware of during a conflict management intervention (a) opposition (P1), (b) political alliances (P2), (c) unstated agendas (P3, P6, P7, P8), and (d) background conversations you are unfamiliar with (P11). An agreement among several of the participants was that these aspects generally lie below the surface within organizations. Furthermore, P7 stated, “About 99% of conflicts take place below the surface” (P7, personal communication, June 5, 2017).

*Understand organizational dynamics.* The third theme for IQ12 put emphasis on understanding organizational dynamics which seven participants noted they would have like to know before they get entrenched into a conflict management intervention (P2, P3, P9, P10, P11, P13, and P15). Both P13 and P15 noted that identifying the decision-maker and understand the historical context of the conflict and relationships in the organization were critical. Also the ability to recognize that organizations are complex and dysfunctional was what P10 determined from experiences working in organizations. Lastly, being cognizant of the organizational culture, subcultures, and culture based on geography is essential to consider (P2, P3, and P9).

**Research question 4 summary.** Research question four proposed, “What recommendations do Alternative Dispute Resolution experts have for enhancing structures and networks to develop conflict management competencies?” The four interview questions were asked to the participants.

- IQ 9: How do organizational networks and structures prevent and/or create conflict?
- IQ 10: What recommendations can you share to enhance organizational networks and structures to develop conflict management strategies?
- IQ 11: What are some lessons learned?
- IQ12: What are some things you would have liked to know?

Research question four strived to gain insight into prevention mechanisms and causes of organizational conflict through the perceptions and experiences of the participants.

Recommendations, lessons learned, and input on the development of conflict management competencies was also warranted. In IQ9 four themes emerged with each having a tendency to both prevent and create conflict within organizations. Organizational structure and policy, social relationship and networks, communication practices, and behaviors were mentioned as either contributors to conflict or viewed as possible methods to prevent conflict. IQ10 garnered recommendations to develop conflict management strategies in organizations. Creating a problem-solving culture, fostering internal and external networks, providing conflict management training for everyone in the organization, and establishing a conflict management system were themes formed.

All 15 participants in IQ11 referenced learning various methods, behaviors, and approaches to use in their conflict management interventions. Also discussed was changing how conflict is viewed in organizations from a destructive and negative lens to viewing conflict as an opportunity to create, enhance, and innovate. Furthermore, the desire of knowing conflict management techniques and approaches earlier in their professional career was frequently stated. The participants often mentioned that conflict management skills were developed from experiential learning versus traditional learning formats. Additionally, knowing hidden agendas, the political landscape, and organizational dynamics were things participants shared they wanted to know at the onset of a conflict management intervention. Table 9 provides an overview of the 14 themes developed in the final research question.

Table 9

*Summary of Themes for Research Question 4*

IQ 9: Preventing and Creating Conflict	IQ 10: Recommendations to Develop Conflict Management Strategies	IQ 11: Lessons Learned	IQ 12: Liked to have known these things as an ADR specialist
Organizational Structure and Policy	Create a Problem-solving Culture	Conflict Manager Competencies	Conflict Management Approaches and Techniques
Social Networks/Relationships	Foster Internal and External Networks	Pre-planning and Preparation	Politics and Hidden Agendas
Communication Practices	Training	View Conflict as an Opportunity	Understand Organizational Dynamics
Behavior	Have a Conflict Management System		

**Chapter 4 Summary**

The purpose of this phenomenological qualitative study was to determine how to enhance conflict management competencies in organizations through informal networks and informal structures. Furthermore, the intent of this study was to understand and identify what strategies and practices, challenges, success measurements, and recommendations leaders and specialists in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution have used in conflict management interventions.

Twelve semi-structured interview questions were formed to investigate the below four research questions:

- RQ1: What strategies and practices do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists employ to promote conflict management?
- RQ2: What challenges are faced by Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in implementing strategies and practices to promote conflict management?

- RQ3: How do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists measure the success of these strategies and practices to promote conflict management?
- RQ4: What recommendations do Alternative Dispute Resolution experts have for enhancing structures and networks to develop conflict management competencies?

A sequence of procedures was followed by the researcher during the data collection and coding analysis process. Forty-six themes were identified by the researcher that emerged from the data and coding analysis. Four principal themes that surfaced for conflict management practices and strategies were Strategic Conflict Management Planning, Engage Stakeholders in the Process, Convening and Inquiry, and Consensus Building. Strategic Conflict Management Planning was the top theme (93.3% participant response rate in IQ1) that was frequently mentioned, and was indirectly commented on in IQ2, IQ3, IQ6, and IQ11. Lack of Stakeholder Engagement (60% participant response rate in IQ4) surfaced as a challenge many participants faced when implementing a conflict management intervention. Feedback on Process and Outcomes (86.7% participant response rate in IQ8) was mentioned either directly or indirectly in IQ1, IQ2, IQ3, and IQ5. This theme was a core technique participants employed to measure and track success of the conflict management intervention. Four key themes that were formed on recommendations to develop conflict management competencies were Conflict Manager Competencies, Create a Problem-solving Culture, Organizational Structure and Policy, and Conflict Management Approaches and Techniques. Conflict Manager Competencies emerged in IQ11 with a 100% participant response rate. It was also indirectly mentioned in IQ1, IQ2, IQ3, IQ5, and IQ12. Create a Problem-solving Culture was the second highest theme that appeared (86.7% participant response rate in IQ10) that was indirectly stated in IQ1, IQ2, IQ3, IQ5, IQ9, and IQ11. A summary of all the 46 themes can be referenced in the Table 10. Chapter 5 will

provide further detail on the analysis, findings of the study, implications, recommendations for future research, and conclusion on the study.

Table 10

*Summary of Themes for Four Research Questions*

RQ1: Planning Strategies and Practices	RQ 2: Implementation Challenges	RQ3: Measurement of success	RQ4: Recommendations
Strategic Conflict Management Planning	Lack of Stakeholder Engagement	Designed Metrics on Conflict/Issue	Organizational Structure and Policy
Convening and Inquiry	Resistance and Opposition	Organizational Performance Metrics	Social Networks/Relationships
Design Solutions	Resource Constraints	Sustainability of Conflict Management Intervention	Communication Practices
Gain Trust and Rapport	Be Agile	Success Defined by Participants	Behavior
Outreach and Education	Positive Communication	Informal and Formal Feedback	Create a Problem-solving Culture
Engage Stakeholders in the Process	Recommitment to the Process	Discuss Core Issue	Foster Internal and External Networks
Consensus Building	Identify the Potential Challenges	Making a Positive Impact	Training
Buy-in from Leadership and Stakeholders	Modeling	Achieved Outcome	Have a Conflict Management System
Diversity and Inclusion		Feedback on Process and Outcomes	Conflict Manager Competencies
Listen and Facilitate Positive Discussions		Trends	Pre-planning and Preparation
Identify the Resistance		Reduction in Conflict	View Conflict as an Opportunity
Communicate Value			Conflict Management Approaches and Techniques
Legitimize the Process			Politics and Hidden Agendas
			Understand Organizational Dynamics



## **Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations**

To remain competitive and profitable many organizations have taken steps to redirect the strategic vision of the company, restructured the organization, brought in new leadership, merged with other entities, and implemented various other actions to impact business. However, conflict is a constant with or without such major changes introduced to the organization. A question leadership should be proposing is whether the conflict is healthy for the organization or is it manifesting in ways that are counterproductive or destructive. Furthermore, leadership should assess if conflict is a barrier to achieving business goals and negatively influencing employees' productivity and morale. This research study will further contribute to the existing body of literature on conflict management in organizations. Additionally, the study will allow educational institutions teaching Conflict Management to incorporate the best practices and strategies found in this research into existing curriculum for Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists. Also, the research conducted from this study will provide future conflict management specialists, Human Resources employees, and leaders insight into practices, challenges, and recommendations on promoting conflict management in an organization.

