

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES OF A SELECTED GROUP OF
PENNSYLVANIA SUPERINTENDENTS AND THEIR BOARD PRESIDENTS'
PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES

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Conflict Management Styles of a Selected Group of Pennsylvania
Superintendents' and Their Board Presidents' Perceptions of Their

Conflict Management Styles

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral study was designed to examine the conflict management style preferences of Pennsylvania superintendents and the congruency between the superintendents' conflict management style preferences and their school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management style preferences.

The principal instrument used was the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). This instrument is based on the work of Robert Blake and Jane Mouton who delineate two basic dimensions of behavior: 1) assertiveness and 2) cooperativeness.

Based on the results of this study, school board presidents and superintendents perceived different perspectives regarding the superintendents' conflict management styles. There was also incongruency with regard to the superintendents' styles and those perceived by the school board presidents in varied conflict situations. Demographic data indicated that conflict management styles were influenced by size, type, and wealth of district but not by age of superintendents.

A knowledge of conflict management styles and how decisions made during conflict episodes influence perceptions can lead to a better understanding of conflict management techniques, enhance team management concepts, and improved training of both superintendents and school board members. The results of this research indicate the need for effective training which addresses perceptions, communication, attributions, and power relationships of school board presidents and superintendents.

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CHAPTER 1

The Problem

Introduction

Few would argue the ubiquitous nature of conflict in everyday life. Hocker and Wilmot (1995) note that conflict is natural, inevitable, and a regular part of the communication interaction of human beings. Spring (1993) suggests that educational settings are even more conducive to repeated conflict situations based on their inherent political, economic, and social characteristics.

Within the educational setting, conflict management appears to be an area of special concern because of the grassroots political nature of schooling and the apparent lack of conflict management training afforded school personnel (Alanis, 1989; Wirt & Kirst, 1992). The demands of producing a successful educational system stem from political pressures on the school from local, state, and federal levels. These pressures, though permeating the entire system, often culminate at the administrative apex of local educational systems – school boards and superintendents. Conflict between the superintendent and school board can have profound effects on the functioning of the school system (Wirt & Kirst, 1992).

Conflict management among superintendents, school boards, and the public is an important issue in today's school systems. School superintendents and boards are often dealing with conflict situations such as school-community relations, allocation of funds, personnel, taxation, travel, supplies, and budgets. Indicative of the ubiquitous nature of conflict in educational settings, Lippitt (1982), in a survey sponsored by the American Management Association, found that conflict management in schools commanded nearly

49% of the attention of school officials as compared to 24% in other management positions surveyed.

Hocker and Wilmot's (1995) analysis of systems theory of conflict, identified three elements that are important to assessing the construction of helpful interventions in conflict management situations. The three elements were: "(1) assessing the workings of the overall system, (2) determining recurring patterns inside the system that are associated with conflict, and (3) identifying individual contributions to the overall system functioning" (p. 139). According to the authors, the third element, identifying individual contributions to the overall system functioning, creates the basis for analyzing the conflict management styles of superintendents and their board presidents perceptions of how they handle conflict. The individual contributions in handling conflict situations may alternatively lead to conflict being a constructive or destructive event within the work environment and within the community.

Past analysis of conflict management styles has been strongly based on self-perception of one's conflict style (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). Conflict management, however, is an interpersonal event strongly based on the interaction of communication behaviors (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995; Lordon, 1991). Thus, perceived conflict management styles expressed only by superintendents are missing the "other's perception" of how that style is received.

People who want to improve relationships are more likely to use conflict styles that are more "integrative"—taking account of the other's needs as well as one's own (Canary & Cupach, 1988; Weider-Hatfield & Hatfield, 1996). Are superintendents who chose to

use integrative styles perceived by board presidents to be integrative? How is conflict management style selection perceived within the dyad of superintendent and school board president? These are some of the questions which may have a powerful influence on the success of the educational institution. As suggested by Hocker and Wilmot (1995), "Just as Russians have no success in translating English unless they speak the language and vice versa, conflict parties must learn the language of their conflict partner." Understanding conflict management styles and how they are perceived by others is an extremely critical process to effective and productive communication within organizations (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). As two key players within the school organization the school board president and superintendent need to interact effectively. Effective communication and an understanding of conflict related behavior within this dyad would appear to be critical to the successful school organization.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict is a powerful force in society (Wehr, 1979). Its use or misuse is an important factor in many decision-making settings, including schools. Present day school leaders, including superintendents and board members, experience conflict daily in their decision-making capacities (Wirt & Kirst, 1992). According to Wirt and Kirst (1992) "roles have changed throughout this century; educational administration has shown an increasing role shift from neutral technician, or manager, to a power-sharing, active advocate of programs"(p. 202). In identifying the role that power plays in conflict situations, Hocker and Wilmot (1995) state that: "Just as a fundamental concept in physics is energy, one of the fundamental concepts in conflict theory is power" (p. 69). In spite of

this role transition and its enhanced potential for conflict, it appears evident that few school administrators, and even fewer school board members, are well-schooled in the management of conflict (Alanis, 1989; Lordon, 1991; Wirt & Kirst, 1992).

This research will fill this void identified in the literature by investigating the perceptions of conflict management styles in the political arena of public school between superintendents and school board presidents.

The term conflict originates from the Latin word *conflictus*, meaning “to strike together”(Merriam-Webster, 1994, p. 242). This definition is true to the perceptions of most people in Western culture regarding communication about conflict, i.e., a negative connotation is implied (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). Like leadership, effectiveness, and other social science constructs, conflict has both a commonly held meaning and a long list of attempts at ascribing a scientific meaning. For the purposes of this study, Thomas’ (1983) definition of dyadic conflict will be used. According to Thomas, dyadic conflict is a process including the perceptions, emotions, behaviors, and outcomes of two parties which lead to conflict when one party perceives that the other has frustrated or is about to frustrate their goals.

Hocker and Wilmot (1995) identified a number of issues which clarify the meaning of the term perception as it relates to conflict. These authors note that “people come to conflict interactions with existing emotional sets about conflict” (p. 4), including those sets based on culture, gender, and personal history. The merging of the various elements incorporated in the emotional sets creates a personal holistic perspective on conflict that is your perception.

The term conflict generally conjures negative thoughts of unwanted behavior (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). Recent reviews of literature, however, tend to elicit a more balanced view of conflict as having constructive or destructive effects, depending upon its management (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Hocker & Wilmot, 1995; Thomas, 1983). Conflict in and of itself is not bad but rather a phenomenon which by its management leads to positive or negative outcomes. In reviewing dyadic conflict, Thomas (1983) noted “that conflict-handling behavior is shaped by a variety of structural variables—by personal predispositions, rules, procedures, incentives, organizational norms, constituent pressures, and so on” (p. 930). Thus, the situation in which conflict behaviors are elicited is a critical element in the understanding of expression of conflict behaviors. “Whether the effect of conflict is good or bad depends on the strategies used to deal with it” (Rahim, 1986, p. vi). Therefore, strategies applied in specific conflict situations can result in either positive or negative outcomes.

One obvious and uniquely powerful and political dyad that affects the operation of public schools is that of school board president and superintendent (PSBA, 1996; Wirt & Kirst, 1992). These players constitute a critical relationship which impacts all aspects of school politics and management (PSBA, 1996). Bolman and Deal (1991) detail the importance of coalitions such as these in the political framing of organizations. For example, board presidents and superintendents form a coalition because of their interdependence; they need each other, even if their interests may, or may not, be in harmony. Thus, they can become excessively conflictual if they pursue significantly different goals and objectives. How the handling of conflict situations proceeds in this

political frame may prove to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory to either party based on their perceptions (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). The behaviors exhibited in a conflict situation could enhance or diminish not only the conflict but also significantly affect the relationship between these two leaders.

In addressing the issues, Wirt and Kirst (1992) proposed that a socialization of board members to superintendents' views of problems may act as a conflict management technique to assuage group pressures mounting from the politics of education. This relationship is further defined by considering the nature of goals in conflict situations. A transactive goal is one that emerges during a conflict situation. The transactive goal results from the communication interactions during a conflict (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). To describe communication accurately, we must study the interactions rather than focusing on the individual experiences (Laing, Phillipson, & Lee, 1966; Wilmot, 1987). As suggested by Hocker and Wilmot (1995), "relationships are interpenetrative, with each person influencing and being influenced by the other" (p.58).

Thus, the superintendent and board members deal with conflict situations through transactional relationships. Typically, conflict situations are more clearly defined as the superintendent and board members communicate throughout a conflict episode. According to Wirt and Kirst (1992) "The board's impact on specific decisions may be more indirect than direct, but it is, nevertheless, real. The superintendent operates with considerable latitude as long as he or she stays within the board's ideological zone of tolerance" (p. 176). The ideological zone of tolerance is defined as an area of decision making where school board members will be indifferent toward those decisions which meet their

expectations that are made by the superintendent. Transactional relationships and goals are important to consider in studying conflict management. With up to ten people involved in a conflict episode, multiple transactions may occur resulting in new, transactive goals.

McCarty and Ramsey (1971), assumed that the community power structure influenced both the nature of the school board and the superintendent's administrative style. The model developed by Spring (1993) indicates that certain types of administrative styles are best suited for different types of community power structures. The four types of school boards identified by their community power structure which are in this model are the following: (1) dominated school boards which are controlled by an elite power structure; (2) factional school boards which are high conflict boards with sharp value differentiations; (3) status-congruent school boards which have a high degree of concern about training children to enter occupations that require a high level of schooling; and (4) sanctioning school boards which are ideologically homogeneous, have no sense of purpose, and confine their energy to one community activity.

According to Spring (1993), dominated school boards require a functionary superintendent who implements the wishes of the power elite who are the dominant business members of the community. Factional school boards require a political strategist as superintendent to maintain order and balance between the various factions. Status-congruent school boards prefer superintendents who act as a professional advisor and decision maker. Sanctioning school boards generally work best with decision making superintendents who control information and educational policies. A lack of understanding by the superintendent of the styles preferred by different political configurations of school

boards and communities can have a deleterious effect on the whole school system along with the employment, health, and well-being of individuals, and could result in increased board-superintendent conflict (Wirt & Kirst, 1992).

Problem

In order to effectively negotiate differences, superintendents and board presidents should be acutely aware of various modes of conflict management. According to Kindler (1983) “when managers handle differences well, they can identify underlying concerns, stimulate creative effort, reduce antagonistic feelings, correct misunderstandings and marshall commitment to needed change” (p.27). Efforts to produce positive, constructive results in conflictual situations have become the everyday activity of superintendents and school board leaders (PSBA, 1996). To produce these results, there is a demand for a knowledge of theory to provide the framework for conceptualizing situations so that there is an understanding of conflict management styles and their effects on conflict (Thomas, 1988). An understanding of conflict theory united with a practical understanding of conflict management styles and their effect, may give school administrators a better chance for constructive conflict management.

The handling of conflict in schools is an important issue with the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (PSBA). During their 1996 School Board Academy, PSBA identified four results of destructive conflict in schools. According to this organization, conflict is destructive when it: 1) takes attention away from other important activities; 2) undermines morale or self-concept; 3) polarizes people and groups, reducing cooperation; and 4) leads to irresponsible and harmful behavior, such as fighting and

name-calling.

Rather than reduced or eliminated, organizational conflict needs to be managed (Rahim, 1985). According to Rahim (1985), “The consensus among the organization theorists is that a moderate amount of conflict is necessary for attaining an optimum organizational effectiveness” (p. 82). This optimal conflict level is considered constructive conflict, that is, conflict which leads to creativity, growth, and development in organizations. The PSBA (1996) noted that conflict is constructive when it: 1) results in clarification of important problems and issues; 2) results in solutions to problems; 3) involves people in resolving issues important to them; 4) causes authentic communication; 5) helps release emotion, anxiety, and stress; 6) helps individuals develop understanding about themselves and others; and 7) builds cooperation among people through learning more about each other.

The relationship that exists between a superintendent and a school board has a great deal to do with the effectiveness of both parties (Ashmore, 1979). The Pennsylvania School Board Association (1996) encourages a “partnership” concept in relations between school boards and superintendents that includes the following characteristics: 1) full disclosure; 2) frequent two-way communication; 3) careful planning; 4) informal interaction; 5) periodic evaluation; and 6) mutual support.

In summary, the literature suggests that the issue of conflict and its management in schools is an important issue to the school community. How conflict is handled can lead to either positive or negative consequences. School board presidents and superintendents play an important role in conflict resolution. Both of these parties stand at the forefront of

the school and community on issues which are inherently conflict driven. Concerted efforts on the part of both of these parties to enhance skills for resolving conflict constructively can only result in benefit to the school community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is twofold: (1) examine the conflict management styles of Pennsylvania superintendents and (2) investigate the relationship between their conflict management styles and perceptions of their board presidents regarding the use of that style to manage conflict in various situations. The following questions were developed to gather information aimed at increasing the research base related to the conflict management styles of superintendents and the perceptions of board presidents of their superintendents' conflict management styles in various conflictual situations.

Research Questions

1. Do Pennsylvania superintendents exhibit a preference for certain conflict management styles? If so, which styles are the most preferred?
2. Are school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles congruent with superintendents' self-perceptions of conflict management styles?
3. Do school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles remain consistent across varied conflict situations?
4. Are the superintendents' style selections related to age, gender, type of school, size of school, or wealth of district?

Methods

The current study of the conflict management styles of superintendents and board

presidents' perceptions of superintendents' styles is a descriptive study using information from four sources: 1) a random sample survey of superintendents' responses to a demographic questionnaire; 2) a random sample survey of superintendents' responses to the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974); 3) a second corresponding survey collecting board presidents' responses to the conflict mode instrument (pronoun modified); and 4) board presidents responses to situational conflict items.

Research instruments were sent to 200 public school superintendents in the State of Pennsylvania and their respective board presidents. Participants were randomly sampled from the 501 superintendents and corresponding board presidents in Pennsylvania at the time of the investigation.

Data Collection

A demographic questionnaire was developed to accumulate data relevant to this study (Appendix A). The demographic questionnaire was piloted with several superintendents to assure its clarity. The questionnaire was adapted from research concerning conflict management (Ashmore, 1979) which also used the Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument.

The demographic questionnaire was sent to 200 randomly selected public school superintendents in the State of Pennsylvania. A cover letter (Appendix B) accompanying the questionnaire requested that the individual take part in the study. Included with the questionnaire was the Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument for completion. The superintendents were asked to consider their professional relationship with their board

presidents when responding to the mode instrument. After completing the mode instrument and the demographic questionnaire, the respondents were asked to return them in the addressed stamped envelope. Based on the sample of superintendents, corresponding board presidents were mailed the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument and a series of five questions concerning their perceptions of their superintendents' responses to select conflict situations. After completing the test in the booklet, the respondents were asked to return it in the addressed stamped envelope. A second and third mailing occurred several weeks later to nonrespondents requesting their participation.

Instrumentation

“The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument is designed to assess an individual's behavior in all conflict situations” (Thomas & Kilmann, 1976, p. 11). The Mode Instrument provides scores which can be used to categorize conflict handling styles as: a) competing, b) collaborating, c) compromising, d) avoiding, and e) accommodating. Each style is appropriate in some situation. There is no one style which is correct in all situations. Any given individual uses some modes better than others and, therefore, tends to rely upon those modes more heavily than others (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974).

The style of conflict behavior which an individual uses tends to be the result of personal history, work environment, and current living situation (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). It was, therefore, necessary to instruct participants in this study to consider their relationships with the board president and vice versa when responding to the Mode Instrument.

The Mode Instruments used in this study (Appendix C) were the standard Thomas-Kilmann Instrument for the superintendents' self-reporting and a pronoun modified version for the school board presidents' other-reporting (Appendix D). The modification of the Mode Instrument was supported by Hocker and Wilmot's (1995) description that the instrument can be revised to assess one's perception of another's style.

The situational conflict management style questionnaire (Appendix E) was designed to further assess a superintendent's conflict management style in varying conflictual situations. The board president was asked to assess which mode of conflict management style the superintendent would use in each of the following situations:

1) contract negotiations with teacher; 2) citizen unrest at a local school board meeting; 3) school board member - superintendent disagreement in work session; 4) teacher - superintendent disagreement on personnel matter; and 5) strategic planning / outcomes based education adoption process. The situations chosen were verified by a panel of experts as typical to superintendents in the State of Pennsylvania (Appendix F).

Significance of the Study

Wirt and Kirst (1992) noted that: "Style is little studied in the scholarship of professionals of any kind, although significant anecdotes imply how different styles operate. Yet studying style is important because the situational roles . . . permit individualization within each role in dealing with routine and conflict management" (p. 204). Based on the use of the Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument, this research was designed to advance knowledge of the use of conflict management styles by studying the styles of public school superintendents in Pennsylvania and investigating how those styles

are perceived by board presidents in the school system.

A knowledge of these styles, their perceptions, and use in various situations should prove beneficial to practitioners as they incorporate different methods to deal with conflict. Research indicates that, "If the board members and superintendent are using incompatible conflict management modes, the conflict could increase rather than decrease" (Ashmore, 1979, p. 62). Womack (1987) notes a need for future work to address whether styles are relatively stable or whether they vary across situations. Also, Weider-Hatfield and Hatfield (1996) suggest that "superiors should be concerned about how their overall managerial strategies affect subordinates' selection of strategies for managing conflict with their superiors, which, in turn, affects a wide variety of . . . reactions to job experience" (p.204). Thus, research indicates that the compatibility of style to organization, the situational variable, and conflict impact on relationships all reflect important issues which support the need for this study.

This research should be beneficial as a possible resource for boards of education as they pursue finding new leaders for their school systems. For example, in a 1990 national survey by The American School Board Journal and Virginia Tech (Freeman, 1990), school board members ranked both the superintendent's and school board member's ability to handle conflict constructively very high when compared to other characteristics of effective school board members. Thus, the method for the resolution of conflict in various situations is considered a very important issue for these two critical leadership positions. In addition, McCarty and Ramsey (cited in Spring, 1993) argue that "school boards hire compatible superintendents. In other words, there are direct relationships between the

community power structure, the nature of the school board, and the style of the superintendent” (p. 148). If one accepts this premise, knowledge gained concerning the superintendent’s style holds promise for decision-making for both the superintendent and the school board regarding employment.

Finally, the results of this research should be of significant use to the educational community in terms of theory advancement by adding to the empirical knowledge base regarding conflict management. This information could lead to more constructive handling of conflict in school leadership positions and may result in better training of both superintendents and board members in conflict management.

Limitations

The value of the instruments used to collect the data is limited by the reliability and validity of the instruments. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument is designed to assess an individual’s behavior in conflict situations along two basic dimensions:

(1) assertiveness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns and (2) cooperativeness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person’s concerns.

Since the instruments are self-reporting results are often influenced by perceptual elements of error of self/other. Social desirability bias can cause the reporting of results which are erroneous, that is, reporting a socially positive perspective. It is anticipated that this factor, though a limitation, was offset to some degree by the expressed confidentiality of responses and the participants’ sense of professional responsibility.

Other limitations include:

1. Cooperation from the superintendents and board presidents.
2. Typical social science problems in measuring human behavior.

Delimitations

The following are delimitations identified for this study:

1. The Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument was used to measure Conflict Management Style (CMS).
2. Data about conflict management style was delimited to the expressed responses of participants during the period between November 1997 and March 1998.

Definition of Terms

For the purposes of this study the following definitions used in the Thomas and Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, as adapted from the work of Blake and Mouton (1964) apply:

1. Accommodating Style: A style of conflict management characterized by both the unassertive and cooperative dimensions of conflict management. In this style an individual neglects his own concerns to satisfy the concerns of others.
2. Assertiveness: The extent to which an individual attempts to satisfy his own concerns.
3. Avoiding Style: A style of conflict management characterized by both the unassertive and uncooperative dimensions of conflict management. In this style the individual does not immediately pursue his own concerns or those of the other person.

4. Collaborating Style: A style of conflict management characterized by both the assertive and cooperative dimensions of conflict management. In this style the individual attempts to work with the other person to find some solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons.

5. Competing Style: A style of conflict management characterized by both the assertive and uncooperative dimensions of conflict management. In this style the individual pursues his concerns at the other person's expense. A power oriented mode of management.

6. Compromising Style: A style of conflict management characterized by intermediate assertiveness and cooperativeness in the conflict dimensions. In this style the individual's objective is to find some expedient, mutually acceptable solution which partially satisfies both parties.

7. Conflict: Divergent, or apparently divergent views and the incompatibility of those views.

8. Conflict handling Mode: An individual's behavior in conflict situations as measured by the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument.

9. Constructive Conflict: Conflict which leads to clarification, creativity, growth and strengthens relationships.

10. Cooperativeness: The extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns.

11. Destructive Conflict: Conflict in which all participants are dissatisfied with the outcomes of a conflict and think they have lost as a result.

10. Dyadic Conflict: a process which includes the perceptions, emotions, behaviors, and outcomes of two parties and which leads to conflict when one party perceives that the other has frustrated or is about to frustrate, some concern of his/her's (Thomas, 1983).

11. Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument: Instrument designed to assess an individual's self-described behavior in conflict situations.

Summary

In summary, this study addresses the conflict management styles of superintendents in the state of Pennsylvania and their school board presidents' perception of their superintendents' styles. It also presents the perceptions of school board presidents regarding the type of style their superintendents would select in five different conflict situations. Demographic information is analyzed for patterns of conflict management behaviors of superintendents based on age, gender, type of school, size of school, and wealth of school district.

CHAPTER 2

Review of Related Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of literature related to the current study. The chapter contains four sections. The first section provides an overview of the research related to the general concept of conflict. The second section reviews the principles, models, and styles of conflict management. The third section reviews research concerning the role of attributions, perceptions, power, and communication in conflict. The final section provides a review of superintendent - school board relationships, including the political dynamics of this relationship.

Conflict

Humankind has been regulating conflict for centuries. The political treatises of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Plato, and Ibn Khaldun dealt largely with the problems of regulating conflict within and between societies. Galtung (1965) traces the development of institutionalized conflict resolution from the medieval period. The use of oracles, trial by ordeal, regulated warfare, private and judicial duels, and arbitration were prominent techniques in that development. (Wehr 1979, p. xv)

Conflict, like power, is one of those fascinating subjects which has attracted the attention of humankind for centuries. Previously, little attention had been paid to the management of conflict. Instead, scholars and historians have focused most of their attention on the “battle” while placing little emphasis on the peacemaking aspects of

conflict. Recent literature supports a more balanced view of conflict as having both constructive and destructive elements (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Hocker & Wilmot, 1995; Thomas, 1983).

Wehr (1979) posits seven different propositions which have emerged from paradigms dealing with conflict. These propositions are as follows:

1. Conflict and fighting is innate in all social animals including man.
2. Social conflict originates in the nature of certain societies and how they are structured.
3. Conflict is an aberration, a dysfunctional process in social systems.
4. Conflict occurs because it is functional for social systems.
5. Conflict between societies occurs because each, as a nation state, pursues often incompatible national interests, misperception, miscalculation, socialization, and other unconscious processes.
6. Conflict is a consequence of poor communications, misperception, miscalculation, socialization, and other unconscious processes.
7. Conflict is a natural process common to all societies with predictable dynamics and amenable to constructive regulation. (pp. 1-8)

The propositions which best support the basis of this research are the sixth and seventh propositions. Conflict as a consequence of poor communications, misperception, miscalculation, socialization, and other unconscious processes is strongly supported by the work of Hocker and Wilmot (1995). These authors purport that: "We cannot present an 'objective' view of conflict, because you as a communicator are the subject, and your

subjective experience creates and reflects the truth of the interaction for you” (p. 2).

They conclude that personal history, perception, cultural frames, and gender frames all contribute to the reality of one’s view of conflict.

Proposition seven proposes that conflict is a natural process common to all societies with predictable dynamics and amenable to constructive regulation. Since school systems are often referred to as a “mirror of society” it is proposed that schools contain conflict as a natural process and this process has predictable dynamics, that can respond to constructive regulation. This proposition supports the notion that “conflict is not evil, but rather a phenomenon which can have constructive or destructive effects depending upon its management” (Thomas, 1983, p. 889).

Destructive Conflict

There is one central problem associated with conflict that should not be ignored: Often, it gets badly out of hand. All too often what starts as a rational exchange of opposing views deteriorates into an emotion-laden interchange—one in which strong negative feelings (e.g., anger) are aroused. Furthermore, as the process continues, the basic goals of the parties involved may shift from that of gaining acceptance of their views to merely winning, or even to defeating and humiliating their opponent. (Baron, 1984, p. 272)

The importance of well managed conflict is paramount in any organization, including schools. As noted by Burns (1978), “The potential for conflict permeates the relations of humankind, and that potential is a force for health and growth as well as for destruction” (p. 37). It is the destructive elements of conflict which will be

addressed in this section.

As Wehr (1979) noted, humankind has been fascinated by conflict for centuries. Propositions concerning this fascination are manifold, including proposed innate competitive behavior by humans. Also, historical literature supports more interest in the actual conflictual situations rather than in the processes that support resolution (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Wehr, 1979). Hocker and Wilmot (1995) suggest that a high likelihood exists that when people are asked to identify words that describe conflict, most respond with words that have a negative connotation. In general, most literature indicates that conflict generally has a negative connotation (Lippitt, 1982).

Often, all parties involved in a conflict perceive potential loss. When all of the participants are dissatisfied with the results of a conflict situation, it can be considered destructive conflict (Deutsch, 1973). Hocker and Wilmot (1995) identify several characteristics of destructive conflict: 1) escalatory spirals pervade destructive conflict; 2) avoidance patterns reduce the chance for productive conflict; 3) retaliation runs rampant in destructive conflicts; 4) inflexibility and rigidity characterize destructive conflict; 5) a competitive system of dominance and subordination results in destructive conflict; and 6) demeaning and degrading verbal and nonverbal communication results in and reflects destructive conflict practices. The recognition of destructive conflict permeates the communication of the parties involved in conflict. Both verbal and nonverbal communications are key factors in acknowledging and dealing with destructive conflict. A knowledge of the elements of destructive conflict is important for the potential to exist for resolution and management of conflict (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995).

Lippitt (1982) describes some of the negative outcomes of conflict carried too far, too long. He states that this kind of conflict: “1) diverts energy from the real task; 2) destroys morale; 3) polarizes individuals and groups; 4) deepens differences; 5) obstructs cooperative action; 6) produces irresponsible behavior; 7) creates suspicion and distrust; and 8) decreases productivity” (p.68). All of these proposed negative outcomes can have broad organizational impact.

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association in their 1996 School Board Academy identified four results of destructive conflict in schools. According to this organization, conflict is destructive when it: 1) takes attention away from other important activities; 2) undermines morale or self-concept; 3) polarizes people and groups, reducing cooperation; and 4) leads to irresponsible and harmful behavior, such as fighting and name-calling.

Having leaders trained in the handling of conflictual situations is an important element for maintaining healthy organizations. Specifically, Argyris (1957) proposed that a reduction in the degree of dependency, subordination and submissiveness experienced on the job would help to alleviate conflict. He posited that job enlargement and employee-centered (or democratic or participative) leadership can lead to less destructive conflict in organizations. But even with more democratic leadership styles emerging, training of leaders in methods of handling conflict for constructive results is still recommended by numerous researchers (Alanis, 1989; Argyris, 1957; Garee, McCaslin, & Jones, 1993; Hocker & Wilmot, 1995; Lippitt, 1983; Lordon, 1991).

Deutsch (1994) purports that participants in conflict need skills and orientations similar to those of a skilled mediator. He states that skills involved in establishing a cooperative, problem-solving relationship and in developing a creative group process that expands the options available for resolving conflict are needed. He also makes note of the need for the ability to look at conflict from an outside perspective to defuse unproductive or destructive traps (Deutsch, 1994).

Constructive Conflict

Conflict can be constructive as well as destructive. Conflict has been given a bad reputation by its association with psychopathology, social disorder, and war. However, it is the root of personal and social change; it is the medium through which problems can be aired and solutions arrived at. There are many positive functions of conflict (Coser, 1967). The social and scientific issue is not how to eliminate or prevent conflict but rather to develop the knowledge that would enable us to answer the question, What are the conditions that give rise to lively controversy rather than deadly quarrel? (Deutsch, 1994, p. 13)

Conflict is considered a potent force with the ability to do great harm or create great good, depending on its use. Methods of using conflict to create positive outcomes for organizations is a critical part of the literature (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Hocker & Wilmot, 1995; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Thomas, 1983). Conflict situations can be successfully managed through the use of skills and techniques which produce productive results

(Lippitt, 1982).

Whether one sees conflict as destructive or constructive is a function of one's psychological perspective developed through life experiences (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). Snyder and Ickes (cited in Deutsch, 1994) noted, "that there appears to be a tendency for a congruence between personal dispositions and situational strategies (Deutsch, 1982) such that persons with given dispositions tend to seek out types of social situations that fit their dispositions and persons tend to mold their dispositions to fit the situation that they find difficult to leave or to alter" (p.17).

A knowledge of the nature of conflict and the factors which control it can lead to helpful intervention techniques. According to Hocker and Wilmot (1995), constructive conflict can be recognized by some of the following "building blocks": 1) providing flexibility; 2) creating interaction with an intent to learn instead of an intent to protect; 3) not staying stuck in conflict when it is destructive; 4) enhancing self-esteem; 5) not focusing on the individual; and 6) being primarily cooperative.

The ability to have open communications permeates the literature with regard to constructive conflict. Unavoidably, the direction conflict situations take is a result of communication skills used for the different levels of conflict intensity (Deutsch, 1994; Fisher & Davis, 1987; Sillars & Weisberg, 1987) and different kinds of relationships (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). Seven communication skills which can lead to constructive resolution of conflict are identified by Hocker and Wilmot (1995). These skills include the following: 1) speak your mind and heart; 2) listen well; 3) express strong feelings

appropriately; 4) remain rational as long as possible; 5) summarize and ask questions; 6) give and take; and 7) avoid all harmful statements.

Perceptions play a large role in conflict. Perceptions of the other and of the situation form the reality of the conflict (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). People react to perceptions, not to other people's objective reality of situations. Dealing with conflict constructively requires good communications and perceptual checks so that all parties understand each other's perceptions.

Organizational conflict must not necessarily be reduced or eliminated, but managed (Rahim, 1985). According to Rahim (1985), "The consensus among the organization theorists is that a moderate amount of conflict is necessary for attaining an optimum organizational effectiveness" (p. 82). This "required" conflict level should be considered constructive conflict. It is the conflict that leads to creativity, growth, and development in organizations. The Pennsylvania School Board Association (1996) notes that conflict is constructive when it: 1) results in clarification of important problems and issues; 2) results in solutions to problems; 3) involves people in resolving issues important to them; 4) causes authentic communication; 5) helps release emotion, anxiety and stress; 6) helps individuals develop understanding about themselves and others; and 7) builds cooperation among people through learning more about each other.

In order to create opportunities for conflict to have constructive results, attention must be paid to intervention. Rahim (1977) and Rahim and Bonoma (1979) identified two basic approaches to conflict intervention: behavioral and structural. Behavioral approaches attempt to change organizational culture, thus, improving organizational effectiveness.

This approach is an educational one which focuses on training members in conflict handling.

The structural approach considers the organization's structural design, including: differentiation and integration mechanisms, system of communication, reward structure, and other organizational characteristics. This approach attempts to create more congruency between the needs of healthy individuals and the demands of the formal organization (Argyris, 1957). Katz and Kahn (1978) supported attention to a structural perspective: "conflict within organizations appears to be increased by internal differentiation, time pressure, tightness of scheduled interdependence and coordination" (p. 650).

Instead of perceiving the behavioral and structural perspectives as mutually exclusive, perhaps a combination of both perspectives could create a more powerful environment for constructive conflict resolution (Thomas, 1983). Employees well trained in conflict management working in a structural system that supports conflict management practices should produce exceptional results.

Conflict Management

Clearly, there is no one best way of managing conflict in organizations. There are a number of ways, each suited to circumstances in a particular situation. The basic principle in choosing a way of managing conflict, however, is to use the approach most likely to minimize the destructive aspects and to maximize the opportunities for organizational growth and development. (Owens, 1981, p. 300)

Paul Wehr (1979) notes that there been an increase in the research related

to the methods of conflict management. Recent literature strongly supports the notion that organizational theorists believe in the natural occurrence of conflict in organizations and societies (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Hocker & Wilmot, 1995; Rahim, 1985; Thomas, 1983). Also, accepted is the concept that conflict is not inherently evil, but rather is constructive or destructive based upon how it is managed (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). Research related to the management of conflictual situations will be reviewed in this section.

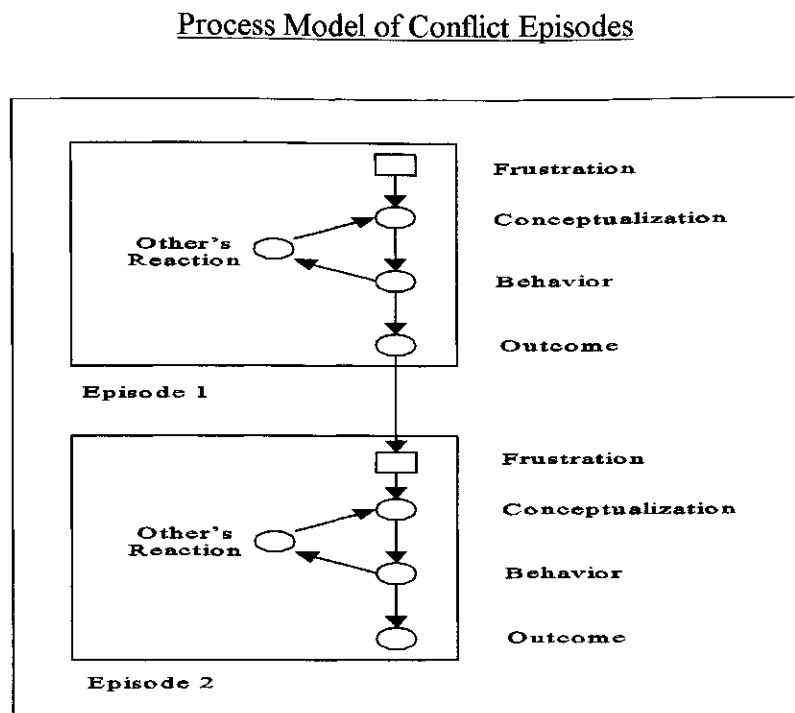
Models

A number of models exist which attempt to explain the phenomenon of conflict. In this review, three models will be considered: 1) process model; 2) structural model; and 3) systems model. A knowledge of these may be important in the consideration of how one might manage conflict. Since an understanding of the various models can influence decisions made with regard to methods of communication, organization, and behavior within organizations (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995; Thomas, 1983).

Process Model.

In a process model, conflict is conceptualized as unfolding in an orderly sequence of events. Unless there is some form of intervention in this sequence of events, the sequence will be repeated in each episode (Owens, 1981). Kenneth Thomas (1983) proposed a process model, shown in Figure 1, which takes into account the episodic nature of conflict. An understanding of this model is intended to help participants conceptualize conflict so that they can constructively implement processes which positively affect the outcome.

Figure 1.



Structural Model.