In Chapter 5 the researcher's analysis from the literature and data collection will be summarized. The resulting sections of this chapter will offer an overview and highlights of the findings from the study in relation to the current literature. In addition, this chapter will detail implications of the study, recommendations for future research, and final thoughts.

### **Summary of the Study**

This phenomenological qualitative study was developed to examine how organizations can enhance conflict management competencies. The study was designed to capture the practices and strategies, challenges, and recommendations provided by the shared lived

experiences of Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists when working on conflict management interventions and initiatives in organizations. The core research questions are outlined below:

- RQ1: What strategies and practices do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists employ to promote conflict management?
- RQ2: What challenges are faced by Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in implementing strategies and practices to promote conflict management?
- RQ3: How do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists measure the success of these strategies and practices to promote conflict management?
- RQ4: What recommendations do Alternative Dispute Resolution experts have for enhancing structures and networks to develop conflict management competencies?

The research study is composed of five distinct chapters. The initial chapter structured and laid the foundation to the subsequent sections of the research study. Chapter 2 provided an overview of existing literature, while chapter 3 framed the research methodology and procedures used to conduct the study. The latter chapters, 4 and 5, described the coding process, analysis of data, and the findings.

The first chapter framed the background information on the research subject, the purpose of the study, the significance of the research, and key terminology. Also indicated are the limitations and assumptions of the study. The second chapter explored the current literature of the theoretical frameworks of various types of conflict management practices and models, communication techniques, emotional intelligence, and learning theories. Further explained are factors that influence conflict such as organizational structure, technology, and team dynamics. The next chapter discussed the nature of the study, and the methods and steps applied by the researcher during the data collection phase. This consisted of a description of the research

design, recruitment process of participants employing purposive sampling, interview protocol, and human protections criteria. The fourth chapter reiterated the data collection process, as well as the coding analysis and validation of themes through statements, phrases, and direct quotes from the participants' interviews. The final chapter details the key findings from the data analysis and the following written segments.

### **Summary of the Findings**

The analysis was driven by the data gathered from the 15 participants that garnered noteworthy results and findings from the semi-structured interviews. The 15 participants that agreed to contribute to the study had extensive experience in the area of Conflict Management that included being in various positions throughout their career. Roles the participants previously held or are currently functioning in comprise of Organizational Consultant (14 participants), Trainer (12 participants), Mediator (12 participants), Alternative Dispute Resolution Professor (9 participants), Coach (8 participants), Human Resources Leader (6 participants), Lawyer (1 participant), and Ombudsman (1 participant).

These experts and leaders in Alternative Dispute Resolution were recruited from a master list created using (a) the 15th annual Online Dispute Resolution Conference website, (b) Mediate.com website, (c) Southern Methodist University's Center of Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management website, and (d) LinkedIn's Alternative Dispute Resolution professional groups. Twelve open-ended questions along with follow-up questions were asked to the 15 participants. Interviews were conducted using video conferencing and via phone calls. Forty-six themes emerged from the coding analysis process. Below highlights the top theme(s) for each interview question which identify the strategies, challenges, and recommendations based on the participants' responses:

1. In the planning phase various techniques were shared by many of the participants that assist in researching the organization, assessing the conflict, and identifying the problem statement which corresponded to strategic conflict management planning.
2. Engaging stakeholders in the process was mentioned as a tactic to get constituencies involved in the planning process to promote conflict management.
3. Listening and facilitating positive discussions was a method expressed to overcome resistance or opposition.
4. Lack of stakeholder engagement was a significant challenge participants encountered when implementing a conflict management intervention.
5. Positive communication and the ability to be agile were repeatedly commented on as approaches to deal with the unexpected challenges.
6. Both designing metrics around the conflict issue and evaluating organizational performance metrics were equally expressed by the participants as how they define and measure success for a conflict management intervention.
7. A majority of participants remarked that they were willing to settle for discussing the core issue when implementing a conflict management intervention.
8. Feedback on process and outcomes was what numerous participants stated how they measure and track success for conflict management interventions.
9. Organizational structure and policy was frequently expressed as a factor that can prevent and create conflict.
10. Create a problem-solving culture was strongly recommended to develop conflict management strategies and enhance organizational networks and structures.

11. Over the course of the participants' professions conflict manager competencies and methods were developed through traditional and experiential learning.
12. Many of the participants shared that they would have liked to have known conflict management approaches and techniques earlier on when working on conflict management interventions.

### **Discussion of Key Findings**

The findings from this study are meant to provide value and greater understanding to Alternative Dispute Resolution leaders and experts, along with other individuals working in organizations supporting conflict management initiatives or programs in some capacity. This section will compare the findings to the current body of literature discussed in chapter two. The next sections will also explain particular themes based on the response rate of the 15 participants for each research question.

**RQ1: Strategies and practices employed to promote conflict management.** The first research question was designed to gather strategies and practices employed by the participants to promote conflict management. Thirteen themes in total surfaced for research question one. The top four themes with highest response percentage for research question one included: strategic conflict management planning (93.3%), engage stakeholders in the process (73.3%), consensus building (66.7%), and convening and inquiry (66.7%).

Fourteen of the 15 participants indicated some manner or method that should occur in the planning process when leading or facilitating a conflict management intervention. Preparation through planning and research were highly commented on by the participants. This involved understanding the organization's strategic vision, meeting with key constituencies (P1, P2, P3, and P9), and gathering data through surveys and metrics (P1, P2, P3, P5, P8, and P14).

Additional feedback received from some of the participants was to keep leadership informed during this process and discuss next steps (P4, P7), perform a conflict audit (P7, P13), and determine objectives the organization anticipates will be achieved (P2). Identifying the problem statement or conflict issue was frequently emphasized in some fashion (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P12, P13, and P15). Further stressed was the notion that if the problem statement or conflict issue is not identified accurately then the following phases of the conflict management intervention would prove ineffectual and not address the actual cause of the conflict. In Chapter 2, the traditional mediation process was highlighted as a phased approach centralized on mapping out the problem solving process (Folger et al., 2001). This strategy is process oriented and supports the methodical approach used by many of the participants in some form or another. However, several participants commented that there is not an established standard or set of practices to follow when planning for a conflict management intervention.

Another strategy expressed was engaging stakeholders in the process. Creating a process that people agree to (P5), keeping individuals informed throughout the process (P6), and getting people involved in developing solutions (P4) are fundamental when engaging stakeholders. Encouraging people to develop solutions to the problem was expressed by the participants so constituencies become invested and aware that there are mutual benefits in being involved in the process. Explaining to the stakeholders the value of resolving conflict quickly was also shared (P10). Furthermore, actively listening, hearing people's narratives, and coaching them through the process were all ways to engage stakeholders (Barner & Ideus, 2017).