The structural model (Owens, 1981; Thomas, 1983; Rahim, 1985) has the objective of identifying the underlying conditions which influence conflict behavior. This model delineates the conditions which shape the events of conflict. These events include the organizational rules and procedures which regulate behavior. Bureaucratic structures are functional mechanisms for controlling conflict (Argyris, 1957; Katz & Kahn, 1978; Owens, 1981; Rahim, 1985). Rahim (1985) notes that: “. . . structural interventions, such as job design, provision for ombudsman, analysis of group tasks, and analysis of task interdependence of two or more groups may be used to reduce or generate conflict . . .” (p. 88). According to Thomas (1992) “the structural model sorts variables into three

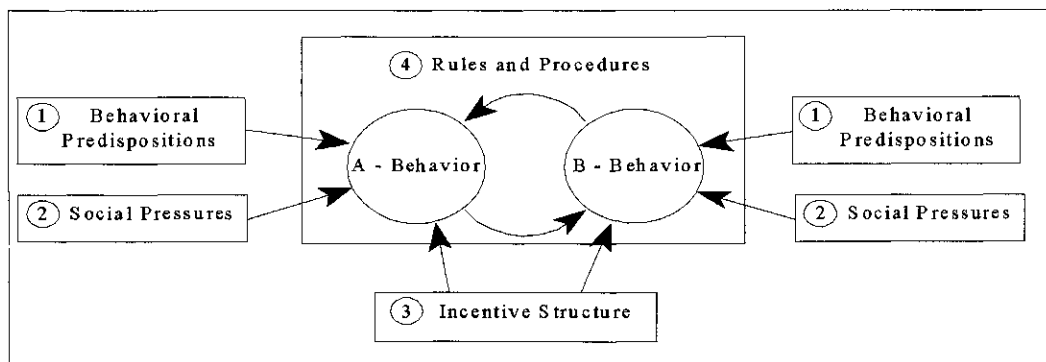
categories which serve the following functions: (1) providing collaborative incentives and feasibility conditions, (2) normatively endorsing collaboration, and (3) generating the emotional conditions (low threat, high support) which enable collaboration to be successful” (p. 272).

Bolman and Deal (1991) identified a form of structural conflict management by identifying horizontal and vertical conflict. According to these authors, conflict is particularly likely to occur at boundaries or interfaces in organizations. Horizontal conflict most likely occurs between different departments or divisions in organizations. Vertical conflict occurs between different hierarchical levels within the organization.

Figure 2 illustrates Thomas’(1983) vision of a structural model of conflict. In this model, little concern is given to discrete conflict episodes. Instead the model is concerned

Figure 2.

Structural Model of Conflict



with the aggregate mix of behaviors used, including the prevalence of collaboration, competition, avoidance, accommodation, and compromise.

Systems Theory Model.

The systems model for conflict is proposed by Hocker and Wilmot (1995) as a method to reduce confusion when considering conflict. Using the framework of systems theory, a more holistic perspective can be gained. Hocker and Wilmot (1995) adapted the following principles of systems theory from an article by Papp, Silberstein, and Carter (1973): 1) conflict in systems occurs in chain reactions so it is necessary to study the chain reactions; 2) each member gets labeled, or programmed, into a specific role in the system; 3) cooperation is necessary among system members to keep conflict going; 4) triangles tend to form in systems when relationships are close or intense; 5) systems develop rules for conflict; and 6) the conflict serves a function for the system.

The systems approach to conflict appears particularly useful. The structural and process models are inherently restrictive by their unidimensional nature. The systems approach creates a perspective which incorporates elements found in both the structural and process models of conflict.

Conflict Management Styles

The work of Blake and Mouton (1964) has formed the basis of most of the studies concerning conflict management styles, especially with regard to instrumentation.

According to Blake and Mouton (1964), conflict is an inherent characteristic of organizations. Although many authors define various formats for the study of conflict management styles, most of them are based on the assumptions found in Blake and

Mouton's Managerial Grid (1964). The basis of this grid is a two dimensional model of conflict handling behavior which assesses an individual's behavior in conflict situations. The two dimensions of behavior are the following: 1) assertiveness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy their concerns and 2) cooperativeness, the extent to which the individual attempts to satisfy the other person's concerns. The two basic dimensions of behavior are used to create five specific methods of dealing with conflict. These methods are generally referred to as styles.

Using the ideas of Blake and Mouton, Thomas and Kilmann (1974) identified the five styles of conflict management as the following: 1) competing; 2) accommodating; 3) avoiding; 4) collaborating; and 5) compromising. A person using a competing style of conflict management is assertive and uncooperative on the two dimensions of behavior. This style is a power-oriented style, in which one uses whatever power seems appropriate to win one's position. This style lends itself to the classic win-lose view of conflict.

The accommodating style is unassertive and cooperative on the behavioral dimensions. In this style the individual neglects his/her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other person. This style might take the form of selfless generosity, obeying another person's order, or yielding to another's point of view.

The third style is avoiding. This style is marked by unassertive and uncooperative on the behavioral dimensions. Individuals expressing this style do not immediately pursue their own concerns or those of the other person. They, in effect, avoid conflict. Typical behavior might include sidestepping an issue, postponing an issue, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. This behavior does not eliminate conflict but rather the

conflict remains latent and must be dealt with another time.

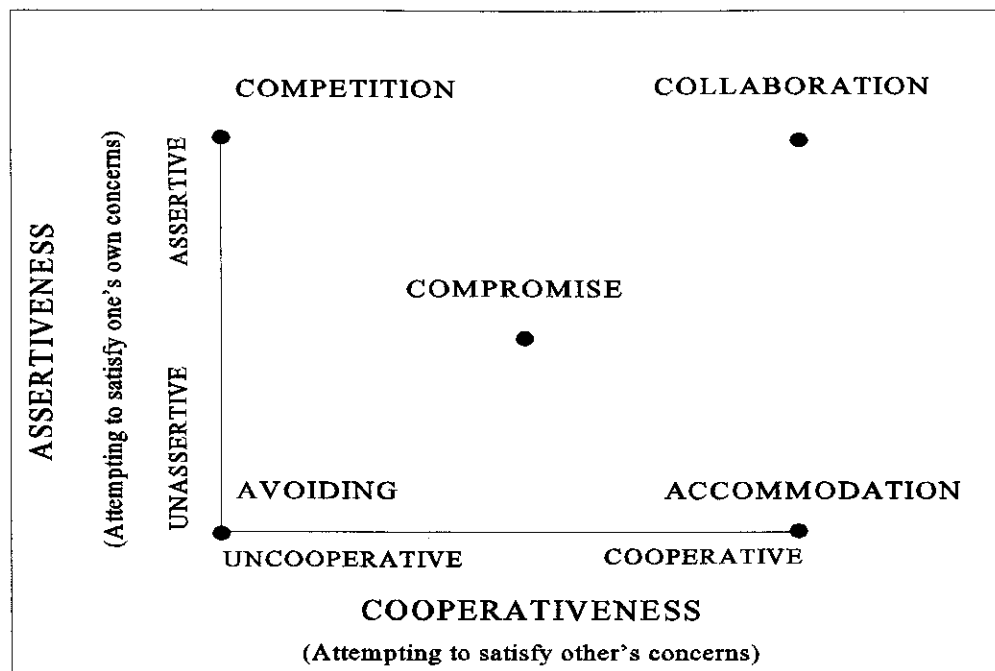
The style identified as collaborating is both assertive and cooperative, on the two behavioral dimensions. This style is typically characterized as win-win. Persons working with this style attempt to work with the other person to find some solution which fully satisfies the concerns of both persons. This style is often called integrative in that the solution to the conflict is a genuine integration of the desires of both sides to win.

Compromising style is intermediate in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. The objective is to find some quick, mutually agreeable solution which partially satisfies everyone. Typically, behavior that is compromising is identified with statements like splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking the middle-ground.

The use of the various styles is not considered exclusive. According to Thomas and Kilmann (1974), "each of us is capable of using all five conflict-handling modes; none of us can be characterized as having a single, rigid style of dealing with conflict. However, any given individual uses some modes better than others and therefore tends to rely upon those modes more heavily than others, whether because of temperament or practice" (p. 11). Since the inception of the work of Thomas and Kilmann (1974), Thomas (1992) has further defined what the modes best describe. Previously the modes of conflict management were variously interpreted as orientations, behaviors, strategies and other constructs. Thomas (1992) now posits "that they are best described as intentions, more precisely, the strategic intention of a party in conflict, what the party is attempting to accomplish in satisfying own and other's goals" (p. 269). Thus, the terms underlying the basis of the model, assertiveness and cooperativeness, are now viewed as intentional

Figure 3

Five Orientations of Conflict Management Styles



terms, attempting to satisfy one's own and other's concerns. Figure 3 shows the five orientations to conflict related to assertiveness and cooperativeness. Aside from the foundational Blake and Mouton Managerial Grid (1964), Hall (1969), Lawrence and Lorsch, (1967), Thomas and Kilmann (1974) all produced conflict management style studies using the two dimensional conflict behaviors previously described.

Also, Rahim developed the Rahm Organizational Conflict Inventory I (ROCI-I) in 1983. Rahim's research basis for the development of this instrument was the work of Blake and Mouton (1964). His model of conflict management generates five styles similar to those proposed by Thomas and Kilmann (1974). In Rahim's model the five styles are

the following: 1) avoiding; 2) obliging; 3) dominating; 4) integrating and 5) compromising. These styles are interchangeable with the five styles proposed by Thomas and Kilmann.

Putnam and Wilson (1988) created the Organizational Communication Conflict Instrument (OCCI) in 1982. The OCCI generates three types of strategies used in conflict situations, instead of the five typically found in other instruments. Putnam and Wilson interpret the three factors as non-confrontation strategies, solution-orientated strategies, and control strategies.

Perspectives on Style

Folger, Poole, and Stutman (1993) identified three perspectives on conflict styles. They proposed that styles can be thought of as 1) a property of the person; much like a personality style; 2) types of conflict behavior or categories of behavior; and 3) communicative orientations people take toward conflict.

Hocker and Wilmot (1995) proposed four important limitations to categorizing conflict style. First, they noted that style measures have some inherent reporting problems. The notions of predispositions and self-reporting of self-perceptions influence the results of many style instruments.

The second limitation of individual conflict style is that the instruments measuring style are not process orientated. Styles change as life experiences change. Also, one may begin using one style and switch to another style during the same conflict episode. Styles should be considered changeable and fluid as one interacts in conflict situations.

A third limitation they note is that the instruments give the impression of situational consistency. Situations are critical to the consideration of conflict

management. Putnam and Wilson (1982) demonstrated that employees used different conflict styles depending on the peer relationship involved in the situation. Similarly, Hocker and Wilmot (1995) identified three possible situational variables that could influence style: “1) nature of the conflict; 2) one’s success with the style in similar situations; and 3) situational constraints such as the nature of the organization” (p. 99).

The fourth limitation proposed by Hocker and Wilmot is that the attempt to measure individual conflict styles ignores the relational dynamics in a conflict situation. Styles are not necessarily personality quirks but rather are related to assessments and considerations involving many variables, such as, power and personal relationships.

Thomas (1992) proposed that handling conflict management be addressed through two different perspectives. Both the collaborative perspective and contingency theory of conflict management are useful constructs with different goals. Thomas (1992) sees the collaborative approach to conflict management as a means to address long-term goals of an organization. The contingency approach is more appropriate for short-term goals—how best to cope with current conditions. This pragmatic approach is useful in the search for short-term, locally optimal solutions which are reactive to specific conditions. With more long range issues, which involve pragmatic coping and visionary improvement, Thomas (1992) suggests that collaborative solutions to conflict management might be more useful.

Elements of Conflict Behavior

Behaviors elicited in conflict episodes commonly include the following elements: attributions, perceptions, power, and communication (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). These

elements play out in social units including individuals, groups, or organizations. The following sections will discuss pertinent information concerning the role that each of these elements play in conflict situations.

Attributions

Whether we are looking at the individual tactical move or the overall conflict style of an individual, we cannot understand conflict dynamics by examining the individuals in isolation. The interaction of two or more people determines the outcome of the conflict. (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995, p. 125)

Much of the literature on conflict management has focused on third-party interventions in conflict situations (Walton, 1969; Deutsch, 1994; Rubin, 1994). However, third-party intervention is necessitated when there is a breakdown in the conflict management activities in the dyad (Thomas & Pondy, 1977). This breakdown is more likely when there is a lack of understanding of the role of higher mental processes in conflict episodes (Thomas & Pondy, 1977). One of the most important cognitive activities in this process is attribution or attributing intent to the other party. According to Hocker and Wilmot (1995), people in conflict situations often assume that the other person is willfully interfering with their needs. One person ascribes negative attributions to the other party's actions or personality traits (Sillars & Scott, 1983).

According to Hocker and Wilmot (1995), "In conflict, we tend to see ourselves in a positive light and others in a negative light" (p. 98). We attribute positive characteristics or motives to ourselves while at the same time attributing negative characteristics or

motives to others in conflict situations. Research by Thomas and Pondy (1977) found that overwhelmingly, managers saw themselves as cooperative or collaborative and the other as primarily competitive, demanding, and refusing.

Perceptions

Perceptions and attributions are two closely linked constructs. Perceptions are formed from one's background. Culture, age, gender, and other social forces create personal history which determines one's perceptions. Hocker and Wilmot (1995) noted that: "perceptions of the other and of the situation make more difference than objective reality" (p. 40). Having an understanding of perceptions and how they influence decisions made during conflict management is critically important. Perceptions differ from attributions in that attributions are the assigning of negative or positive personality traits to the other party (Sillars & Scott, 1983). Perceptions lead to attributions. If one perceives that someone is interfering with his/her goals it is not uncommon for that party to see the other as inconsiderate, rude or untrustworthy. This represents the assigning of attributes to the other party. A knowledge of perceptions and attributions is important for the movement towards the skillful solutions of conflict situations (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995; Howat & London, 1980; Thomas & Pondy, 1977).

Power

One element which has an impact on conflict is relational power. According in Heilbrun (1988) "power is the ability to take one's place in whatever discourse is essential to action and the right to have one's part matter" (p. 18). Another definition of power proposed by Goodrich (1991) suggests that "power is the capacity to gain whatever

resources are necessary to remove oneself from a condition of oppression, to guarantee one's ability to perform, and to affect not only one's own circumstances but also more general circumstances outside one's intimate surroundings" (p. 10).

Hocker and Wilmot (1995) proposed that power is a necessary attribute to move a conflict along to some sort of resolution. In any relationship there must be some power influence between parties. Without influence there is simply a mutual discussion, not a conflict episode. Power is found in the relationship between parties and is not necessarily a personal trait. Power is a product of the social relationship in which certain attributes become important and valuable to others (King, 1987).

Power depends on having resources that are valued by other persons. Hocker and Wilmot (1995) identify four power "currencies": 1) expertise; 2) resource control; 3) interpersonal linkages; and 4) communication skills. These power currencies are important in the development of relationships in dyadic conflicts. One's power currencies can be increased by becoming skillful at knowing when to activate the different forms of power. A repertoire of currencies serves parties better than the reliance on a single currency (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995).

The research of Howat and London (1980) supports the conclusion that perceived conflict frequency is associated with attributions of power. The results of their research on attributions of conflict management strategies in supervisor-subordinate dyads indicated that, "one person's attributions of another are related to the other's perceptions of conflict frequency in a supervisor-subordinate dyad" (p. 174). The authors also noted that "one member's perceptions of the favorability of interpersonal relations in the dyad were

negatively related to the other's perceptions of conflict frequency" (p. 175).

Communication

Hocker and Wilmot (1995) propose that "Communications is the central element in all interpersonal conflict" (p. 22). According to these authors communication behavior often creates or reflects conflict. They also note that "Communication is the vehicle for the productive or destructive management of conflict" (p. 22). In order to have effective communication during conflict situations, the parties involved in conflict must have effective communication strategies available to access. The availability of these strategies is related to prior successful skill development or training garnered by the participants. However, as noted by Deutsch (1994), "Despite the development of a growing industry of conflict resolution training, there had been little relevant systematic theorizing or research in this area" (p. 29).

Training in communication skills necessary to successfully manage conflict is an important issue (Alanis, 1989; Deutsch, 1994; Hocker & Wilmot, 1995; Lordon, 1991). Aside from a knowledge of perceptions, attributions, and power relationships, there are skills which can be used to enhance communication during conflict episodes. Hocker and Wilmot (1995) identified skills which can be used by an intervener to guide specific communication behavior. The authors identified four tools which could be useful in a conflict episode: "1) power balancing, 2) fractionation, 3) reframing and, 4) communication guidelines" (p. 237). Constructs have been designed which permit higher level thinking processes to intervene when communication break-downs occur

during conflict. A knowledge of these skills could enhance the constructive resolution of conflict.

The study of conflict relationships and elements is critical to the development of systems which can manifest constructive conflict resolution. Whether one pursues a structural model, a process model, or a systems theory model, the dyadic relationship still forms the basis of analysis. Invariably, conflict takes the form of two social units interacting. These two units form a dyad through which conflict is handled. The dyadic relationship which is fundamental to this research is that of superintendent-school board president. The following section will present characteristics of the relationship which influence conflict management in that particular dyad.

Superintendent–School Board Relationships

This section of related literature presents elements of the relationship between the superintendent and school board. Included are a review of political frames, related research, and conflict management.

Politics

Two reasons existed for attempting to preserve the myth that “politics and education do not mix.” The first was the risk to the school professionals who were overt players of politics when they were expected not to be. The second reason was the relative benefits to them—more legitimacy and money—if they preserved the image of the public schools as a uniquely nonpolitical function of government.

(Wirt & Kirst, 1992, p. 4)

Educators have long proposed that education was politically neutral. This

perspective has been rejected by the research and writings of many recent authors (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Easton, 1965; Freire, 1970; Sleeter & McLaren, 1995; Spring, 1993; Wirt & Kirst, 1992; Young, 1990). From the view of political scientists, the essence of a political act is the struggle of a group to secure the authoritative support of government for its values (Wirt & Kirst, 1992). By this definition, schools are highly political institutions. School professionals are, by virtue of their involvement in this system, politicians.

Bolman and Deal's (1991) political frames will be used to consider school organizations. According to these authors, "Public agencies typically operate amid a complex welter of constituencies, each making policy demands and using whatever resources it can muster to enforce those demands. The result, typically, is a confusing multiplicity of goals, many of which are in conflict with one another" (p. 191). From a political frame perspective, authorities control the power of position, but they are only one among many contenders for other forms of power in the organization. Clearly, the superintendent and board president occupy authoritative positions in the school culture. Whether their positions are dominant, however, is not a given. Power is accessible by all of the contenders in an organization (Bolman & Deal, 1991).

According to Bolman and Deal (1991), from a political perspective, conflict is not necessarily a problem or a sign that something is wrong in an organization. Using the political frame of thought, the competition that leads to conflict is a natural and inevitable event in an organization.

In Easton's (1965) political framework, the school professionals input data to the

school board. Whether specific policy issues ever reach the school board is a function of the discretion of the professionals. In their political decisions professionals must anticipate the reactions of board members. They must also anticipate the ultimate power of a provoked citizenry and the congruency of the board with their initiatives.

According to Wirt and Kirst (1992), "It is also likely that the superintendent would act in keeping with the school board's wishes on many issues even without the threat of job loss. It is natural to assume that board members would hire a person whose values were similar to their own" (p. 176). In a study by Zeigler and Jennings (1974), the authors found the following patterns between school boards and superintendents:

- 1) Board demands on and opposition to the superintendent increase and board victories decrease as one moves from small town to suburb to city school districts.
- 2) Superintendent's interaction with the board is positively related to board opposition to her or him in city and suburban sites, but much less so in rural locals.
- 3) The superintendent's socialization of board members reduces board opposition in both urban and small-town places, but both interaction and socialization effects have limited association with board victories against the superintendent in smaller districts, although high association exists in urban districts. (Wirt & Kirst, 1992, p. 177)

Joel Spring (1993), reflecting on the work of McCarty and Ramsey (1971), assumed that the community power structure influences both the nature of the school board and the superintendent's administrative style. The analytical model developed by Spring indicated that certain types of administrative styles are best suited for

different types of community political structures. The four types of school boards identified in this model were the following: (1) dominated school boards which are controlled by an elite power structure; (2) factional school boards which are high conflict boards with sharp value differentiations; (3) status-congruent school boards which have a high degree of concern about training children to enter occupations that require a high level of schooling; and (4) sanctioning school boards which are ideologically homogeneous, have no sense of purpose, and confine their energy to one community activity.

According to Spring (1993), dominated school boards require a functionary superintendent who implements the wishes of the political elite. Factional school boards require a political strategist as superintendent to maintain order and balance among factions. Status-congruent school boards prefer superintendents who act as professional advisor and decision-maker. Sanctioning school boards generally work best with decision-making superintendents who control information and educational policies.

Assuming validity in these relationships proposed by Spring (1993) and Zeigler and Jennings (1974), one would propose that specific relationships exist between school boards and superintendents which could enhance the well-being of both the school community and the superintendent. Furthermore, it would appear that a knowledge of these relationships would be valuable both before and after employment.

One aspect of the school board's leadership for education is the continuing challenge of sorting the gray areas between its policymaking and leadership roles from the superintendent's administrative role. Sorting these areas

affects not only the management of the system and relations with staff below the superintendent, but it also affects the question of who is the leader for education in the community. In districts where board-superintendent relationships are good and processes exist for dealing with natural tensions in the gray areas, little attention is paid to this dichotomy. For some school boards, though, particularly larger heterogeneous districts, lay governance and administrative relationships degenerate into a 'we-they' situation. (Wirt & Kirst, 1992, p. 164)

The relationship that exists between the superintendent and the school board has a great deal to do with the effectiveness of both parties (Ashmore, 1979). The Pennsylvania School Board Association (1996) encourages a "partnership" concept in relations between school boards and superintendents. The PSBA identified six characteristics which support this partnership concept. These six characteristics include the following: 1) full disclosure; 2) frequent two-way communication; 3) careful planning; 4) informal interaction; 5) periodic evaluation; and 6) mutual support.

Boyd (1976) identified the factor of the "law of anticipated reaction." This is the ability of the superintendent to estimate the limits within which action could be taken without board concern—the "zone of tolerance". In other words, superintendents make numerous decisions which they believe are within their purview and are tolerable based on their knowledge of the board's past behavior. This relationship is important for two reasons. First, superintendents who constantly make decisions which later are usurped by the board place themselves in professional jeopardy. Second, superintendents who make decisions within the zone of tolerance help to create a smooth and efficient

operation of schools by not delaying decisions, which are expected of them based on school board beliefs.

According to Wirt and Kirst (1992), school boards tend to hire people whose values are similar to their own. A 1989 study by the National Center for Educational Information concerning attitudes about public schools showed that the ranking of school board presidents paralleled those for superintendents. If this is the case, it should continue that those hired under this premise can operate with considerable latitude within the board's ideological zone of tolerance. Of course, school boards change as the community responds in elections to the actions of the board. As changes occur in the board, the zone of tolerance may also evolve to a completely different standard as new parties participate in the process. This change enhances the likelihood of conflict and disagreement between the board and superintendent.

Charles Darwin (1975) stated that organisms adapt to changes in the environment be either changing, moving, or dying. Using Darwin's ideas of adaptation, one could propose that the same options exist for superintendents when the winds of politics shift. When a good match exists between the administrative styles of superintendents and their board's expectations, peace and harmony tend to rule. As the board changes expectations, the superintendent has the options to either change to a style which is congruent to the "new" board, move, or get fired.

The burden of adapting to change rests with the school administrator far more than with the board of education. Lippitt (1982) notes that "Managers should know the causes of conflict, ways to diagnose the type of conflict and methods to cope with

differences” (p. 67). He further proposed that training in areas related to adapting to the change in organizations should be a requirement for all managers.

Conflict Management: Superintendent - School Board

The results of conflict behavior are the same as they manifest themselves in superintendent - school board relations. Each party has a role in instituting conflictual situations. As stated earlier, conflict can be healthy and natural in the successful organization. However, it can also be destructive and detrimental to the growth and development of organizations (Deutsch, 1994). The Pennsylvania School Board Association (1996) identified ways that superintendents and school boards can cause destructive conflict. They propose that school boards can cause conflict with the superintendent by:

- 1) trying to be administrators; 2) making promises as individual board members;
- 3) not preparing for meetings; 4) not following procedures for handling complaints; 5) not keeping information confidential; 6) failing to take action on ‘tough’ issues; 7) failing to be open and honest; 8) making decisions based on preconceived notions; 9) not supporting the superintendent; 10) not alerting the superintendent of public concerns; 11) springing surprises at meetings; and
- 12) having hidden agendas. (p. 17)

The PSBA noted that superintendents can cause conflict with school boards by:

- 1) failing to be open and honest; 2) not treating board members alike; 3) not alerting the board members of public concerns; 4) not providing adequate financial data or timely and complete information; 5) using poor management practices;

6) not providing alternatives in an objective manner; 7) making public statements before informing the board; 8) not supporting the board; 9) springing surprises at meetings; 10) having hidden agendas; and 11) not adjusting to the new reality of an involved board. (p. 18)

Summary

Conflict is a normal and natural part of the everyday events in all organizations. Whether conflict is destructive or constructive is a function of how it is managed within the organization. To manage conflict well, a knowledge of the processes involved in conflict episodes is important. Attributions, perceptions, power relationships, and communication skills are all elements which can impact on the results of conflict.

Within the realm of the school community, political forces affect the relationships which interact to form a multitude of conflict episodes. Numerous authors cite school relationships which are inherently conflictual (Bolman & Deal, 1991; Easton, 1965; Spring, 1993; Wirt & Kirst, 1992). One of the relationships which often has strong political and conflictual elements is that between the school board and superintendent (Wirt & Kirst, 1992). A subset of that relationship is the one between the superintendent and the school board president. These two parties form an important dyad in the successful functioning of the system. For this reason, a study of perceptions between these two parties concerning conflict management style can lead to improved training for both parties. Developing knowledge of processes and elements of behavior which can lead to constructive conflict resolution could improve not only the relationship between these two school leaders, but also could lead to a more creative and successful organization.

This research examines the relationships which may exist between the self-perceived conflict management styles of superintendents and their board presidents' other-perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles. Hocker and Wilmot (1995) noted that "the comparison of how each conflict party sees self and the other yields some useful information on the discrepancy in perceptions" (p. 159). Deutsch (1994) states that, "There appears to be a tendency for a congruence between personal dispositions and situational strategies . . ." (p. 17). Whether congruence exists between these two parties with regard to personal dispositions as measured by the Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974) will be analyzed in this study. Also responses to situational behavior will be analyzed pursuing whether congruence exists between superintendents' personal dispositions and school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' situational strategies.

This research will produce data to report the preference for certain conflict management styles by Pennsylvania superintendents with regard to age, gender, size of district, and fiscal constraints.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

Introduction

This chapter describes the steps taken to address the research questions. Included are descriptions of the study design, population and sample, the data collection including instrumentation, scoring, validity, reliability and procedures, and the data analysis process.

Conflict styles have received considerable attention in research. Most of the scales duplicate each other, especially those based on the Blake and Mouton Managerial grid (Weider-Hatfield & Hatfield, 1996). These instruments use a five-category scheme for classifying interpersonal conflict. The schemes include the five modes of competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating.

The Blake and Mouton (1964) model is based upon the dimensions of cooperation (attempting to satisfy the other person's concerns) and assertiveness (attempting to satisfy one's own concerns). From these two dimensions, the following five modes may be obtained: 1) competing which is assertive and uncooperative, 2) collaborating which is assertive and cooperative, 3) avoiding which is unassertive and uncooperative, 4) accommodating which is unassertive and cooperative, and 5) compromising which is intermediate in both cooperativeness and assertiveness (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument measures self-reports of one's conflict management style. The instrument can be revised so one can assess (1) party A's views of self and other and (2) party B's perceptions of self and other's style (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). In this research, the instrument is used to measure the conflict style of

superintendents (party A) as self-reported and their board presidents' (party B) perceptions of superintendents' (party A) styles.

Statement of Hypotheses

Four research questions have been delineated for this study. The research questions are the following:

- 1) Do Pennsylvania superintendents exhibit a preference for a certain conflict management style? If so, which styles are most preferred?
- 2) Are school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles congruent with superintendents' self-perceptions of conflict management styles?
- 3) Do school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles remain consistent across varied conflict situations?
- 4) Are the superintendents' style selections related to age, gender, type of school, size of school, or wealth of district?

From these questions the following hypotheses were developed to assess the relationships between school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management style and preferences of superintendents sorted by demographics. The hypotheses are stated as null hypotheses. All of the hypotheses will be tested at alpha = .05.

Hypothesis 1

H_0 : The population of superintendents shows no preference in selecting any one of five conflict management styles over the others. This hypothesis will be tested using a chi-square test for goodness of fit. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that the

superintendents showed a significant preference for style.

Hypothesis 2

H_0 : The population of school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles will be congruent with the superintendents' self-perceptions of conflict management styles. This hypothesis will be tested using the sign test. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles are not congruent.

Hypothesis 3

H_0 : The population of school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles will be congruent with the the school board presidents' perception of the superintendents' conflict management styles during contract negotiations with teachers. This hypothesis will be tested using the sign test. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles are not congruent with their perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles during negotiations.

Hypothesis 4

H_0 : The population of school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles will be congruent with the the school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles during citizen unrest at a local school board meeting. This hypothesis will be tested using the sign test. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles are not congruent with their perceptions of

superintendents' conflict management styles during citizen unrest at a local school board meeting.

Hypothesis 5

H_0 : The population of school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles will be congruent with the the school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management style during school board member- superintendent disagreement in a work session. This hypothesis will be tested using the sign test. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles are not congruent with their perceptions of superintendents' conflict management style during school board member - superintendent disagreement in a work session.

Hypothesis 6

H_0 : The population of school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles will be congruent with the the school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles during teacher - superintendent disagreement on a personnel matter. This hypothesis will be tested using the sign test. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents conflict management styles are not congruent with their perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles during teacher - superintendent disagreement on personnel matter.

Hypothesis 7

H_0 : The population of school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents'

conflict management styles will be congruent with the the school board presidents' perception of the superintendents' conflict management styles during strategic planning / outcomes based education adoption process. This hypothesis will be tested using the sign test. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles are not congruent with their perceptions of superintendents' conflict management style during strategic planning / outcomes-based education adoption process.

Hypothesis 8

H_0 : The population of superintendent's preference of conflict management style is independent of gender. This hypothesis will be tested using a chi-square test for independence. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that superintendent's preference of conflict management style is influenced by gender.

Hypothesis 9

H_0 : The population of superintendent's preference of conflict management style is independent of age. This hypothesis will be tested using a chi-square test for independence. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that superintendent's preference of conflict management style is influenced by age.

Hypothesis 10

H_0 : The population of superintendent's preference of conflict management style is independent of wealth of district. This hypothesis will be tested using a chi-square test for independence. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that superintendent's preference of conflict management style is influenced by wealth of district.

Hypothesis 11

H_0 : The population of superintendent's preference of conflict management style is independent of type of school. This hypothesis will be tested using a chi-square test for independence. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that superintendent's preference of conflict management style is influenced by type of school.

Hypothesis 12

H_0 : The population of superintendent's preference of conflict management style is independent of size of school. This hypothesis will be tested using a chi-square test for independence. A rejection of the null hypothesis will indicate that superintendent's preference of conflict management style is influenced by size of school.

Chi-square tests for independence will be used to analyze frequency differences in the results generated from hypothesis two through seven. This information may provide additional anecdotal data of interest for future research.

The results of the testing of these 12 hypotheses are reported in chapter four. Identification of conflict styles was made through the use of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. Situational conflict perceptions were gathered from school board presidents through the use of a questionnaire which asks them to identify the type of conflict management style the superintendent would use in each of the above mentioned situations. The demographic data were obtained through the use of a questionnaire administered to the superintendents.

Design of the Study

The study of conflict management style of superintendents and board

presidents' perceptions of superintendents' styles is a descriptive study using information obtained by mailed demographic questionnaires, conflict mode instruments, and situational conflict questions. Responses were collected from a random sample of Pennsylvania superintendents to a demographic questionnaire and the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. Using the same sample, board presidents' responses to the conflict mode instrument (modified) and situational conflict items were collected.

The study surveyed public school superintendents in the State of Pennsylvania and their corresponding board presidents. A 60 percent response rate was anticipated based on professional accessibility to participants and response rates from similar studies (Ashmore, 1979; Stellman, 1996).

Population and Sample

A random sample of 200 pairs of the 501 superintendents and school board presidents in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania was used in this study. The population of superintendents in Pennsylvania has the following common characteristics as required by law:

1. Certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Education
2. Have a minimum of seven years of educational experience
3. Elected into office by the local board of education
4. Minimum education of a Master's degree plus 30 credits
5. Contract length three to five years

The population of school board presidents in Pennsylvania has the following characteristics as required by the Pennsylvania School Code of 1949:

1. Elected by local voters to a 4-year term in office
2. Must be 18 years of age and a citizen of Pennsylvania
3. Must have lived in the district for one year prior to election
4. Elected to president position by local school board members

A random sample of 200 was chosen as it represents 40 percent of the total population. Given the conformity of the population based on the above-mentioned characteristics, it was believed that this sample size, randomly selected, would provide a representative view of the population. Power tables from Cohen (1988) indicate that a 60 percent return would equate to a power of 92%.

Data Collection

A questionnaire requesting demographic information describing the district and age, gender, experience, and education of the superintendent was developed to gather data relevant to this study (Appendix A). The demographic questionnaire was piloted with several superintendents to assure its clarity. The questionnaire was adapted from research concerning conflict management (Ashmore, 1979) and using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. No confidentiality issues appeared to be critical since the information requested was public access information.

The demographic questionnaire was sent to 200 Pennsylvania public school superintendents. A cover letter (Appendix A) accompanied the questionnaire requesting the individual take part in the study. Included with the questionnaire was the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Appendix C) for completion. The superintendents were asked to consider their relationship with their board president when responding to

the Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument. The respondents were asked to return the instrument along with the demographic questionnaire in the addressed stamped envelope.

The corresponding 200 board presidents were mailed the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (modified) (Appendix D) and a series of five questions asking their perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles in select conflict situations (Appendix E). After completing the questionnaires, the board presidents were asked to return them in the addressed stamped envelope. A second and third mailing occurred several weeks later to the nonrespondents asking for their assistance.

Instrumentation

“The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument is designed to assess an individual's behavior in all conflict situations” (Thomas & Kilmann, 1976, p. 11). The Mode Instrument provides scores which reflect preferences for five conflict handling styles: 1) competing, 2) collaborating, 3) compromising, 4) avoiding, and 5) accommodating. Each style is appropriate in some situation. There is no one style which is correct in all situations. Any given individual uses some modes better than others and, therefore, tends to rely upon those modes more heavily than others (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974).

The style of conflict behavior chosen by an individual is the result of personal history, work environment, and current living situation (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). It was, therefore, necessary to instruct participants in this study to consider their relationships with the board president and vice versa when responding to the Mode Instrument.

The instruments used were the standard Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument for the

superintendents' self-reporting (Appendix C) and a pronoun modified version for the school board presidents' other reporting (Appendix D). In the pronoun modified version "I" statements were changed to "he" or "she" to reflect the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendent. The modification of the Mode Instrument is supported by Hocker and Wilmot's (1995) suggestion that this instrument can be revised to assess one's perception of another's style (p. 159). The situational conflict management style questionnaire (Appendix E) was designed to further assess the superintendents' conflict management style in varying conflictual situations. The board president was asked to assess which mode of conflict management style the superintendent would use in defined conflict situations. The situations chosen were verified as typical to superintendents in the State of Pennsylvania by a panel of experts from the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (Appendix H).