Listening to the narratives of others not only promotes engagement, it also aids in consensus building and convening and inquiry. Narrative story-telling is connected to how individuals live their life in narrative form and experience their life in a world they have constructed (Barner &

Ideus, 2017). Hearing one's stories through conducting interviews, informal and formal one-on-one meetings (P2, P3, P4, P5, P9, P14), and focus groups (P3, P5, P9, P12) with stakeholders and leaders aids trust building (Mayer et al., 1995). Gaps or paradoxes in a story allow for further inquiry that can offer a better understanding of the conflict from the other person's perspective. When able to separate the person and the problem this shifts conflict in to being an external element instead of conflict only being associated to a person or group (Cloke, 2008). A number of drivers cause conflicts which include information, relationships, structure, interests, and values (Furlough, 2005). Uncovering the root cause and dynamics of a conflict can be complex so understanding the different conflict drivers help Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in strategic conflict management planning, engaging stakeholders in the process, consensus building, and convening and inquiry. This aids conflict management practitioners when at times a more nuanced approach is needed to find practical solutions.

### **RQ2: Challenges faced when implementing conflict management interventions.**

Research question two was formed to gain insight into the challenges the participants faced during the implementation of conflict management interventions and how they dealt with them. Eight themes transpired for research question two. The top three themes with the highest response percentage for research question two consisted of: lack of stakeholder engagement (60%), be agile (46.7%), and positive communication (46.7%).

In IQ4, lack of stakeholder engagement was stated routinely as a challenge encountered during the implementation phase of a conflict management intervention (P1, P3, P5, P6, P7, P10, P12, P13, and P14). Lack of leadership buy-in was another barrier faced by the participants (P3, P5, P7, P10, P12, P13, and P14). The literature discusses the link between motivation and the engagement level of employees in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic measures (Benabou & Tirole,

2002). Understanding the motivation of the stakeholders and making them aware that their involvement is crucial should be communicated. Robbins and Judge (2015) state motivation is measured by “an individual’s intensity, direction, and persistence of effort toward attaining a goal” (p. 184). Intrinsic motivation does not focus on external rewards but on internal stimuli such as learning to develop proficiency or to complete a task to gain satisfaction (Calder & Staw, 1975; Deci & Ryan, 1980). While external motivation is driven by monetary incentives and recognition. Furthermore, explaining the implementation phases of the conflict management intervention will set expectations early on for stakeholders so they understand that delays will occur, challenges will happen, and progress will be incremental. Managing their expectations will alleviate potential disengagement, along with fostering communication and building rapport in the initial stages to gain trust.

Being agile and having positive communication were the next highest themes for RQ2. Participants were asked how they dealt with unexpected challenges in IQ5. Being agile and framing communication in a positive way was commonly expressed. According to Wilmot and Hocker (2011) power is interpersonal and the dynamics of power are fluid, changeable, and dependent on each situation. Conflict also possesses this fluidity and movement based on circumstances. Unpredictability the participants experience requires them to demonstrate their ability to be agile and change directions when unanticipated challenges arise (P1, P2, P5, P7, P8, P9, and P10). Three aspects of being agile are (a) be flexible, (b) contingency planning, and (c) self-reflection.

In addition, framing communication in a positive manner is essential when administering conflict management strategies (P1, P3, P7, P9, P12, P14, and P15). Turning roadblocks into something productive (P1), being creative, showing empathy (Barreta, 2008), and making sure



you are present encourage positive communication (P12). How people express themselves in conflict can determine an outcome for an issue (Bergiel et al., 2015; Hartman & McCambridge, 2011). The connection between communication and conflict enables the process of conflict management to occur. People need to be able to communicate freely to lessen chances of miscommunication and confusion. An opportunity to have a deeper conversation has the potential to be transformative in nature (P7). The transformative methodology used in mediation fosters empowerment and recognition shifts, and centers on the parties determining the process and the outcome (Folger et al., 2001).

**RQ3: Measuring and tracking the success of the conflict management interventions.**

Research question three was developed to get input on the success measurements participants use for their conflict management interventions. Eleven themes emerged for research question three. The top four themes with highest response percentage for research question three comprised of: feedback on process and outcomes (86.7%), designed metrics on conflict/issue (46.7%), organizational performance metrics (46.7%), and discuss core issue (46.7%).

Thirteen of the 15 participants commented that they measure and track success based on feedback they receive on process and outcomes implemented. Post feedback surveys inquiring if the users and stakeholders were satisfied with the outcome (P1 and P11) were used. Another measurement utilized was evaluation forms, engagement surveys, pulse surveys, and 360 feedback forms (P3, P5, and P7). Feedback was also gathered through post interviews assessing how people felt and if they thought they were heard.

The following three themes for RQ3 that ranked highest each had the same response rate percentage. Metrics designed around the conflict issue or problem statement was mentioned multiple times (P1, P5, P6, P8, P11, P13, and P15). Identifying the problem initially and

customizing metrics around that is a practice employed (P13 and P15). For example, metrics can be viewed in terms of dollars, time saved, and productivity (P15); or it can be assessed by tracking the number of complaints, types of complaints, employee turnover, production measurements, comparison of existing measurements, and speed of time of resolution. Organizational performance metrics is another measurement of success (P1, P4, P6, P9, P10, P13, and P14). Evaluating business outcomes, measuring process improvements, and team performance can also be tracked (P1, P5 and P9). In IQ7, discussing the core issue is an outcome participants were willing to settle for during the implementation of the conflict management intervention (P2, P4, P7, P8, P10, P13, and P15). Establishing rapport and encouraging people to discuss their interests (P4), along with acquiring time, consideration, energy, and resources from leadership was considered by P10 as a partial success.

Although there was much data collected from the participants on how they define and measure success for conflict management interventions, it was clear that there is no set of standard measurements practitioners apply. According to a few of the participants, a weak point when conducting a conflict management intervention relates to measuring and tracking success. The significance of aligning framework documents that are structured in the planning phase to the success measurements after the implementation phase is standard for several participants.

**RQ4: Recommendations to develop conflict management competencies.** The final research question was constructed to obtain an understanding from the participants on how to enhance structures and networks to develop conflict management competencies. Fourteen themes materialized for research question four. The top three themes with the highest response percentage for research question four included: conflict management competencies (100%), create a problem-solving culture (86.7%), and organizational structure and policy (73.3%).

There was an overall consensus that conflict manager competencies were developed both through experience and some type of formal training. Characteristics of psychology of conflict were brought up by several of the participants (P1, P6, P8, P10 and P14). This entails being able to reserve making judgments, assumptions, and to be conscious of biases. Individuals develop an understanding of conflict through the perspectives of the people dealing with the issue (P2, P3, and P13). Being aware of one's conflict type and recognizing how other conflict styles interact with each other can prove valuable when leading teams or working with a group of diverse individuals (Meluch & Walter, 2012). This concept of self-awareness is one of the pillars of emotional intelligence, according to Daniel Goleman (Barreta, 2008). Mastering the capacity to understand the emotions of one self and the feelings of others heightens the skills level to respond to and manage conflict. Gaining a better understanding of human behavior was also emphasized, and corresponds to intrapersonal, interpersonal, and organizational conflicts (Di Pietro & Virgilio, 2013; Donais, 2006).