Scoring

Each of the five modes of conflict management can generate a score from zero for very low use to 12 for very high use (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). Based on the underlying theory upon which the instrument is based, the five modes are mutually exclusive and exhaustive (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). Thus, a higher score on one mode would mean a corresponding decrease across the scores of the other modes. Because of the ipsative nature of this instrument the average intercorrelation between modes is $-.25$ (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977).

The highest score generated in the five categories were translated into the dominant style for each individual. In instances of tied scores the ranking of scores

provided in the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument were used to assign the dominant style.

Validity

Thomas and Kilmann (1977) have reported on the development of their forced-choice measure of conflict handling behavior. They noted that major emphasis was given to controlling social desirability in designing the Conflict Mode Instrument for substantive validity. If the social desirability is not controlled, it would tend to distort the experimental results in predictable ways (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). The scores would be higher on those responses reflecting desirable conflict handling modes. Ratings of desirable modes would tend to correlate with ratings of other desirable attributes thereby confounding results.

Instrument development investigation using the Edwards Social Desirability Scale (Edwards, 1957) and the Crowne Marlowe Social Desirability Scale (Crowne & Marlowe, 1964) were conducted by Thomas and Kilmann (1977). The results indicated the social desirability of the items was not readily apparent compared to similar conflict instruments (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Hall, 1969; Lawrence-Lorsch, 1967) designed around the five conflict-handling modes (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977).

There is a lack of evidence concerning external validity. Ben-Yoav and Banai (1992) used standard multitrait-multirater analyses to assess the convergent and discriminant validity of self and peer ratings for the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument and the ROCI-II. They reported "the correlation coefficients on the resulting validity diagonal of the MODE instrument indicted that four of its conflict modes showed

relatively high convergent validity (collaborating .86, compromising .87, avoiding .72, and accommodating .74) while the fifth mode—competing—had a moderate coefficient of .55” (Ben-Yoav & Banai, 1992, p. 241). The results indicated moderately low convergence and discriminant validity across the two data sources. Ben-Yoav and Banai (1992) state that “the relatively high convergence between self and peer ratings on both instruments makes it reasonable to use peer ratings as a training and development tool enabling individuals to validate and confirm their perceptions of their own conflict behavior.” (p. 245)

Reliability

Reliability of the Conflict Mode Instrument, based upon test-retest, shows that the instrument compares well with other conflict instruments tested including Blake and Mouton (1964), Lawrence-Lorsch (1967), and Hall (1969). Research by Wilson and Waltman (1988), using Pearson correlations, found that reliability estimates for the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument were approximately equal to the Putnam-Wilson Organizational Communication Conflict Instrument (1982) and higher than either the Blake and Mouton (1964) or Hall (1969) instruments.

Research conducted by Nichols (1984) reported internal consistency reliability estimates for the conflict mode instrument ($N = 59$) resulting in the following values: competing .91, collaborating .47, compromising .59, avoiding .79, and accommodating .63. Using another estimate of internal consistency in the form of split-half reliability, Nichols (1984) reported the following values: competing .90, collaborating .69, compromising .56, avoiding .79, and accommodating .67 for this conflict mode

instrument.

Research conducted by Ben-Yoav and Banai (1992) reported internal consistency reliability estimates of self-ratings on the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument comparable to the average estimates reported in original studies by Kilmann and Thomas (1977) — .58 for the Conflict Mode Instrument. Coefficient alphas for self measures were reported as follows: competing .72, collaborating .64, compromising .63, avoiding .63, and accommodating .52. Coefficient alpha for peer measures was reported as follows: competing .64, collaborating .67, compromising .67, avoiding .54, and accommodating .47.

Procedures

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument was administered to 200 randomly selected Pennsylvania public school superintendents. A modified Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument was administered to the superintendents' corresponding school board presidents. The modifications reflected changes in the pronoun used so that the board presidents were responding to their perceptions of superintendents' conflict handling behaviors.

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument was chosen for this study based on a number of factors. First, it is the most widely used questionnaire of its type used for both research and training in North America (Putnam, 1988). Second, the instrument is self-administering, self-scoring, has a twelve minute administration time (including scoring), and is noted for its strong control for social desirability bias (Womack, 1988). Third, the instrument has been widely used in research (Ashmore, 1979; Nelson &

Lubin, 1991; Nichols, 1984; Percival, Smitheram, & Kelly, 1992; Weider-Hatfield & Hatfield, 1996; Volkema & Bergmann, 1995; and Zumpetta, 1987) and for training purposes (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). Fourth, the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode is one of the two best known self-report instruments for assessing conflict management style (Van de Vliert & Kabanoff, 1990).

The “symmetrical binomial cumulative distribution” or Sign Test (Cohen, 1988, p.146) was used to predict the relationship between the self-report and other-report results. Pairs of ratings were defined as dichotomously, i.e., agree or disagree. A value of zero was assigned to agree and a value of one was assigned for disagreement. If the self-determined style of the superintendent agreed with the perceived style of the superintendent according to the school board president, a value of zero was assigned. Likewise, if disagreement resulted, a value of one was assigned. The results were tested at $H_0: P = .50$. Another test for significance was conducted for the two measures. The same groupings were used as with the sign test. The test uses the difference between means for uncorrelated data to obtain a z -score or standard score. A z -score to be significant at the $p < .05$ level must have a value of 1.96 or greater.

The individual results of the superintendents on the Mode Instrument were tallied according to selected demographic data. A chi-square test was used to test for significant differences between the frequencies of board presidents’ other-perceptions of superintendents’ conflict management styles on the Mode Instrument and superintendents’ self-perceptions frequencies on the Mode Instrument. Other anecdotal information was gained by using the chi-square test to test for significant differences

between the frequencies of board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles and frequencies of board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles in five varied conflict situations.

Effect Size and Sample Size

When testing for a significant difference in conflict management styles, the $p < .05$ level was used for rejecting the null hypothesis. For the purposes of this study a w value (Cohen's effect size for chi-square testing) of .30 was considered. Cohen (1988) proposed that a w value of .30 would be a medium effect size. At four degrees of freedom power would be 92% with a sample of ($N = 180$). At eight degrees of freedom power would be 83%. Sorting of data regarding demographic information resulted in both five by two and five by three contingency tables. A five by two table requires four degrees of freedom and a five by two table requires eight degrees of freedom.

The effect size used in this research for the Sign Test was $g = .15$. (Cohen's symbol for the binomial effect size) Cohen (1988) indicates that "a 65: 35 split represents a conventional definition of a medium departure from .50: .50" (p. 148). With $n = 92$, $v = 56$, $\alpha = .05$, the power of this effect size was 83%. Cohen (1988) defines the v -value as the high score in a binomial distribution.

Significance Criterion

The .05 level of significance was used in this study. For the Sign Test, with $\alpha = .05$, power = .83, $b = 1 - .83 = .17$. The relative seriousness of Type I to Type II error was $b / a = .17 / .05 = 3$ to 1; thus mistaken rejection of the null hypothesis was considered three times as serious as mistaken acceptance (Cohen, 1988). Using a chi-square test at

four degrees of freedom, with $\alpha = .05$, power = .92, $b = 1 - .92 = .08$. The relative seriousness of Type I to Type II error was $b / a = .08 / .05 = 1.6$ to 1; thus mistaken rejection of the null hypothesis was considered slightly more serious than acceptance (Cohen, 1988). Using a chi-square test at eight degrees of freedom, with $\alpha = .05$, power = .83, $b = 1 - .83 = .17$. The relative seriousness of Type I to Type II error was $b / a = .17 / .05 = 3$ to 1; thus, mistaken rejection of the null hypothesis was considered three times more serious than acceptance (Cohen, 1988).

Human Subjects

Appropriate guidelines were followed for Human Subjects Research Committee review of the instrument and overall content of the study. A signed copy of the approval letter is included in Appendix G.

The cover letter explains the importance of the study and offered opportunity for informed consent by the participants. Support of the Pennsylvania School Board Association Executive Director for this research is included in the cover letter. The respondents were guaranteed anonymity. A copy of the cover letters is included in Appendix B.

The anticipated return rate was 60%. A follow-up procedure was initiated for the initial nonrespondents. A second copy of the instrument and demographic survey was included in the follow-up mailings.

Summary

While this chapter outlined the research methodology, including the population and sample, data collection, instrumentation, and data analysis, the next chapter reviews the

results of the statistical tests which were identified. The results of these tests are discussed relative to the proposed hypotheses. Areas of agreement or disagreement between the defined relationships and demographics are delineated.

CHAPTER 4

Analysis of the Data

Introduction

The data analyses in this chapter were designed to address the research questions previously proposed in chapter one. The research questions were the following: 1) Do Pennsylvania superintendents exhibit a preference for a certain conflict management style? If so, which styles are the most preferred? 2) Are school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles congruent with superintendents' self-perceptions of their conflict management styles? 3) Do school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles remain consistent in varied conflict situations? 4) Are the superintendents' style selections related to age, gender, type of school, size of school, or wealth of district?

This chapter includes a summary of the demographic and survey results in total and by matched pairs, a description of the results of matched pair analysis of board presidents' and superintendents' conflict management styles with regard to research questions two and three, and statistical analyses relating to question four. The 12 hypotheses proposed in chapter three will be delineated and results reported throughout this chapter.

Return Rates

Two hundred schools of the 501 in Pennsylvania were randomly selected for this research. Demographic and conflict management style surveys were mailed to the 200 matched superintendents and board presidents sampled for this study. After an initial mailing, a second copy of the survey was mailed to each non-respondent. A third

mailing was sent to superintendents whose school board presidents had already responded. Phone calls and personal contacts were also used to help increase the rate of return.

In the final analysis, 153 superintendents responded to the conflict mode instrument and 148 superintendents responded to the demographic questionnaire. The response rate of the superintendents to the conflict mode instrument was 76.5%. The response rate of the superintendents to the demographic survey was 74%. One hundred and one school board presidents completed the conflict mode instrument (modified); there was a return rate of 50.5%. Of the responding school board presidents, 92 matched those responses from superintendents for a matched pairs rate of 46% (Table 1). Using Cohen's Power Tables (1988) for the Sign Test, an $N = 92$ pairs would be equal to 83% power with a moderate effect size (65:35 split). For the chi-square tests with $N = 184$, a power of 92% was identified at four degrees of freedom (Cohen, 1988).

Table 1

Return Rates

Return Rates	First Mailing	Second Mailing	Third Mailing	Total
Number Sent				
Superintendent	200	105	30	335
Board President	200	155	45	400
Number Returned				
Superintendent	48% (95)	65% (35)	77% (23)	153
Board President	23% (45)	38% (30)	51% (26)	101
Matched Pairs				
	23% (45)	38% (30)	46% (17)	92

Demographic Data for Superintendents

Demographic data were requested from each superintendent selected for this study. The demographic survey included two parts – personal and school data. Of the 200 demographic surveys mailed, 148 were returned completed for a response rate of 74%. Measures of central tendency were used to analyze the personal data. A complete review of the personal data collected from the superintendents is included in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographic Data - Personal (N = 148)

Superintendent:	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Mdn</u>	mode	Range
Age	51.7	4.79	50.5	54.0	43 - 67
Years in Education	30.2	4.83	30.3	30.0	11 - 44
Years as Superintendent Total	8.9	6.14	5.9	1.0	1 - 34
Years as Superintendent Locally	6.3	4.76	4.9	1.0	1 - 20
Years in Administration	21.2	5.87	19.4	20.0	7 - 39
Years with Current Board President	3.5	3.27	1.9	1.0	1 - 16

For the school data 148 surveys were completed for a response rate of 74%. Data analysis using measures of central tendency relating to the school information are included in Table 3. The following statistics define the typical superintendent respondent in this research. The average respondent was a 51.7 year old male. Almost 70% of the respondents had attained a doctorate degree. The average length of educational service was 30.2 years, with 21.2 years in administration in general and 8.9 years in the superintendency. The mean length of time as superintendent in their present

system was 6.3 years. The average length of service with the same school board president was 3.5 years. There were 132 males and 16 females self-identified on the survey. Thirty had a masters' degree, 16, advanced work, and 102, a doctorate degree.

Table 3

Demographic Data - School (N = 148)

<u>Type</u>		
Urban	n = 10	6.8%
Suburban	n = 53	35.8%
Rural	n = 85	57.4%
<u>Structure</u>		
K - 12	n = 7	4.7%
Elem/Jr. High/High	n = 51	34.5%
Elem/Middle/High	n = 90	60.8%
<u>Size</u>		
Small (1 - 1499)	n = 40	27.0%
Medium (1500 - 2499)	n = 27	18.2%
Large (+2500)	n = 81	54.7%
<u>Aid Ratio</u>		
Less than .50	n = 54	36.5%
.51 - .69	n = 50	33.8%
.70+	n = 44	29.7%

Demographic Data - Schools

Table 3 illustrates demographic data for type of schools. These data indicate that more than half of the schools in this study (57.4%) were self identified as rural, 35.8%

were identified as suburban, and 6.8%, as urban. The large majority of schools are structured in an elementary / middle school / high school format (60.8%). A third of the schools have an elementary / junior high / high school format. Less than 5% of the responding schools indicate a K - 12 format in one building.

Schools were also identified according to size. Small schools (1 - 1499 students) make up 27.0% of the respondents. Medium size school (1500 - 2499 students) make up 18.2% of the subjects. Large schools (2500+ students) represent 54.7% of the respondents.

Aid ratio was used as a measure of district wealth. Aid ratio is calculated by dividing market value of property in the community by the personal income in the community. The value generated was between zero and one, with zero being the highest wealth and one being the lowest wealth. The state funds school districts based on aid ratio. For this study three divisions were made regarding aid ratio: 1) less than .50 was considered wealthy; 2) .50 - .69 was considered moderate wealth; and 3) .70 and above was considered poor. Data collected indicate 36.5% wealthy districts, 33.8% moderate, and 29.7% poor districts. Tables 15 through 23 show results of conflict management style data sorted by selected personal and school information.

Conflict Mode Instrument

Superintendents

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument was mailed to 200 randomly selected public school superintendents in the State of Pennsylvania. Of the 200 instruments mailed 153, usable responses were received. The frequencies and chi-square

test of self-identified styles indicated by all of the superintendents in this study are noted in Table 4. In Table 5 the mean scores for superintendents in each style category from this study are compared to mean scores from graduate students in Thomas and Kilmann's

Table 4

Frequency of Modes - All Superintendent Respondents (N = 153)

Style	Frequency	Percentage	X ²
Competing	18	11.8%	5.19
Collaborating	33	21.6%	0.19
Compromising	58	37.9%	24.53
Avoiding	30	19.6%	0.01
Accommodating	14	9.2%	9.00

*X² is significant at (4, n = 153) = 38.92, p < .05

Table 5

Comparison of Mean Scores for Superintendents from Three Studies

Style	Current Study (N = 153)		Thomas-Kilmann (N = 196)		Ashmore (N = 80)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Competing	4.52	2.60	5.94	NA	5.09	NA
Collaborating	6.89	2.26	6.46	NA	6.89	NA
Compromising	7.27	2.49	6.39	NA	6.86	NA
Avoiding	6.03	2.22	5.93	NA	6.15	NA
Accommodating	4.88	2.23	5.20	NA	4.64	NA

original study (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977) and mean scores from a study by Ashmore (1979) of Maine superintendents. Participants in the Thomas and Kilmann study and the Ashmore studies identified the collaborating mode of conflict management as the most

frequently used conflict management style and accommodating as the least frequently used style. These results contrast to the current study in which Pennsylvania superintendents chose the compromising style as the most preferred style of conflict management, and the accommodating style as the least preferred.

Hypothesis 1: Superintendent Style Preference

The data in Table 4 indicate that superintendents in the State of Pennsylvania identified the compromising style of conflict management as the style most often used (37.9%). The least frequently identified style by superintendents is the accommodating style (9.2%). Chi-square test for goodness of fit using four degrees of freedom indicated that the superintendents showed a significant response preference to the selection of style. A chi-square value greater than 9.488 is required to reject the null hypothesis. Since the value obtained was 38.92, the first null hypothesis that the population of superintendents would show no preference in selecting any one of the five conflict management styles over the others, was rejected.

School Board Presidents

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (modified) was mailed to 200 randomly selected public school board presidents in the State of Pennsylvania. Of the 200 instruments mailed, 101 usable responses were received. The school board presidents were asked to complete this survey thinking of how his/her superintendent might typically behave towards conflict. Instead of the "I" pronoun, "he" or "she" was substituted in the original instrument so that board presidents related their impressions of the superintendents. Table 6 shows the frequency of the results of all of the responses of the

101 school board presidents. This information is compared to the frequency of responses for all superintendents of their own styles. The results indicate that overall the school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents differ when compared to the

Table 6

Board Presidents' Perceptions of Superintendents' Conflict Management Styles (Total)

Style	Frequency Board Presidents (N = 101)		Frequency Superintendents (N = 153)	
		Percent		Percent
Competing	34	33.7%	18	11.8%
Collaborating	16	15.8%	33	21.6%
Compromising	28	27.7%	58	37.9%
Avoiding	11	10.9%	30	19.6%
Accommodating	12	11.9%	14	9.2%

Table 7

Board Presidents' Perceptions of Superintendents' Conflict Management Styles (Matched pairs)

Style	Frequency Board President (N = 92)		Frequency Superintendent (N = 92)	
		Percent		Percent
Competing	29	31.5%	13	14.1%
Collaborating	15	16.3%	20	21.7%
Compromising	27	29.3%	29	31.5%
Avoiding	11	11.9%	18	19.6%
Accommodating	10	10.9%	12	13.1%

superintendents' self-perceptions of their conflict management styles. Board presidents generally perceive their superintendents to be more competing while the self-perceptions of superintendents reflect the compromising style of conflict management.