Several participants commented that displaying the ability to be open, flexible, authentic, and to build rapport and trust were crucial. The relationships between coworkers must have trust otherwise the potential for conflict increases (Mayer et al., 1995). The absence of trust within project teams and departments generates obstacles in meeting deadlines and completing projects (Peelle, 2006). A fundamental comprehension of beliefs, customs, values and traditions are needed to help build trust and rapport with others (Mayer et al., 1995).

Thirteen of the 15 participants indicated aspects that supported organizations creating a problem-solving culture to manage conflict. Literature describes a connection with an organization's culture and environment and how conflict is managed (Friedman et al., 2000; Jameson et al., 2009; Poitras & Le Tareau, 2008). There are situations in which conflicts need a

more evolved approach to reach a solution, and the knowledge capital of an informal network or social system can assist (Krackhardt & Hanson, 1993; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015). When insight, guidance, or direction is needed versus a traditional resolution then an informal network of peers can be referred to in such instances (Kotter, 2014). Utilizing an informal network of peers, mentors, and coaches supports the development (Salas et al., 2015; Wenger-Trayner & Wenger-Trayner, 2015) of conflict management competencies. Several principles are in line fostering informal networks. Within cognitive apprenticeship there are various stages of skill acquisition. Creating a problem-solving culture leans on the principles of attaining expert problem solving skills detailed in the cognitive apprenticeship model. The framework describes growing complexity, increasing diversity, and teaching global before local skills as methods to build proficiency (Collins et al., 1987). Organizational structures and policy were stated by many of the participants as both creating and preventing conflict (P1, P3, P5, P6, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14 and P15).

### **Implications of the Study**

The objective of this study was to determine conflict management strategies and practices to enhance conflict management competencies within the workplace. Upon completion of the different phases of the study significant themes emerged and applicable implications were developed from the analysis and study findings. The following sections detail the implications:

**Implications for organizations.** The natural state of an organization is to be in conflict. The perception of conflict is typically seen as negative, undesirable, or even harmful in organizations (Clerq et al., 2009; Meluch & Walter, 2012; Wilmot & Hocker, 2011). A need to shift the conflict narrative and slant within organizations should occur so conflict can be viewed as an opportunity to enhance organizational effectiveness and increase innovation (Gladstein,

1984; Salas et al., 2015). To attain organizational objectives and reduce costs connected to conflict corporations should encourage a problem-solving culture. A strategic framework to promote a problem-solving culture that incorporates literature and data gathered in this study is composed of three components (a) environment, (b) system, and (c) competency (See Figure 15). The three pillars are further described in the below sections.

**Environment.** The environmental structure and design directly influences how conflict is viewed, communicated, and managed in organizations. The organizational design, team structure, and impact of technology on communication have changed how people interact and work together in the modern workplace. Group dynamics and team communication has changed as a result of leaner organizational structures with fewer levels of management and the formation of matrixed and self-managed, cross-functional teams. Consequently, this increases conflict and impacts team performance and employee engagement.

Creating an environment that encourages social relationships and networks allows information and knowledge to be circulated through formal and informal channels. This also produces communities and networks in which individuals can turn to when seeking guidance, feedback, insight, or informal problem-solving. Employee resource groups, centers of excellence, and communities of practice are some networks organizations can establish to promote such interactions organically. The integration of a diverse group of stakeholders in the conflict management process is vital for an initiative to be successful. However, it is also significant to have an organization that supports diversity and inclusion in the workforce population to foster a creative and innovative environment.

In addition, it is beneficial to have the employees and staff understand the organizational structure and various dynamics, programs, and strategic initiatives of the company. To have an

awareness of this helps individuals navigate complex processes and structures lessening the occurrence of conflict due to miscommunication and confusion. Furthermore, an organization must distinguish its conflict identity and ensure that this is messaged appropriately throughout the established structure. For example, here are some questions the organization needs to address (a) what is the organization's perception of conflict, (b) how does leadership deal with conflict, and (c) what are the systems and mechanisms put in place to manage conflict. Finally, the use of organizational performance metrics such as key performance indicators to assess the impact of conflict is paramount. Reviewing the effect conflict has on an organization's performance will aid in understanding if conflict is constructive or destructive to the success of the organization. Fostering a problem-solving culture that empowers and includes individuals to contribute and determine what success is has a substantial influence on the engagement of employees.

*System.* As mentioned in the literature review organizations often implement some type of Dispute Resolution program to manage conflict and handle complaints filed by employees. Making an investment in a robust conflict management system to address disputes is necessary for organizations to promote a problem-solving culture. These systems should be reevaluated and audited periodically to ensure conflicts and disputes are managed, individuals are utilizing the conflict management system, and to review if the system put in place is effective and relevant. Another systemic process that could be integrated during leadership strategy and planning meetings is to fold in aspects shared by the participants described in the Strategic Conflict Management Planning theme from IQ1. This allows leaders to consider the role conflict would play when rolling out strategic initiatives. Planning meetings would be the time to discuss ways to prevent or reduce possible conflict.

Another element tied to the system component of a problem-solving culture is designing specific metrics around the conflict/issue. Connecting customized metrics to measure the systems, processes, and tools employed to manage conflict will track progress made and identify if changes need to be considered and executed. Feedback gathered on process and outcomes, along with monitoring trends are also recommended. Additionally, to ensure individuals understand the systems in place education should be provided, along with basic conflict management training for the entire organization. This type of outreach and education is pivotal so leaders and employees are receiving the same information. Also, this encourages stakeholders and users to engage in the process. Carrying out these actions can legitimize the systems and processes used to manage conflict.

**Competency.** The third feature of a problem-solving culture is the competency of the management and staff to manage conflict. While organizations have largely focused on structuring environments and putting conflict management systems in place, attention also should be given to conflict management competencies at the individual level. This study has provided key conflict management approaches and techniques that organizations can leverage to develop conflict management competencies. Themes emerged from the data analysis that would be relevant to building core competencies when dealing with conflict. The ability to demonstrate agility, gain trust and rapport, conduct initial planning and preparation, design solutions, communicate effectively, and model key behaviors others are able to observe were all discussed by various participants.

Many of these themes will also be incorporated in the competencies mentioned for Conflict Manager Specialists explained in the next implication section. A recommendation was suggested by one participant for organizations to have specific functions and roles for Conflict

Manager Specialists. Utilizing individuals with a specialized skillset to manage conflict will address multiple gaps organizations possess. One disconnect organizations demonstrate is placing an emphasis on project and business plans, and giving less attention to processes on communication. Secondly, organizations tend to focus their efforts on being reactive versus establishing mechanisms to prevent conflict. Finally, organizations should understand and listen to employees' concerns early on to deter conflict from escalating and formal complaints being filed. Acquiring internal conflict management consultants who have expertise and formal training in coaching, team building, organizational change management and organizational design can address such issues.

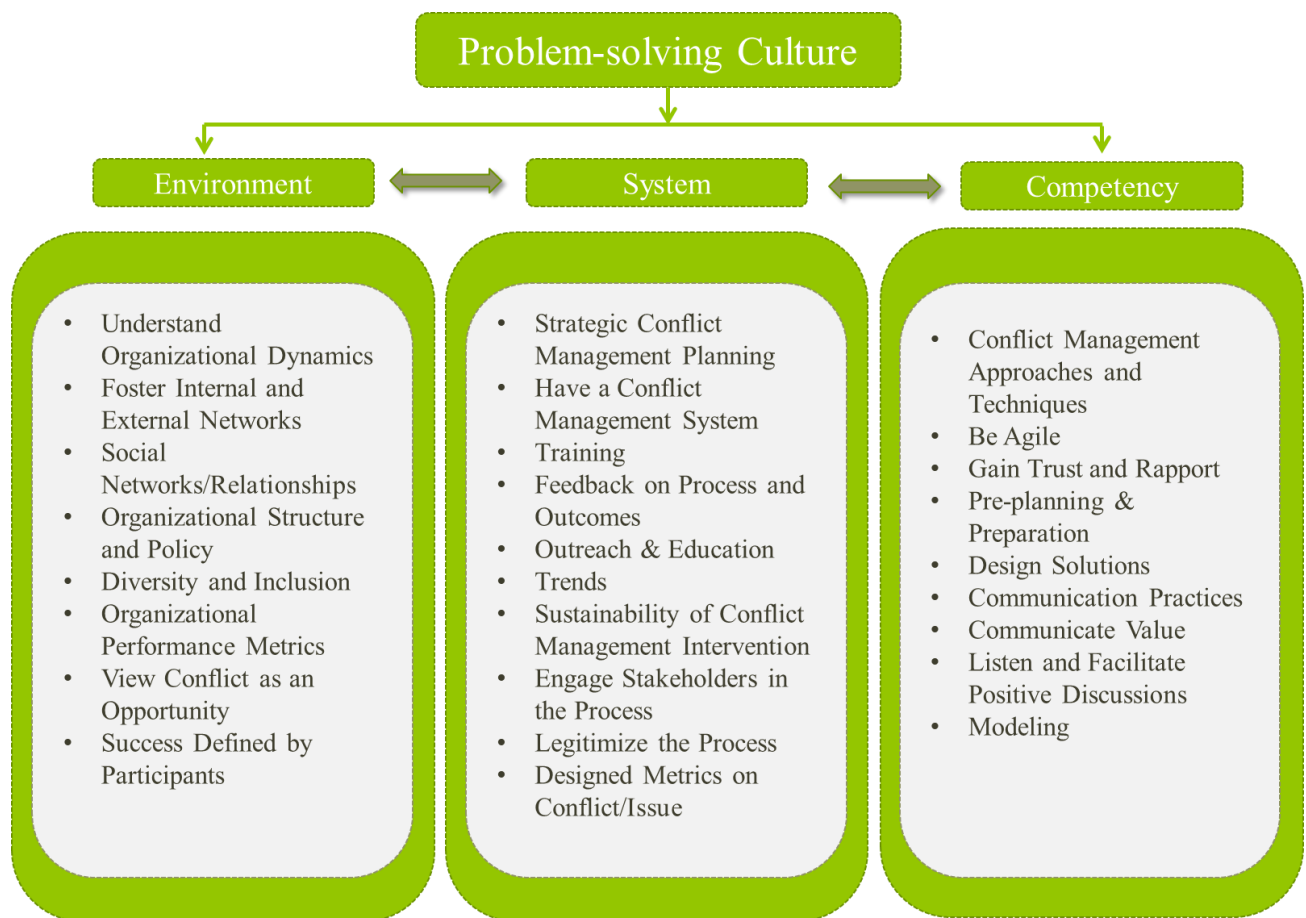


Figure 15. Problem-solving culture framework.



**Implications for Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists.** The findings of this study can be beneficial to existing Alternative Dispute Resolutions specialists as well as individuals entering the field of Conflict Management. The participants in the study provided insight and input to strategies and practices they use during a conflict management intervention. These include identifying a problem statement, assessing organizational dynamics, conducting a conflict audit, engaging key stakeholders, employing communication practices, overcoming resistance, and defining and tracking success measures. In addition, another strategic model that could be used to understand the organizational dynamics is the SPELIT Power Matrix Leadership Tool which examines six elements of an organizational strategy. Incorporating a holistic approach to understand a conflict issue utilizing conflict management models, techniques, and frameworks will generate standards and processes Alternative Dispute Resolutions specialists and others working in the areas of Dispute Resolution and Human Resources can apply when promoting conflict management strategies. Figure 16 lays out a three tier model that Alternative Dispute Resolutions specialists can apply when working in organizations with conflict.

- The bottom tier labeled Identifying Problem Statement that is coded in green centers on detecting the root cause of the conflict or issue an organization has encountered. It is essential to understand the conflict in the initial planning phase of an intervention because subsequent steps and actions will be dependent on identifying the conflict. Additionally, metrics will be designed and tracked according to the conflict assessment and identified problem statement.
- The second tier of boxes coded in blue consists of three overarching strategies and practices that Alternative Dispute Resolutions specialists can employ in conflict management work. Assess organizational dynamics, employ communication practices,

and conduct a conflict audit were all feedback received from the interview questions that fell under RQ1 and RQ4 which focused on the strategies and practices, and the recommendations of this study.

- Lastly, the third tier highlighted in orange is comprised of three elements that will provide tactics and approaches Alternative Dispute Resolutions specialists can apply when implementing conflict management interventions. Overcome resistance and opposition, engage key stakeholders, and define and track success measures are all related to themes developed in RQ2 and RQ3 that investigated challenges and success measures in the study.

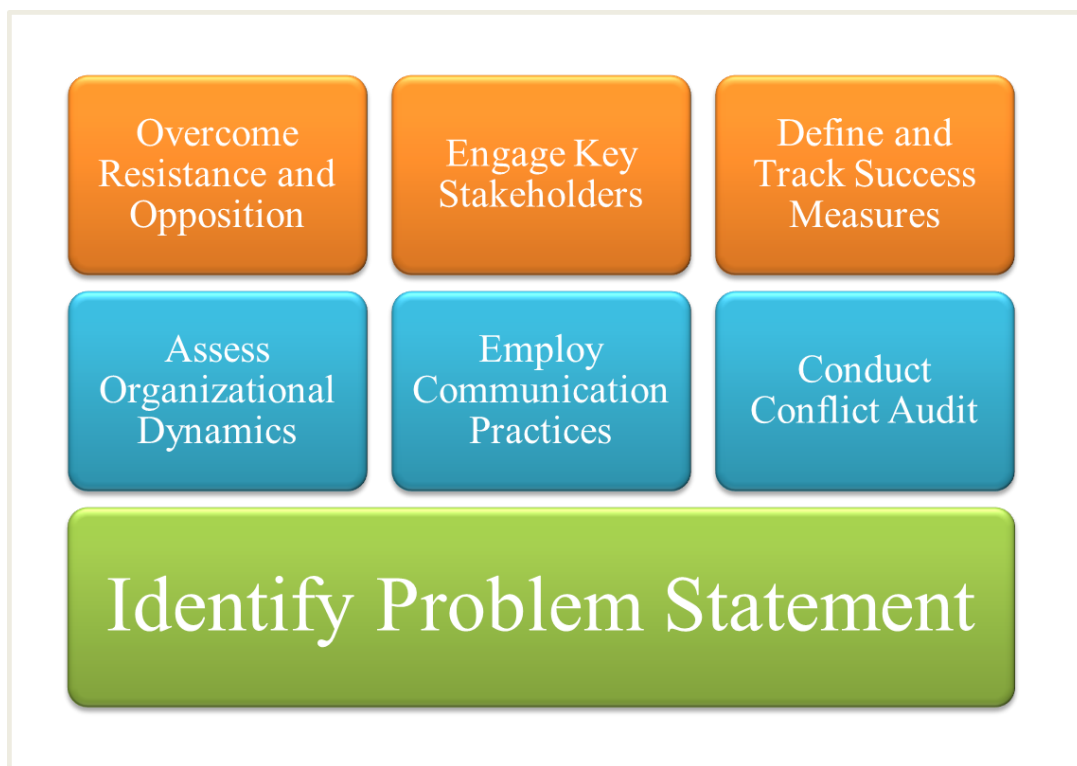


Figure 16. Conflict management intervention model.