Table 7 presents the same analysis as table 6; however, only matched pairs of board presidents and superintendents are included. There were 92 matched pairs which generated usable data. The results for the matched pairs only are closely aligned with the results presented for the total response.

Hypothesis 2: Matched Pairs Analysis

Hypothesis two states that the population of school board presidents’ perceptions of superintendents’ conflict management styles would be congruent with the superintendents’ self-perceptions of conflict management styles. Analyzing the data collected by matched pairs (see Table 8), using a five by two chi-square test for independence contingency table at four degrees of freedom, shows no significant difference in the self-perceptions of superintendents and the other-perceptions of their school board presidents when asked to identify conflict management style using the

Table 8

Board Presidents’ Perceptions of Superintendents’ Conflict Management Style (Matched pairs)

Chi-square analysis (N = 92)

Style	Board President (X ²)	Superintendent (X ²)
Competing	3.05	3.05
Collaborating	0.50	0.22
Compromising	0.04	0.04
Avoiding	1.07	0.60
Accommodating	0.09	0.09

X² is not significant at (4, n = 184) = 8.75, p > .05.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. All values obtained were below the critical value necessary for the $p < .05$ level of confidence. Critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom is 9.488, $p \leq .05$.

The data collected by matched pairs were also analyzed by using the Sign Test. According to Cohen (1988) a moderate effect ($p = .05$) is attained with the Sign Test by a 65:35 split. Thus, a split of 65:35 or greater would be significant at the $p < .05$ level. With 92 matched pairs, Cohen's Power Tables (1988) indicate a confidence level of 83%. Comparing the results of the matched pairs of board presidents and superintendents, there were 72 non-matches and 20 matches. This translates to a 78:22 ratio which met the standard for confidence at the $p < .05$ level.

Table 9

Board Presidents' Other Perception vs. Superintendents' Self Perception (N = 92)
Sign Test

Situation	Matches	Non-matches	z-score	Area beyond z
Overall Results	20	72	5.42	.00001
Situation No. 1	30	62	3.33	.0005
Situation No. 2	17	75	6.04	.00001
Situation No. 3	22	70	5.00	.00001
Situation No. 4	19	73	5.63	.00001
Situation No. 5	22	70	5.00	.00001

These data illustrated in Table 9 produced a z-score of 5.42, which is significant at the $p < .05$ level. The results indicate that when scores are matched in pairs, there is a lack of agreement between the superintendents' self-perception of their conflict management

style and the other-perception of the school board president as to their conflict management style overall and in varied conflict situations.

Situational Responses

School board presidents were asked to respond to specific conflict situations which might typically face their school superintendent. Each board president was requested to choose the conflict management style that the superintendent would have used to resolve a given situation. The responses of the school board presidents varied greatly by situation. The Sign Test produced data (Table 9) which supports the proposition that different conflict management styles are used in different situations. Further analysis is made using chi-square tests for independence to compare the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles in a given situation to the board presidents' non-situational perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management style. The results of those analysis are presented in Tables 10 through 14.

Board Presidents' Perceptions of Superintendents' Conflict Management

Styles in Specific Conflict Situations

Hypothesis 3: Contract Negotiations with Teachers

The third null hypothesis states that the population of school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles would be congruent with the school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles during contract negotiations with teachers. When presented with this situation, the board presidents chose the collaborating style more frequently than the other styles of conflict management. This choice in this situation was identified more than twice as often as

collaboration was identified through the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument.

The Sign Test (Table 9) produced results which indicated a lack of agreement between the school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' general style and that style which the school board president assigned in this specific situation. A 67:33 ratio was obtained which exceeds the 65:35 ratio required at the .05 level. Therefore, with $p < .05$, the third null hypothesis was rejected.

Chi-square analysis with a five by two test for independence indicated that there was a significant difference between the frequencies of board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles and situational strategies as identified by the board presidents. The value obtained of 20.09 is above the critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom. Critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom is 9.488, $p < .05$.

Table 10

No.1 Contract Negotiations with Teachers.

Style	Situation			General		
	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	Frequency	Percentage	X ²
Competing	11	12.0%	4.05	29	31.5%	4.05
Collaborating	38	41.3%	4.48	15	16.3%	5.33
Compromising	30	32.6%	0.03	27	29.3%	0.14
Avoiding	6	6.5%	1.00	11	11.9%	0.44
Accommodating	7	7.6%	0.44	10	10.9%	0.11

*X² is significant at (4, n = 184) = 20.07, $p < .05$.

Hypothesis 4: Citizen Unrest at a Local School Board Meeting

Hypothesis number four states that the population of school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles would be congruent with the school board presidents' perception of the superintendents' conflict management styles during citizen unrest at a local school board meeting. Table 11 illustrates the results of situation number two. The board presidents were asked to respond to which style the superintendent would chose during citizen unrest at a school board meeting. Of the 92 matched pairs, 42.4% responded that their superintendent would use the accommodating style of conflict management in this situation. This response represented an almost four fold increase in the general perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles selection for the accommodating mode.

The Sign Test (Table 9) produced results which indicated a lack of agreement between the school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' general style and that style which the school board president assigned in this specific situation. A 82:18 ratio was obtained which exceeds the 65:65 ratio required at the .05 level. Therefore, with $p < .05$, the fourth null hypothesis was rejected.

Chi-square analysis with a five by two test for independence indicated that there was a significant difference between the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management style and situational strategies as identified by the board presidents. The value obtained of 29.15 was above the critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom. Critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom is 9.488, $p < .05$.

Table 11

No.2 Citizen Unrest at Local School Board Meeting

Style	Situation			General		
	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	Frequency	Percentage	X ²
Competing	9	9.98%	5.26	29	31.5%	5.26
Collaborating	15	16.3%	0.00	15	16.3%	0.00
Compromising	18	19.6%	1.09	27	29.3%	0.07
Avoiding	11	12.0%	0.00	11	11.9%	0.00
Accommodating	39	42.4%	7.84	10	10.9%	9.00

*X² is significant at (4, n = 184) = 20.07, p < .05.

Hypothesis 5: School Board Member - Superintendent Disagreement in Work Session

Hypothesis five states that the population of school board presidents’ perceptions of superintendents’ conflict management styles would be congruent with the school board presidents’ perception of the superintendents’ conflict management style during school board member-superintendent disagreements in work sessions.

Given the situation of a disagreement in work session between the superintendent and a board member, board presidents most frequently responded that their superintendent would use the collaborative style of conflict management (Table 12). This contrasts with the board presidents’ perceptions that generally their superintendents use the competitive conflict management style.

The Sign Test (Table 9) produced results which indicated a lack of agreement between the school board presidents’ perceptions of the superintendents’ general style and that style which the school board president assigned in this specific situation. A ratio of

76:24 was obtained which exceeds the 65:35 ratio required at the .05 level. Therefore, with $p < .05$, the fifth null hypothesis was rejected.

Using a five by two chi-square test for independence, chi-square analysis indicates that there is a significant difference between the superintendents' personal dispositions

Table 12

No.3 School Board Member - Superintendent Disagreement in Work Session

Style	Situation			General		
	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	Frequency	Percentage	X ²
Competing	8	8.7%	6.37	29	31.5%	5.26
Collaborating	34	36.9%	3.24	15	16.3%	4.00
Compromising	29	31.5%	13.07	27	29.3%	9.60
Avoiding	6	6.5%	1.00	11	11.9%	0.44
Accommodating	15	16.3%	0.31	10	10.9%	0.69

*X² is significant at (4, n = 184) = 43.98, $p < .05$.

and situational strategy as identified by the board presidents. The value obtained of 43.98 is above the critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom. Critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom is 9.488, $p < .05$.

Hypothesis 6: Teacher - Superintendent Disagreement on Personnel Matter

Hypothesis six states that the population of school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles would be congruent with the school board presidents' perception of the superintendents' conflict management style during teacher-superintendent disagreement concerning a personnel matter.

In the situation presented of teacher - superintendent disagreement on a personnel matter, the school board presidents identified the competing mode of conflict management as the style that most frequently would be used by their superintendent (Table 13). This

Table 13

No.4 Teacher - Superintendent Disagreement on Personnel Matter

Style	Situation			General		
	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	Frequency	Percentage	X ²
Competing	34	36.9%	0.13	29	31.5%	0.28
Collaborating	30	32.6%	2.13	15	16.3%	2.78
Compromising	16	17.4%	1.64	27	29.3%	1.14
Avoiding	3	3.3%	2.29	11	11.9%	2.29
Accommodating	9	9.8%	0.10	10	10.9%	0.00

*X² is significant at (4, n = 184) = 12.78, p < .05.

matched the overall perception of the most frequently used style by superintendents as perceived by board presidents through the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument.

The Sign Test (Table 9) produced results which indicated a lack of agreement between the school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' general style and that style which the school board president assigned in this specific situation. A 79:21 ratio was obtained which exceeds the 65:65 ratio required at the .05 level. Therefore, with p < .05, the sixth null hypothesis was rejected.

A five by two chi-square test of independence indicated that there was a significant difference between the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles and situational strategies as identified by the board presidents. The

value obtained of 12.78 was above the critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom. Critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom is 9.488, $p < .05$.

Hypothesis 7: Strategic Planning / Outcomes-Based Education Adoption Process

The seventh hypothesis states that the population of school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles would be congruent with the school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management style during strategic planning / outcomes-based education adoption process.

When asked to identify the style of conflict management their superintendent might use when dealing with strategic planning and/or outcomes-based education adoption (Table 14), the school board presidents overwhelming chose the collaborating style of conflict management (58.7%). In completing the Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument (modified), the board presidents only chose the collaborative style 16.3% of the time.

The Sign Test (Table 9) produced results which indicated a lack of agreement between the school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' general style and that style which the school board president assigned in this specific situation. A 76:24 ratio was obtained which exceeds the 65:65 ratio required at the .05 level. Therefore, with $p < .05$, the seventh null hypothesis was rejected.

A five by two chi-square test for independence indicates that there is a significant difference between the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles and situational strategies as identified by the board presidents. The value obtained of 50.42 is above the critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom. Critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom is 9.488, $p < .05$.

Table 14

No.5 Strategic Planning / Outcomes Based Education Adoption Process

Style	Situation			General		
	Frequency	Percentage	X ²	Frequency	Percentage	X ²
Competing	11	12.0%	4.05	29	31.5%	4.05
Collaborating	54	58.7%	27.00	15	16.3%	5.33
Compromising	14	15.2%	2.33	27	29.3%	1.71
Avoiding	2	2.2%	3.57	11	11.9%	2.29
Accommodating	11	12.0%	0.00	10	10.9%	0.09

*X² is significant at (4, n=184) = 50.42, p < .05.

Summary of School Board Presidents-Superintendent Perceptions

All of the results presented in Table 9 for the Sign Test are statistically significant. The results indicate that the superintendents' self-perceptions of their conflict management styles are not congruent with the school board presidents' other-perception of the superintendents' conflict management styles when matched in pairs. Additional analyses with chi-square tests for independence indicates that there is a significant difference in frequencies between the superintendents' personal dispositions and situational strategies as identified by the board presidents.

Chi-square analysis (Tables 10 - 14) of each situation indicates a significant disagreement in the school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles versus the board presidents' specific choice of which conflict management style their superintendent would use in varied conflict situations.

Analysis by Selected Demographics

Hypothesis 8: Gender

Hypothesis eight states that the population of superintendents' preferences for conflict management style is independent of gender. This hypothesis was to be tested with a chi-square test for independence, but the gender sample was unreliable based on the

Table 15

Mean Conflict Management Scores for Superintendents by Gender (N = 148)

Style:	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating
Female (n = 16)					
<u>M</u> =	3.20	6.80	9.00	6.70	4.30
<u>SD</u> =	2.14	1.94	1.41	2.05	2.24
Male (n = 132)					
<u>M</u> =	4.87	6.80	6.94	6.01	5.12
<u>SD</u> =	2.66	2.17	2.35	2.25	2.21

small number of female superintendents (16) in the sample. Chi-square analysis was not conducted regarding gender because the lack of frequency ($f < 5$) found in the cells exceeded 80% violating one of the assumptions needed to conduct chi-square analysis. Mean scores for superintendents on the Thomas-Kilmann Instrument and standard deviations are reported in Table 15.

Hypothesis 9: Age

Hypothesis nine states that the population of superintendents' preferences of conflict managements style is independent of age. A five by two chi-square test of

independence was performed to test for significant difference between the two groups. The results of the chi-square analysis are presented in Table 16. The total chi-square obtained was 6.89. Critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom is 9.488, $p < .05$. The score obtained is not significant at four degrees of freedom. There is no significant difference in the frequency of styles of conflict management reported by superintendents based on age.

Table 16

Chi-square Test of Differences in Conflict Management Style by Age

Age Group:	Older ($n = 75$)	Younger ($n = 73$)
Style:	X^2	X^2
Competing	1.96	1.96
Collaborating	0.05	0.05
Compromising	0.02	0.02
Avoiding	1.42	1.42
Accommodating	0.01	0.01

X^2 is not significant at (4, $n = 148$) = 6.86, $p > .05$.

Using the mean age of superintendents, the age category divided the superintendents into two subsamples, those 52 and older ($n = 75$) and those under the age of 52 ($n = 73$). Table 17 illustrates mean scores for superintendents on the Thomas-Kilmann Instrument and standard deviations which were calculated for each category.

Hypothesis 10: Aid Ratio

Another area of demographics which was selected for study was the wealth of the

district. Hypothesis 10 states that the population of superintendents' preference of conflict

Table 17

Mean Conflict Management Scores for Superintendents by Age (N = 92)

Style:	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating
Younger (n = 50)					
<u>M</u> =	5.10	7.77	8.18	6.75	5.47
<u>SD</u> =	2.60	2.07	2.48	2.36	2.03
Older (n = 42)					
<u>M</u> =	4.98	6.24	6.50	6.09	5.09
<u>SD</u> =	2.73	2.18	2.03	2.09	2.41

management style is independent of wealth of the district. In the State of Pennsylvania aid ratio is considered a measure of local wealth. Aid ratio divides market value of property in the community by the personal income in the school district. The value created is between zero and one, with zero being the highest wealth and one being lowest wealth. For funding purposes, the state funds school districts based on their aid ratio. Using state guidelines the divisions were made with those schools below .50 being considered wealthy, those .50 to .69 considered moderate, and those .70 and above were considered poor. This analysis created the following percentages (N = 148): Less than .50 = 36.5%; .50 - 69 = 33.8%; and .70+ = 29.7%. Table 18 presents the data from chi-square analysis using a five by three contingency table. At eight degrees of freedom a chi-square score of 15.51 or greater is needed to indicate significance difference at the $p < .05$ level. This analysis produced a score of 57.00 which is highly significant at the $p < .05$ level.

It can be stated that the conflict management style expressed by the responding superintendents was influenced by wealth of district.

Table 18

Chi-square Analysis of Superintendent Conflict Management Styles by Aid Ratio

Aid Ratio:	< .50 (n = 54)	.50 - .69 (n = 50)	.70 - 1.00 (n = 44)
Style:	X ²	X ²	X ²
Competing	1.35	1.39	0.00
Collaborating	8.27	11.49	1.32
Compromising	15.84	8.12	1.28
Avoiding	0.01	3.92	2.07
Accommodating	1.14	0.04	0.76

* X² is significant at (8, N = 148) = 57.00, p < .05.

Table 19

Mean Conflict Management Scores for Superintendents by Aid Ratio

Style:	Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating
Aid Ratio < .50 (n = 54)	<u>M</u> = 4.22 <u>SD</u> = 2.67	6.98 2.02	8.04 2.24	6.04 2.33	4.67 2.35
.50 - .69 (n = 50)	<u>M</u> = 4.98 <u>SD</u> = 2.52	6.98 2.29	6.92 2.77	5.94 2.06	4.94 1.94
.70 - 1.0 (n = 44)	<u>M</u> = 4.36 <u>SD</u> = 2.57	6.93 2.28	6.93 2.23	6.23 2.22	4.88 2.36
Total (N = 148)	<u>M</u> = 4.52 <u>SD</u> = 2.60	6.89 2.26	7.27 2.49	6.03 2.22	4.88 2.23

Mean scores on the Thomas-Kilmann Instrument and standard deviations were also calculated for the data on aid ratio. The reporting of those score is listed in Table 19.

Hypothesis 11: Type of School District

Hypothesis eleven states that the population of superintendents' preference of conflict management style is independent of the type of school. The types of schools identified in this study were urban, suburban, and rural. The respondents identified their school according to these three classifications. The results indicated that 10 schools were identified as urban, 53, as suburban, and 85, as rural.

Chi-square test of independence was conducted between the scores of suburban and rural superintendents (Table 20). The urban superintendents were excluded because there inclusion violated the need for 80% of the cells to contain at least five scores in the contingency table. The results of the chi-square test indicated a significant difference between the scores of suburban and rural superintendents on the Thomas-Kilmann

Table 20

Chi-square Analysis: Conflict Management Style of Suburban and Rural Superintendents

Type of School:	Suburban ($n = 53$)	Rural ($n = 85$)
Style:	X^2	X^2
Competing	0.02	0.02
Collaborating	0.01	0.01
Compromising	11.49	11.02
Avoiding	4.24	4.45
Accommodating	0.96	0.96

* X^2 is significant at $(4, n = 141) = 33.18, p < .05$.

Conflict Mode Instrument. With a five by two contingency table at four degrees of freedom, a score of 9.49 was needed to support a significant difference at the $p < .05$ level. The score achieved through this test was 33.18. With a critical value of 9.49, $p < .05$, the null hypothesis was rejected. The conflict management styles of superintendents is influenced by type of school in rural and suburban districts.