**Implications for educational institutions teaching Conflict Management.** Consensus was reached among all the study participants that they attained a substantial degree of their conflict management skills and approaches through experiential learning. The researcher came

to the conclusion that comprehensive conflict management training was lacking in many educational institutions. Characterizing conflict manager competencies can help craft future courses and curriculum that would reflect on the following aptitudes and skills.

- Understand the psychology of conflict and human behavior
- Be open, flexible, and authentic
- Ability to be realistic and manage expectations
- Have effective communication and listening skills
- Proficiency in coaching/training/facilitating skills
- Capacity to build relationships, rapport, and trust
- Knowledge of organizational change and process design
- Understanding of conflict management models and theories

The chart below categorizes the conflict manager competencies gathered in this study into four quadrants and several subgroups for each core competency (a) psychology of conflict, (b) assess conflict, (c) communication, and (d) engagement (See Figure 17).

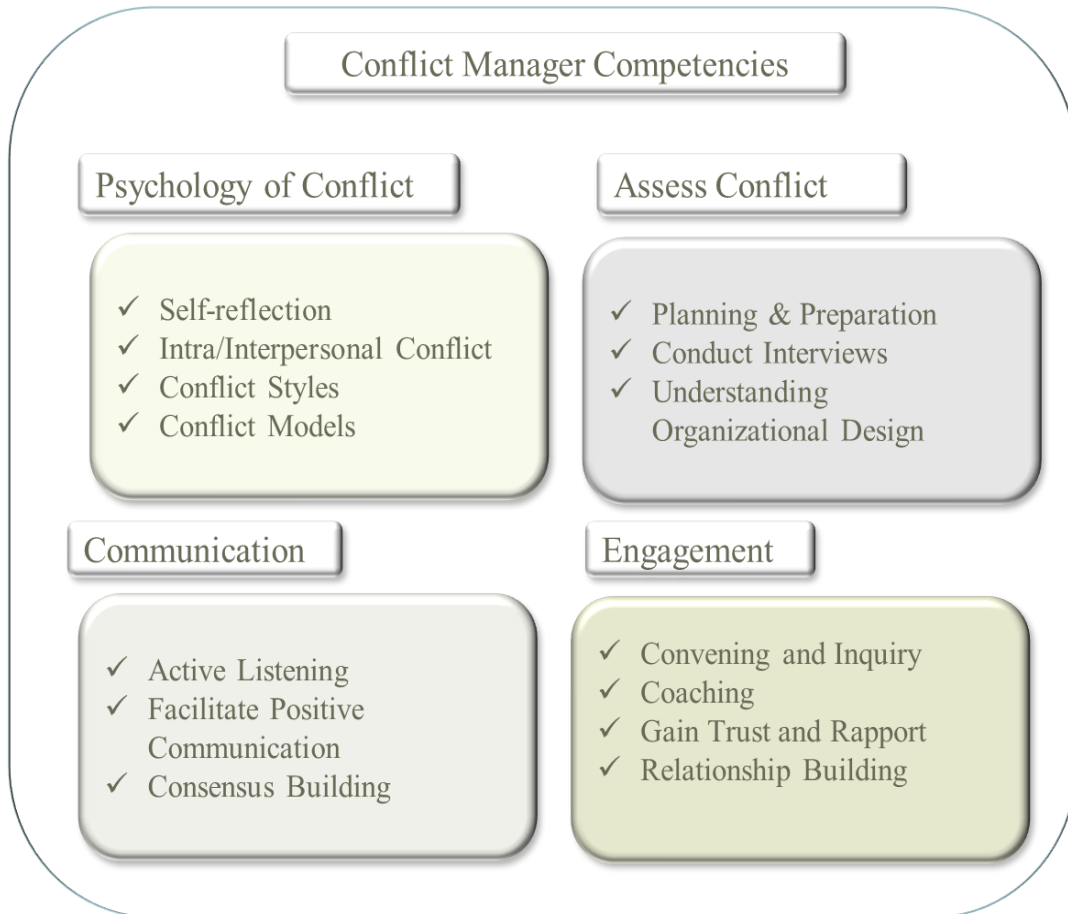


Figure 17. Conflict manager competency paradigm.

### Recommendations for Future Research

This qualitative study interviewed 15 Alternative Dispute Resolution scholars, leaders and/or practitioners who implement conflict management interventions in organizations. The intent of this research study was to explore the strategies and practices, challenges, and recommendations shared by the participants to enhance conflict management competencies within the workplace. Merging the current literature relative to conflict, organizational design, communication, and learning theory along with the collective experiences and knowledge from the 15 participants has constructed an in depth study that can be added to the existing body of research. To further widen and add to the current literature the following studies are recommended for future research to support organizations manage conflict.

1. Design a research study on women in Alternative Dispute Resolution roles that mirrors this study. Four of the 15 participants (26.7%) in this study were female. Conducting a study solely with female Alternative Dispute Resolution practitioners may yield varying practices and strategies, challenges, and recommendations based on the experiences shared by female participants. The conflict management approaches and methods collected could be compared to this study. Strategies related to coaching, framing communication in positive ways, and self-reflection was reiterated often by the female Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists more so than the male participants. Additionally, the female participants in this study expressed a few instances in which they encountered gender bias during their conflict management work. Another interview question that could be added in a future study to explore this phenomenon would be: Did you experience any challenges as a female Alternative Dispute Resolution specialist?
2. Develop a study that examines the conflict management culture of an organization. Secondly, the study can investigate if the organizational culture and its relation to conflict management influence creativity and innovation within the organization. The study can further examine if there is a correlation between the conflict management identity and methods of an organization, and the creativity and innovation culminated. An added component to this study would be to investigate to what degree creativity and innovation transpired and in what mediums and forms was it exhibited.
3. Structure and administer a study that would research organizations that have initiated practices and programs that encourage a high coaching and problem-solving culture. Elements that can be examined would be: (a) to identify what are the practices and programs that encourage a high coaching and problem-solving culture; (b) measure how

the perspective of conflict has changed for the leaders and employees; and (c) evaluate the volume, velocity, complexity, and frequency of conflicts in the organization in its current state. The study is developed to focus on how organizations encourage conflict management competencies incorporating a high coaching and problem-solving culture.

4. Conduct a research study that identifies which conflict management approaches are effective based on the structure, size, and span of an organization. Elements that can be examined would be: (a) identify what conflict management practices and strategies are utilized to manage conflict; (b) measure how the perspective of conflict has changed for the leaders and employees relative to the approaches employed; and (c) evaluate the volume, velocity, complexity, and frequency of conflicts in the organization in its current state. The study is intended to focus on how organizations encourage conflict management competencies according to organizational structure and design.
5. Develop a study assessing conflict management competencies of leaders and employees in an organization based on the existence of a conflict management system. Elements that can be examined would be: (a) identify what the conflict management systems employ as strategies to manage conflict; (b) measure how the perspective of conflict has changed for the leaders and employees relative to the approaches employed; and (c) evaluate the volume, velocity, complexity, and frequency of conflicts in the organization in its current state. The study is designed to focus on how organizations encourage conflict management competencies based on systems.
6. Form a research study that explores organizations with an identity of framing conflict as positive and productive, and incentivizing developing conflict management competencies. Elements that can be examined would be: (a) understand how an

organization incentivizes leaders and employees to develop conflict management competencies; (b) identify how leaders and employees develop conflict management competencies; (c) measure how the perspective of conflict has changed for the leaders and employees relative to the approaches employed; and (d) evaluate the volume, velocity, complexity, and frequency of conflicts in the organization in its current state. The study is designed to focus on how organizations encourage conflict management competencies of the individuals.

7. Conduct a study on senior leaders in organizations who are adept in conflict management competencies and measure the impact those competency behaviors have on their effectiveness as leaders, achievement of performance/business outcomes, and employee engagement. Furthermore, the study can ascertain whether these leaders demonstrate additional behaviors, techniques, and approaches in relation to conflict management. The data gathered can establish best practices and strategies in conflict management for leaders and organizations.

### **Final Thoughts**

Conflict is prevalent in various structures and organizations, and regardless of size, industry, and location the need to establish practical conflict management mechanism is readily apparent. By characterizing conflict management strategies and practices collected from Alternative Dispute Resolution scholars, leaders and/or practitioners, organizations can implement strategies and practices to enhance conflict management competencies within the workplace. Organizations are complex in nature and over time and expansion can create unnecessary conflict due to silos, communication gaps, and failed processes. Enterprises experiencing transitions, undergoing a transformation, or encountering challenges that are

counterproductive will benefit from approaches and methods that enhance conflict management proficiencies in organizations.

Leveraging innovative ways to reduce or prevent conflict among stakeholders by introducing problem-solving mechanisms to improve conflict management skills throughout an organization. Organizations are routinely aligning business needs with the future state of the entity. Through realignments and restructuring conflict is created impacting the organization and its employees. To manage organizational changes, new projects assignments, and/or to develop specialized skills corporations construct environments, systems, and core competencies to manage conflict productively. The empowerment of employees to handle disputes, misunderstandings, and roadblocks increases when establishing a holistic conflict management approach. Implementing conflict management programs have been a strategic response to organizations experiencing internal turmoil and potential threats. Applying a strategy that will advance conflict management competencies via structures and networks can be highly efficient in managing and preventing conflict. Conflict can be either constructive or destructive to an organization, and has the ability to bring about extensive transformation and insight. With the right environment, structure, and culture individuals can deal with conflict in a transparent manner and manage conflict in a healthy fashion versus avoiding conflict, issues and/or negative behaviors that are detrimental to an organization.



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## APPENDIX A

### IRB Approval Notice



Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

#### NOTICE OF APPROVAL FOR HUMAN RESEARCH

Date: May 17, 2017

Protocol Investigator Name: Roslynn Almas

Protocol #: 16-11-437

Project Title: PROMOTING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES WITHIN INFORMAL STRUCTURES AND INFORMAL NETWORKS

School: Graduate School of Education and Psychology

Dear Almas:

Thank you for submitting your amended exempt application to Pepperdine University's Institutional Review Board (IRB). We appreciate the work you have done on your proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations 45 CFR 46.101 that govern the protections of human subjects.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit an amendment to the IRB. Since your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite the best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete written explanation of the event and your written response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the IRB and documenting the adverse event can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* at [community.pepperdine.edu/irb](http://community.pepperdine.edu/irb).

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all communication or correspondence related to your application and this approval. Should you have additional questions or require clarification of the contents of this letter, please contact the IRB Office. On behalf of the IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

Judy Ho, IRB Chairperson

Page: 1





Pepperdine University  
24255 Pacific Coast Highway  
Malibu, CA 90263  
TEL: 310-506-4000

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Brett Leach, Regulatory Affairs Specialist

## APPENDIX B

### Informed Consent Form

#### PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

*(Graduate School of Education and Psychology)*

#### INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

#### PROMOTING CONFLICT MANAGEMENT COMPETENCIES WITHIN INFORMAL STRUCTURES AND INFORMAL NETWORKS

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by **Roslynn Almas, M.A and Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D.** at Pepperdine University, because you an Alternate Dispute Resolution scholar, expert and/or leader in the field of Conflict Management. Your participation is voluntary. You should read the information below, and ask questions about anything that you do not understand, before deciding whether to participate. Please take as much time as you need to read the consent form. You may also decide to discuss participation with your family or friends. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form. You will also be given a copy of this form for you records.

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

The purpose of this study is to determine how organizations can enhance structures and networks to enhance conflict management competencies. This purpose will be achieved by understanding what strategies and practices leaders and specialists in the field of Alternative Dispute Resolution use to promote Conflict Management standards. Additionally, the study seeks to identify what challenges these individuals encounter when implementing conflict management strategies and practices in organizational systems, and how success is measured.

#### **STUDY PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that will last for approximately 60 minutes. The semi-structured interview includes the use of 10 to 12 open-ended questions that are designed in advance, with probes that are either planned or unplanned to clarify your responses. The types of questions will elicit valuable practices, strategies, and frameworks that current Alternate Dispute Resolution specialists utilize

in encouraging Conflict Management standards in organizations. During this interview your answers will be recorded. If you choose not to have your answers recorded, you will not be eligible to participate in this study.

### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

The potential and foreseeable risks associated with participation in this study include feeling uncomfortable with questions, issues with self-esteem, boredom, and fatigue from sitting for a long period.

### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

While there are no direct benefits to the study participants, there are several anticipated benefits to society which include understanding Conflict Management strategies and practices collected from Alternate Dispute Resolution scholars, leaders and/or practitioners that organizations can implement to enhance Conflict Management competencies within the workplace. Practical applications resulting from such research would support a framework that could be employed to improve learning initiatives focused on advancing Conflict Management proficiencies in organizations. Organizations and institutions experiencing transition, going through a transformation, or facing challenges can benefit leveraging innovative ways to reduce or prevent conflict among stakeholders.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

I will keep your records for this study confidential as far as permitted by law. However, if I am required to do so by law, I may be required to disclose information collected about you. Examples of the types of issues that would require me to break confidentiality are if you tell me about instances of child abuse and elder abuse. Pepperdine's University's Human Subjects Protection Program (HSPP) may also access the data collected. The HSPP occasionally reviews and monitors research studies to protect the rights and welfare of research subjects.

To protect the identity of your responses, the recordings will be saved under a pseudonym and transferred to a USB flash drive, which will be kept in a safe, locked drawer within the researcher's residence for three years, after which it will be properly destroyed. The researcher will be transcribing and coding the interviews herself. The documents containing the transcribed interviews and coding analysis will also be transferred to the same USB flash drive and maintained in the same locked drawer at the researcher's residence, which will be destroyed after three years. Your name, affiliated organization, or any personal identifiable information will not be reported. Instead a pseudonym with a generic organization name will be used to protect your confidentiality.