The mean score and standard deviation for the conflict management styles of superintendents in each of these types of schools is reported in Table 21. The use of data from the urban school is suspect because of the low number of schools which met this criterion.

Table 21

Mean Conflict Management Scores for Superintendents by Type of School

Style		Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating
Urban ($n = 10$)	<u>M</u> =	3.30	7.10	7.50	6.10	5.20
	<u>SD</u> =	2.41	1.37	1.96	1.92	1.54
Suburban ($n = 54$)	<u>M</u> =	4.81	7.23	7.62	5.89	4.42
	<u>SD</u> =	2.55	1.85	2.62	2.20	2.33
Rural ($n = 87$)	<u>M</u> =	4.41	6.71	7.08	6.10	4.88
	<u>SD</u> =	2.59	2.27	2.46	2.24	2.19

Hypothesis 12: Size of School District

Hypothesis 12 states that the population of superintendents' preferences of conflict management style is independent of size of school district. For this research the size of

school was determined by state standards. In the state of Pennsylvania small school districts are those with less than 1,500 students. Officially, there is no measure of a large district; however, using state athletic standards, those districts with approximately 2,500 students or more are generally classified as large districts. In this research 41 districts reported to be small, 28, medium sized and 83, to be large.

Table 22 presents the data from a chi-square test for independence using a five by three contingency table. At eight degrees of freedom a chi-square score of 15.51 or greater is needed to indicate a significant difference at the $p < .05$ level. This analysis produced a score of 142.52 which is highly significant at the $p < .05$ level. It can be stated that the conflict management style expressed by the responding superintendents was influenced by size of district.

Table 22

Chi-square Analysis of Superintendent Conflict Management Styles by District Size

District Size:	Small (n = 40)	Medium (n = 27)	Large (n = 81)
Style:	X ²	X ²	X ²
Competing	0.17	1.21	0.49
Collaborating	6.84	13.40	1.61
Compromising	44.62	2.16	27.67
Avoiding	11.77	0.79	18.66
Accommodating	0.05	6.00	7.08

*X² is significant at (8, N = 148) = 142.52, $p < .05$.

Mean scores on the Thomas-Kilmann Instrument and standard deviations were also calculated for the data on size of district. Table 23 reports the results of those analyses.

Table 23

Mean Conflict Management Scores for Superintendents by Size of School

Style		Competing	Collaborating	Compromising	Avoiding	Accommodating
Small ($n = 40$)	$\underline{M} =$	4.23	6.98	6.60	6.73	5.18
	$\underline{SD} =$	2.76	2.45	2.36	2.05	2.20
Medium ($n = 27$)	$\underline{M} =$	4.00	6.85	7.56	6.37	5.70
	$\underline{SD} =$	2.45	1.95	2.93	2.41	2.43
Large ($n = 81$)	$\underline{M} =$	4.81	7.15	7.81	5.67	4.80
	$\underline{SD} =$	2.54	1.99	2.41	2.14	2.04

Summary

The return rate for superintendents of the Conflict Mode Instrument was 76.5%. The school board presidents had a return rate of 50.5%. The return rate for matched pairs of responses was 46%. This chapter reported both demographic data and responses from superintendents and school board presidents to the Conflict Mode Instrument. Results indicate that, using the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, Pennsylvania superintendents do show preferences for certain conflict management styles. The style most commonly self-identified by the superintendents was compromising. The least frequently identified style was accommodating. By contrast, the school board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles measured by the

modified Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument identified the competing style as most frequently occurring and the accommodating style as least frequently occurring style of conflict management.

With regard to conflict management style perceptions of superintendents by board presidents in varied situations, the data indicates that board presidents perceived that superintendents used different styles based on the situation. It was also indicated that the styles school board presidents' perceived to be used by superintendents in situations varied from those identified by school board presidents when asked to respond to the superintendents' typical behavior (nonsituational) as defined by the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument.

An analysis of the effect of demographics on the superintendents' conflict management styles indicates that age has no effect, but there is a significance difference indicated in styles when wealth, size, and type of district is considered.

CHAPTER 5

Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Summary of Study

Throughout this country, educational systems and those responsible for them are under intense scrutiny from both internal and external constituencies. Issues which impact the schools include the following: political mandates, teacher unionism, taxpayer revolt, desegregation, student rights, and student violence. All of these issues can create conflict which must be managed for the effective operation and growth of educational systems. A study of conflict management styles can help educators understand the nature of conflict and the positive and creative role they can play in managing conflict. The purpose of this study was to examine the conflict management styles of Pennsylvania superintendents and to examine the relationship between their conflict management styles and perceptions of their board presidents concerning the use of the superintendents' styles in varied situations. Research in the handling of conflictual events by these two pivotal players is sparsely reported in the literature.

A review of the literature indicates that Ralph H. Kilmann and Kenneth W. Thomas are recognized experts in the field of conflict management in organizations. Kilmann and Thomas (1974) developed a forced-choice measure of conflict-handling behavior which included the five styles of competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating. Since most of the research conducted to study conflict management styles focuses on self-reporting, it is appropriate and useful to add research which assesses the school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' styles. This

research provides a comparison between the superintendent's perception of his/her conflict management style and the school board president's perception of the superintendent's conflict management style.

Researchers propose that people can, and do, change conflict management styles on the basis of the situation. What type of conflict management style best serves the situation at hand? This broad question was imposed on five typical conflictual situations which commonly occur in the superintendency in Pennsylvania. School board presidents responded by relating the typical conflict management behaviors they perceived were exhibited by their superintendents in these situations.

Analyses of demographic information obtained indicates that some forms of the institutional structures have an effect on the styles chosen by superintendents. Size of district, financial status, and type of district are all found to reflect significant differences in the conflict management styles school superintendents choose.

The four measurement instruments used were: 1) the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, 2) a pronoun modified Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, 3) a situational response survey and 4) a demographic questionnaire. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument is the most widely used questionnaire of its type used for both research and training in North America (Putnam, 1988). This instrument is especially noted for its strong control for social desirability bias (Womack, 1988). The situational response survey lists five typical conflictual situations which Pennsylvania superintendents encounter. The situations were verified as typical by a committee of superintendents from the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators.

Reliability for the Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument and the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument were based on past research conducted in other studies. There were no mechanisms built into this research to conduct internal consistency tests.

Cronbach alpha was considered but not included due to constraints caused by the ipsative nature of this instrument. According to Kerlinger (1973) “the important limitation on ipsative procedures is that . . . the usual statistics are not applicable, since such statistics depend on assumptions that ipsative procedures *systematically* violate” (p. 509).

Cronbach α internal consistency reliability coefficients for the Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument are, however, reported by numerous researchers. Ben-Yoav and Banai (1992) reported the following internal consistency results: competing .72, collaborating .64, compromising .63, avoiding .63, and accommodating .52. The original Cronbach α internal consistency reliability coefficients reported by Thomas and Kilmann (1974) were the following: competing .71, collaborating .65, compromising .58, avoiding .62, and accommodating .43. Coefficient α reported by Nichols (1984) produced the following results: competing .91, collaborating .47, compromising .59, avoiding .79, and accommodating .63. All other reports of coefficient α found in various studies produced results similar to those listed herein.

Results obtained from the four measurement instruments were analyzed using frequency distributions, measures of central tendency, sign tests, and chi-square tests.

Findings

The results of data analyses of the 12 hypotheses proposed in Chapter Three indicate the following:

1. There is a significant difference in conflict management styles among superintendents in the state of Pennsylvania.
2. There is no significant difference in the conflict management styles selected by superintendents and the board presidents' perceptions of those styles. When matched in pairs there is a significant difference in the conflict management style selected by the superintendent from that perceived by the board president.
3. There is a significant difference in the board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles and the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles during contract negotiations with teachers.
4. There is a significant difference in the board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles and the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles during citizen unrest at a school board meeting.
5. There is a significant difference in the board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles and the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles during school board member - superintendent disagreement in a work session.
6. There is a significant difference in the board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles and the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles during teacher - superintendent disagreement on personnel matters.
7. There is a significant difference in the board presidents' perceptions of

superintendents' conflict management styles and the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles during strategic planning / outcomes-based adoption process.

8. Statistical analysis of the hypothesis relating to conflict management styles and gender was not able to be performed due to lack of reliable data.

9. There is no significant difference in conflict management style selection between younger and older superintendents.

10. There is a significant difference in superintendents' conflict management style selection based on the wealth of the district.

11. There is a significant difference in superintendents' conflict management style selection in rural versus suburban districts. Urban districts were excluded due to lack of respondents.

12. There is a significant difference in superintendents' conflict management style selections based on the size of school.

Conclusions of the Study

This section summarizes the results of this study. First, a discussion reports the results of Pennsylvania superintendents' self-perceptions of their conflict management styles. Second, the congruency between the superintendents' self-perceptions and the other-perceptions of the school board presidents is discussed. Third, a discussion addresses the results of the school board presidents' perceptions of superintendents' conflict management styles in varied conflict situations. Fourth, the result of style differences based on select demographic data is discussed.

Superintendents' Self-Perceived Conflict Management Style

One of the research questions addressed in this study is, do Pennsylvania superintendents exhibit a preference for a certain conflict management style? The data generated support the proposition that the superintendents do show a style preference. The results of 153 responding superintendents who completed the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument indicate the following rates: Compromising 37.9%, Collaborating 21.6%, Avoiding 19.6%, Competing 11.8%, and Accommodating 9.2%. As measured by self-reporting on this instrument, the compromising style of conflict management is the most frequently reported style. The least reported style is the accommodating style of conflict management.

An analysis using mean scores of the results of these data to compare with mean scores from two prior studies indicates that superintendents in Pennsylvania exhibit different scores from participants in prior studies. The highest mean style score in Pennsylvania is in the compromising category while the lowest mean score is in the accommodating style. In Kilmann and Thomas' (1977) original study ($N = 196$) with graduate students and Ashmore's (1979) study ($N = 80$) of Maine superintendents, the collaborating style scored the highest mean value and the avoiding style scored the lowest mean value. Other reports reviewed (Ben-Yoav & Banai, 1992; Nichols, 1984) also produced the same findings as Kilmann and Thomas (1977) and Ashmore (1979). In this study, it appears that the Pennsylvania superintendents exhibit a different conflict management style preference from those participants in other studies. Whether the differences illustrated by these results are a function of changing social and political

cultures nationally or whether there is a systematic variable within the Pennsylvania superintendency cannot be concluded from this research.

Congruency of Superintendents' Self-Perceived Conflict Management Styles and School Board Presidents' Other-Perception of Styles

The superintendent and the school board president in the state of Pennsylvania occupy two key school leadership roles. The relationship between these two actors is important to the successful operation of a school. One of the issues addressed in this research is the question of congruency between the superintendents' self-perceived conflict management styles and the school board presidents' other-perceptions of the superintendents' styles. Since these two leaders must work closely together, an understanding of differences in perceptions is important. According to Hocker and Wilmot (1995) how the handling of conflict situations proceeds in this political frame may prove to be satisfactory or unsatisfactory to either party based on their perceptions.

The relationship between the superintendent and the school board has a great deal to do with the effectiveness of both parties (Ashmore, 1979). The Pennsylvania School Board Association (1996) encourages a "partnership" concept in relations between school boards and superintendents. The concept of a "partnership" is enhanced by having an understanding of one's own perspectives and of the other's perspective. Joel Spring (1993) and William L. Boyd (1976) both proposed models which support the concept that a "good fit" between the superintendent and the school board is important for the successful functioning of a school system.

A statistical analysis of the congruency between the superintendents' self-

perceptions and the board presidents' other-perceptions produces mixed results. Using a chi-square test for independence, the resultant value obtained is 8.75 at four degrees of freedom. The critical value for chi-square at four degrees of freedom is 9.49 at .05 probability. Thus, there is no significant difference in the frequency of different styles obtained between the superintendents' self-perceptions and the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles.

Using the Sign Test with matched pairs indicates a significant disagreement in perceptions at the .05 level of probability. Of the 92 matched pairs, there are 72 pairs which are not congruent. This translates to a 78:22 ratio which exceeds the standard of a 65:35 split for a moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988).

Frequency of style types indicate that school board presidents identify superintendents as competitive twice as often as superintendents identify themselves as competitive. According to Hocker and Wilmot (1995), "In conflict, we tend to see ourselves in a positive light and other in a negative light" (p. 98). Thomas and Pondy (1977) found that overwhelmingly, managers saw themselves as cooperative or collaborative and the other as primarily competitive, demanding, and refusing. It is important that these two leaders have an understanding of attributing characteristics. This research supports the proposition that there is a lack of congruency in self-perceptions of superintendents and the other-perceptions of their board president.

Situational Perceptions of Board Presidents' Toward Superintendents' Conflict Management Styles

The school board presidents in this study were asked to identify the conflict

management styles their superintendents would use in each of five different conflict situations.

The following descriptions are provided in order to clarify the perspectives presented in the five situations which follow: 1) Situational Style: This is the conflict management style assigned by the school board president to the superintendent's behavior in each of the five situations presented. 2) Nonsituational Style: This is the conflict management style assigned by the school board president to the superintendent's behavior based on the results of the pronoun modified Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument.

The following is a review of the results obtained for each situation. The data were analyzed using frequency results, chi-square tests, and Sign Tests.

Situation 1

Situation number one asked the school board presidents to identify which conflict management style their superintendent would use when dealing in contract negotiations with teachers. In situation one, the board presidents identified the collaborating style more frequently than the other superintendent styles of conflict management. In this situation, the choice of collaboration was identified more than twice as frequently by board presidents' than it was when the school board presidents' identified the superintendents' nonsituational style with the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument.

Data analysis using the Sign Test with matched pairs ($N = 92$) indicates that there is lack of agreement between the school board president's perceptions of conflict management styles in this situation and the nonsituational styles they identify with their superintendents using the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument. The results

generated 30 matches and 62 nonmatches (67:33 ratio). At the .05 level of probability, a 65:35 ratio or greater is needed for significance. A z -score of 3.33 was obtained which is also significant at the .05 level of probability.

Chi-square analysis of the data using the same population produced a value of 20.07 which is significant at the .05 level of probability at four degrees of freedom. Data analysis indicates that there is significant disagreement between the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' nonsituational conflict management styles versus their perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles when dealing in contract negotiations with teachers.

Situation 2

Situation number two asked the board presidents to respond to which style of conflict management the superintendents would choose during citizen unrest at a school board meeting. In this situation, of the 92 matched pairs, 42.4% responded that their superintendent uses the accommodating style of conflict management. In this situation the choice of the accommodating style represented a fourfold increase in the frequency selected by school board presidents over the nonsituational conflict management style of the superintendent as perceived by board presidents with the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument.

Data analysis using the Sign Test with matched pairs ($N = 92$) indicates that there is lack of agreement between the school board presidents' perceptions of conflict management styles in this situation and the nonsituational styles they identify with their superintendents using the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument. The results

generated 17 matches and 75 non matches (78:22 ratio). At the .05 level of probability, a 65:35 ratio or greater is needed for significance. A z -score of 6.04 was obtained which is also significant at the .05 level of probability.

Chi-square analysis of the data using the same population produced a value of 29.15 which is significant at the .05 level of probability at four degrees of freedom. The critical value required is 9.49. This test indicates that there is significant disagreement between the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' nonsituational conflict management styles versus their perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles when dealing with citizen unrest at a local school board meeting.

Situation 3

Situation number three asked the board presidents to respond to which style of conflict management the superintendent would choose during superintendent-school board member disagreement at a school board work session. Of the 92 matched pairs, 36.9% responded that their superintendent uses the collaborating style of conflict management in this situation. The collaborating response represented a twofold increase from the school board presidents' nonsituational perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles as measured with the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument.

Data analysis using the Sign Test with matched pairs ($N = 92$) indicates that there is lack of agreement between the school board presidents' perceptions of conflict management styles in this situation and the nonsituational styles they identify with their superintendents using the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instruments. The results generated 22 matches and 70 non matches (76:24 ratio). At the .05 level of probability, a

65:35, ratio or greater is needed for significance. A z -score of 5.00 was obtained which is also significant at the .05 level of probability.

Chi-square analysis of the data using the same population produced a value of 43.98 which is significant at the .05 level of probability at four degrees of freedom. The critical value required is 9.49. The data analysis indicates that there is significant disagreement between the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' nonsituational conflict management styles versus their perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles when dealing with school board members in disagreement at work sessions.

Situation 4

In situation number four the school board president was asked to respond to which conflict management style the superintendent would use in a disagreement with a teacher concerning a personnel matter. The board presidents most frequently identified the competing style of conflict management (36.9%). This style was also the most frequent nonsituational style that board presidents identified through the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument (31.5%).

Data analysis using the Sign Test with matched pairs ($N = 92$) indicates that there is a lack of agreement between the school board presidents' perceptions of conflict management styles in this situation and the nonsituational styles they identify with their superintendents using the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument. The results generated 19 matches and 73 nonmatches (79:21 ratio). At the .05 level of probability, a 65:35 ratio or greater is needed for significance. A z -score of 5.63 was obtained which is

also significant at the .05 level of probability.

Chi-square analysis of the data using the same population produced a value of 12.78 which is significant at the .05 level of probability at four degrees of freedom. The critical value required is 9.49. Data analysis indicates that there is significant disagreement between the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' nonsituational conflict management styles versus their perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles when dealing with personnel disagreements with teachers.

Situation 5

Situation number five is probably unique to the state of Pennsylvania. Board members were asked to identify which conflict management styles their superintendents would use when dealing with Strategic Planning and/or Outcome-based Education adoption processes. In this situation, the board presidents chose the collaborating style more frequently (58.7%) than the other styles. The choice of collaboration was identified more than three times as often by board presidents as the type of style the superintendent would exhibit in this situation than collaboration was identified by the school board presidents as the nonsituational style of the superintendent with the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument (16.3%).