### **SUSPECTED NEGLECT OR ABUSE OF CHILDREN**

Under California law, the researcher(s) who may also be a mandated reporter will not maintain as confidential, information about known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse or neglect of a child, dependent adult or elder, including, but not limited to, physical, sexual, emotional, and financial abuse or neglect. If any researcher has or is given such information, he or she is required to report this abuse to the proper authorities.

### **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Your participation is voluntary. Your refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study.

### **ALTERNATIVES TO FULL PARTICIPATION**

Your alternative is to not participate or completing the items for which you feel comfortable. Your relationship with your employer will not be affected whether you participate or not in this study.

### **EMERGENCY CARE AND COMPENSATION FOR INJURY**

If you are injured as a direct result of research procedures you will receive medical treatment; however, you or your insurance will be responsible for the cost. Pepperdine University does not provide any monetary compensation for injury

### **INVESTIGATOR'S CONTACT INFORMATION**

You understand that the investigator is willing to answer any inquiries you may have concerning the research herein described. You understand that you may contact Roslynn Almas at XXXXX@pepperdine.edu, 469-XXX-XXXX, or Farzin Majidi, XXXXX@pepperdine.edu if you have any other questions or concerns about this research.

### **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT – IRB CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you have questions, concerns or complaints about your rights as a research participant or research in general please contact Dr. Judy Ho, Chairperson of the Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board at Pepperdine University 6100 Center Drive Suite 500

Los Angeles, CA 90045, 310-568-5753 or [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu).

## SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

## AUDIO

*I agree to be audio-recorded*

*I do not want to be audio-recorded*

---

Name of Participant

---

Signature of Participant

---

Date

## SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I have explained the research to the participants and answered all of his/her questions. In my judgment the participants are knowingly, willingly and intelligently agreeing to participate in this study. They have the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study

and all of the various components. They also have been informed participation is voluntarily and that they may discontinue their participation in the study at any time, for any reason.

---

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

---

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

---

Date

## APPENDIX C

### Recruitment Script

Dear [Name],

My name is Roslynn Almas. I am a doctoral student in Organizational Leadership at Pepperdine University's Graduate School of Education and Psychology. I am conducting a study on leaders in healthcare and you are invited to participate in the study.

If you agree, you are invited to participate in an interview that intends to explore Conflict Management strategies that Alternate Dispute Resolution practitioners and leaders employ in organizations. The purpose will be achieved by identifying strategies, challenges, and successes Alternate Dispute Resolution experts have experienced when implementing Conflict Management best practices in organizations.

The interview is anticipated to take no more than 60 minutes to complete and the interview will be audio-taped with your consent. Participation in this study is voluntary. Your identity as a participant will remain confidential during and after the study. Your name, affiliated organization or any personal identifiable information will not be reported. Instead a pseudonym from a "generic organization" will be used to protect your confidentiality. Additionally, confidentiality and privacy of all participants will be fully protected through the reporting of data in aggregate form.

If you have questions or would like to participate, please contact me at 469-XXX-XXXX or XXXXXXXX@pepperdine.edu

Thank you for your participation,

Roslynn Almas  
Pepperdine University  
Graduate School of Education and Psychology  
Status: Doctoral Student

## APPENDIX D

### Peer Reviewer Form

Dear reviewer:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my research study. The table below is designed to ensure that may research questions for the study are properly addressed with corresponding interview questions.

In the table below, please review each research question and the corresponding interview questions. For each interview question, consider how well the interview question addresses the research question. If the interview question is directly relevant to the research question, please mark “Keep as stated.” If the interview question is irrelevant to the research question, please mark “Delete it.” Finally, if the interview question can be modified to best fit with the research question, please suggest your modifications in the space provided. You may also recommend additional interview questions you deem necessary.

Once you have completed your analysis, please return the completed form to me via email to roslynn.almas@pepperdine.edu. Thank you again for your participation.

Research Question	Corresponding Interview Question
RQ1: What strategies and practices do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists employ to promote conflict management?	1. What planning process did you engage in? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. The question is directly relevant to Research question - <b>Keep as stated</b></li> <li>b. The question is irrelevant to research question – <b>Delete it</b></li> <li>c. The question should be <b>modified as suggested:</b></li> </ul> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> 2. How did you get various constituencies involved in the planning process? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. The question is directly relevant to Research question - <b>Keep as stated</b></li> <li>e. The question is irrelevant to research question – <b>Delete it</b></li> </ul>



	<p>f. The question should be <b>modified as suggested</b>:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>3. How did you overcome resistance or opposition to your plan?</p> <p>a. The question is directly relevant to Research question - <b>Keep as stated</b></p> <p>b. The question is irrelevant to research question – <b>Delete it</b></p> <p>c. The question should be <b>modified as suggested</b>:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>RQ2: What challenges are faced by Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists in implementing strategies and practices to promote conflict management?</p>	<p>4. What challenges did you face in the planning phase of the implementation?</p> <p>a. The question is directly relevant to Research question - <b>Keep as stated</b></p> <p>b. The question is irrelevant to research question – <b>Delete it</b></p> <p>c. The question should be <b>modified as suggested</b>:</p> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p>

	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>5. Did anything unexpected happen that you had not planned for?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The question is directly relevant to Research question - <b>Keep as stated</b></li> <li>The question is irrelevant to research question – <b>Delete it</b></li> <li>The question should be <b>modified as suggested:</b></li> </ol> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>RQ3: How do Alternative Dispute Resolution specialists measure the success of these strategies and practices to promote conflict management?</p>	<p>6. How do you define and measure your success for your intervention?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The question is directly relevant to Research question - <b>Keep as stated</b></li> <li>The question is irrelevant to research question – <b>Delete it</b></li> <li>The question should be <b>modified as suggested:</b></li> </ol> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p>7. What final outcome were you willing to settle for?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The question is directly relevant to Research question - <b>Keep as stated</b></li> <li>The question is irrelevant to research question – <b>Delete it</b></li> </ol>

	<p><b>c. The question should be <b>modified as suggested:</b></b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <p><b>8: How did you measure and track your success?</b></p> <hr/> <p>a. The question is directly relevant to Research question - <b>Keep as stated</b></p> <p>b. The question is irrelevant to research question – <b>Delete it</b></p> <p>c. The question should be <b>modified as suggested:</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/>
<p>RQ4: What recommendations do Alternative Dispute Resolution experts have for enhancing structures and networks to develop conflict management competencies?</p>	<p><b>9. How do organizational networks and structures prevent and/or create conflict?</b></p> <p>a. The question is directly relevant to Research question - <b>Keep as stated</b></p> <p>b. The question is irrelevant to research question – <b>Delete it</b></p> <p>c. The question should be <b>modified as suggested:</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <p><b>10. What are some the lessons learned? What are some things you would have like to know?</b></p> <p>a. The question is directly relevant to</p>

	<p>Research question - <b>Keep as stated</b></p> <p>b. The question is irrelevant to research question – <b>Delete it</b></p> <p>c. The question should be <b>modified as suggested:</b></p> <hr/> <hr/> <p>I recommend adding the following interview questions:</p> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
--	---