Data analysis using the Sign Test with matched pairs ($N = 92$) indicates that there is lack of agreement between the school board presidents' perceptions of conflict management styles in this situation and the nonsituational styles they identify with their superintendents using the modified Thomas-Kilmann Mode Instrument. The results generated 22 matches and 70 non matches (76:24 ratio). At the .05 level of probability, a

65:35 ratio or greater is needed for significance. A z -score of 5.00 was obtained which is also significant at the .05 level of probability.

Chi-square analysis of the data using the same population produced a value of 50.42 which is significant at the .05 level of probability at four degrees of freedom. The critical value required is 9.49. This test indicates that there is significant disagreement between the board presidents' perceptions of the superintendents' nonsituational conflict management styles versus their perceptions of the superintendents' conflict management styles when dealing with Strategic Planning and/or Outcomes-based Education adoption processes.

Demographics

Demographic data for this study were requested from each randomly selected superintendent. The demographic survey included two parts—personal and school data. Of the 200 demographic surveys mailed, 148 were returned completed for a response rate of 74%. In this sample, the typical superintendent respondent is 51.7 years old. Almost 70% of the respondents have attained a doctorate degree. The average length of educational service is 30.2 years, with 21.2 years in administration and 8.9 years in the superintendency. The mean length of time as superintendent in the present system is 6.3 years. The average length of service with the same school board president is 3.5 years.

The demographic data for schools indicate that more than half of the schools in this study are self-identified as rural (57.6%), 35.8% are identified as suburban, and 6.6% as urban. The large majority of schools are structured as elementary / middle school / high school (61.8%). A third of the schools have an elementary / junior high / high

school format, and less than 5% of the responding schools indicate a K - 12 format in one building.

Schools are also identified by size. Small schools (1 - 1499 students) represent 26.9% of the respondents, medium size schools (1500 - 2499) comprise 18.4%, and large schools (2500+) comprise 54.6%, of the responses.

Aid Ratio is used to measure district wealth. In the state of Pennsylvania Aid Ratio is the standard used by the Department of Education to distribute funds to schools. This numerical construct is created by dividing the market value in a school district by the personal income reported in a district. A value of zero would indicate the highest wealth while a value of one would indicate complete poverty. Using the state standards for Aid Ratio, the following assignments are made: 1) less than .50 is considered wealthy; 2) .50 - .69 is considered moderate wealth; and 3) .70 and above is considered poor. Data collected showed the following: 36.6%, wealthy districts, 34.0%, moderate, and 29.3%, poor districts.

All analyses of the demographic data regarding the aforementioned variables involved the superintendents' self-perceptions of their conflict management styles as identified with the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument. The frequencies used in chi-square tests for demographic data are the result of tallying the predominant conflict mode of the superintendents who replied. Since this demographic analysis applies only to the superintendents, all 148 responses are included in the following statistical analyses for chi-square and measures of central tendency.

Selected demographic information was used to make general comparisons based

upon age, gender, aid ratio, size, and type of school. Mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for these items. Some generalizations concerning the data were made based on the average scores generated. Scores can range from zero to 12, with zero being an absence of that style and 12 being a perfect score in that style. Scoring high in one mode causes other mode scores to decrease.

Age

The superintendents were sorted as younger (less than 52 years old) and older (52 years or older). This sorting creates an $n = 73$ for younger superintendents, and an $n = 75$ for older superintendents. A comparison of the mean scores indicates that the younger superintendents have an average score of 8.18 for the compromising style as compared to a score of 6.50 for the older superintendents for the compromising style. Both of these scores are the highest scores for each group of superintendents.

Chi-square analysis using a test for independence generated a score of 6.86 for the age variable. A critical value of 9.488 is needed to reject the null hypothesis at $p < .05$. The results do not reject the null hypothesis. Data analysis indicates no influence by age was found in this research.

Gender

When the 148 superintendents are sorted by gender, the results produced an $n = 16$ female subsample and an $n = 132$ male subsample. A comparison of the mean scores indicates that the female superintendents score an average of 9.00 for the compromising style of conflict management compared to a score of 6.94 for the males in the same category. Both of these score are the highest scores in the five conflict modes. Also, of

note is a comparison of scores in the category of competing. Females score an average of 3.20 while males score 4.87. Caution must be used in drawing any conclusions from these data because of the small number of females in the subsample.

Chi-square analysis based on gender was not conducted because a review of cell frequencies indicates that less than 80% of the cells contain frequencies of five or greater. Not filling the appropriate number of cells violates one of the basic guidelines of conducting chi-square testing.

Wealth of District

With regard to Aid Ratio (wealth), most of the mean scores are comparable regardless of district wealth. The one exception is that superintendents in wealthy school districts score higher in the compromising style (8.04) than superintendents in average (6.92) and poor districts (6.93).

A Chi-square test for independence for Aid Ratio was conducted. A three by five chi-square contingency table generated a chi-square value of 57.00. The critical value needed to reject the null hypothesis, that there was no influence by Aid Ratio, is 15.51 for $p < .05$, at eight degrees of freedom. From these data it is concluded that the style frequencies reported by the superintendents in this research are influenced by wealth.

Type of School

Mean scores generated based on the type of school (urban / rural / suburban) are found to be tightly grouped with the exception of the competing mode for urban schools. Urban school superintendents have a mean score of 3.30 in the competing mode while suburban superintendents' scores average 4.81, and rural scores average 4.41. Given the

small number of urban schools in the study (10), any conclusions drawn from this information would be questionable.

Testing these relationships with a chi-square test of independence indicates that the choice of superintendents' styles is influenced by the type of school they represent. The urban schools were deleted from chi-square analysis because their low frequencies caused less than 80% of the cells to have five or more frequencies. Instead, analysis was conducted using the suburban and rural frequencies. A five by two chi-square test generates a value of 33.18 for type of school. A critical value of 9.49 is needed to reject the null hypothesis at the $p < .05$ level of confidence. Since the score generated exceeds the critical value, the null hypothesis is rejected.

Size of School

Hypothesis 12 states that the population of superintendents' preferences of conflict management style is independent of size of school district. In this research, the schools are classified as small, medium, and large, based on student enrollment. Using a chi-square test for independence, the data were analyzed. The results indicate that the size of the school has an effect on the style of conflict management superintendents exhibit. With a five by three chi-square test, a critical value of 15.51 or greater is required to reject the null hypothesis at $p < .05$ level of confidence. The score obtained is 142.52, which greatly exceeded the critical value. The null hypothesis that preferences of conflict management style is independent of size of school district is rejected.

Mean scores generated based on the size of school are found to be tightly grouped. Superintendents in small schools score highest in the collaborating style of conflict

management. Superintendents in medium and large schools score highest in the compromising style of conflict management.

Implications of the Study

Understanding conflict management styles and how they are perceived by others is a critical process in effective communication within organizations (Hocker & Wilmot, 1995). The results of this study of conflict management styles of Pennsylvania superintendents and school board presidents' perceptions of those styles overall and in varied conflict situations indicate the following: 1) an incongruency of style perceptions in general between the two parties, 2) incongruency of style perceptions by the school board presidents of superintendents nonsituational styles and situational styles of conflict management, 3) a lack of research involving the superintendent and school board president regarding conflict management and 4) a need for more training regarding the role conflict management plays in the school setting.

This study adds to the knowledge base that has been developed by the business community but only marginally developed by the education community. Until recently, training in conflict management for school personnel has seldom been addressed. The spiraling nature of conflict in schools over the past decade sends a clear signal that there is a need for more intensive study of the nature and role of conflict management in schools.

Based on the results of this study, superintendents and board presidents would be well served to consider their perceptions of one another's role in conflict management. It appears evident that the superintendents in Pennsylvania have self-perceptions of how they handle conflicts which are not congruent with the perceptions of their school board

presidents. If, as the Pennsylvania School Board Association (1996) proposes a “team concept” is critical to the successful running of a school district, then issues which enhance teaming are quite important. Congruency of perceptions, though never totally achievable, can be enhanced if the superintendent and school board president were more aware of the elements of conflict and conflict management. Literature exists which would help provide the skills needed by superintendents and school board presidents to become better conflict managers. Especially noteworthy is literature which speaks to the role of communication skills in conflict management. The translation of perceptions into one’s reality is a form of communication. Awareness of how and why this occurs is an obvious first step towards enhanced conflict management skills.

Understanding the importance of congruency of perceptions also holds promise for the process of superintendent selection. A wealth of authors supports the proposition that there is a “fit” between the superintendent and the school board. Wirt and Kirst (1992), Joel Spring (1993), and Hocker and Wilmot (1995) all address the concept of the need for a “fit” between the superintendent and the school board. Recognizing the conflict management style of candidates for the superintendency can help alleviate the likelihood of future problems when a candidate is hired. Also, from the other perspective, the superintendent needs to recognize how their style of conflict management might fit in with the local school board’s power structure. A lack of congruence recognized by either party should be a signal to critically analyze future relationships. How this can be accomplished is an issue for the local school board and candidates pursuing jobs with those districts. The possibility exists to administer a conflict management style survey to candidates before

hiring. From the candidates perspective it would be wise to pursue research on the behavior and nature of the power structure of the community, possibly looking to the work of Joel Spring (1993) regarding the four types of school boards based on community power structure.

With regard to situational variables which influence conflict management style choice, it seems apparent in this research that board presidents either perceived changing styles by superintendents based on situations or school board presidents perceived what they believed the behavior should be. Regardless of the rationale, the data support the conclusion that the school board presidents perceived that the conflict management style used by superintendents changes dramatically in varied situations. It appears that the superintendents adapt to the various natures of each audience, culling from their experience the “right” conflict management style to fit the situation. Although the frequencies reported for specific conflict management styles in varied situations are generally high compared to the broad-based results from the Conflict Mode Instrument, there still remains a large portion of superintendents in modes which do not appear to fit the situation given. This raises the question of the development of training for superintendents and board presidents in conflict management. It would appear that there exists a need for identification of style and training in the merits of using different styles in different situations. As an example, the situation presented in this research concerning the school board presidents’ perceptions as to which conflict management style the superintendents use during strategic planning / outcomes-based adoption indicated that 58.7% of the school board presidents identified the collaborating mode. Common sense

would seem to support this result but there were still 41.3% of the superintendents whose school board presidents apparently perceived that they used a different mode of conflict handling during this situation. Training in the use of the various styles in typical conflictual events could prove useful for practitioners to tactically achieve goals. Identification and training in style use could lead to higher levels of thinking by both superintendents and board presidents as they pursue constructive conflict resolution.

The demographic data analyzed raise questions for further research. Of particular note were the variances identified by size, wealth, and type of school. Further study is warranted to see if there exist some systematic variables which impact the choice of conflict management style.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions of this study, several recommendations for further research are proposed. First, more studies are needed regarding conflict management in school settings. Given the apparent escalation of conflict in educational settings in both number and intensity, studies need to be made regarding conflict and its management between and among all the varied actors. Administrators, board members, teachers, taxpayers, and students risk the dysfunction of our educational institutions through escalating conflict spirals. Skills are needed to address conflict situations by enhancing de-escalation through constructive conflict management techniques.

Second, since conflict management skills are based upon communication, studies are needed which address communication skills and how they relate to conflict management in schools. Schools tend to be very formal in structure. The study of the

effect of structure on communication pathways could lead to some important conflict management information. Future analysis of conflict relationships between the superintendent and principals, principals and teachers, and teachers and students could all lead to better understanding of systematic ways to enhance communications and productive conflict management.

Third, research needs to address ways to teach conflict management skills effectively in school settings. There appears to be limited training regarding conflict management available to those in the school community. Much of the literature dealing with conflict management and its resolution is found in the business community. Efforts need to evolve which take information from the business community and merge it with that in the educational community. More attention needs to be given to conflict management training in the educational setting. Materials need to be developed that include: 1) the unique characteristics of school settings; 2) the politics of schools; 3) ways to reach the varied actors; and 4) enhancing communication skills.

Fourth, further study should pursue the relationship between conflict management styles and demographic information. The impact of age, gender, wealth of district, and other variables could generate important information concerning matching the needs of the community and the viability of superintendent candidates. Minimally, the information would be important to design training for administrators. A knowledge of the impact of perceptions toward conflict is an important issue. Culture, gender, and status influence the way one perceives the world. Understanding the influence of these issues on one's ability to interact in unique conflict situations would be important. These recommended studies

appear to be logical extensions and expansions of the current study of conflict management.

Summary

The constructive management of conflict in school settings is an important issue for all members of the school and community. According to the Pennsylvania School Boards Association (1996), efforts to produce positive, constructive results in conflictual situations have become the everyday activity of superintendents and school board leaders. This research can lead to a heightened awareness regarding conflict management. Currently, much of the training occurring in schools is focused on student conflict management; however, training needs to be provided on a multitude of levels. This research supports training concepts which point toward joint training in conflict management which includes both the superintendent and school board. As the literature suggests, an understanding of conflict management and styles of conflict handling are important to the positive growth of the organization. All parties in conflict situations hold the key for either successful resolution or spiraling disaster. An understanding of the elements of communications, attributions, perceptions, and power relationships can help to promulgate the mechanisms necessary for a successful resolution. However, as noted by Deutsch (1994), formal training in these skills has been overlooked.

Efforts need to focus on professional organizations and schools of education so that there is training for school personnel in conflict management. Professional organizations play a vital role because they have ability to provide joint training for superintendents and school board leaders. Lessons that include conflict interventions such

as facilitation, mediation, organizational development, and conciliation have the capacity to affect better conflict management.

Training designed involving all of the aforementioned elements and methods can produce school systems with the capacity to develop and grow into organizations which constructively handle conflict and thus provide opportunities for creativity, goal achievement, and personal satisfaction.

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APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Please complete the items below to the best of your ability. If you do not know the answer, leave it blank.

I. Personal:

____ Age

____ Gender

Highest degree held: check only one and include date obtained.

____ B.S. ____

____ Masters ____

____ A.B.D. ____

____ Doctorate ____

Educational Background:

____ Number of years in education

____ Number of years as superintendent

____ Number of years in present position

____ Number of years in administration

Board President

____ How many years have you work with the current board president.

II. School System Information:

Present system:

____ Urban

____ Suburban

____ Rural

Number of Students:

____ 0-1499

____ 1500-2499

____ 2500-3500+

Structure of system:

____ K-12 one building

____ Elem/Jr-High/Sr-High

____ Elem/Middle/Sr-High

Aid Ratio:

____ Less than .50

____ .50-.69

____ .70+

Per pupil expenditure: Total budget divided by number of students = _____

APPENDIX B

Survey Cover Letters



Youngstown State University / One University Plaza / Youngstown, Ohio 44555-0001

Dear Colleague:

As a doctoral student at Youngstown State University, I am requesting you and your Board President's participation in a study which will hopefully produce meaningful information for school administration in the State of Pennsylvania. You represent one of two hundred randomly selected pairs chosen for this study.

Given the ever increasing political nature of our positions, a study of how we manage conflict may elicit information that will positively impact on the everyday decision-making of superintendents and their leadership cohorts on the school board. The Pennsylvania School Board Association has indicated to me that they would be interested in the results of this research.

Enclosed are a demographic data survey and a questionnaire designed to assess superintendents' conflict management styles. The code numbers on each will enable me to correlate the demographic data with the questionnaire. Your Board President will receive a similar questionnaire asking his/her perceptions of your conflict management style. I hope that you will take 15 minutes of your time to respond to the enclosed instruments.

By responding to this survey you will be giving me your informed consent to participate in this study. All responses will be held in strictest confidence. Data will be computer analyzed for general trends only and will not focus on individual responses. No individual or school information will be shared with anyone.

Please return the demographic survey and the questionnaire in the enclosed self-addressed envelope. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. If you have any concerns, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at (412) 662-5100.

Sincerely,

Lawrence R. Connelly, Jr.
Superintendent, Mercer Area SD



Youngstown State University / One University Plaza / Youngstown, Ohio 44555-0001

Dear President:

As a doctoral student at Youngstown State University, I am requesting you and your superintendent's participation in a study which will hopefully produce meaningful information for school administration in the State of Pennsylvania. You represent one of two hundred randomly selected pairs chosen for this study.

Given the ever increasing political nature of our positions, a study of how we manage conflict may generate information that will positively impact on the everyday decision-making of board presidents and their superintendents. The Pennsylvania School Boards Association has indicated to me that they would be interested in the results of this research.

Enclosed are two surveys designed to assess your superintendent's conflict management style. The code numbers on each will enable me to correlate the data between you and your superintendent. Your superintendent will receive a similar survey asking his/her perception of their conflict management style. I hope that you will take 15 minutes of your time to respond to the enclosed instruments.

By responding to this survey you will be giving me your informed consent to participate in this study. All responses will be held in strictest confidence. Data will be computer analyzed for general trends only and will not focus on individual responses. No individual or school information will be shared with anyone.

Please return the surveys in the enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns please feel free to call me at (412) 662-5100.

Sincerely,

Lawrence R. Connelly, Jr.
Superintendent, Mercer Area SD

APPENDIX C

Instrument (Superintendent)

SUPERINTENDENT

THOMAS-KILMANN CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT

INSTRUCTIONS:

By completing the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, you will be participating in a study to identify the types of styles of conflict handling used by Pennsylvania superintendents and how board presidents' perceive those styles.

As you complete the Mode Instrument, consider situations in which you find your wishes differing from those of you board of directors. How do you usually respond to such situations?

On the following pages are several pairs of statements describing possible behavioral responses. For each pair, please circle the "A" or "B" statement which is most characteristic of your own behavior.

In many cases, neither "A" nor "B" statement may be very typical of your behavior; but please select the response you would be more likely to use.

THOMAS-KILMAN CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT

1. A. There are time when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.
 B. Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, I try to stress those things upon which we both agree.
2. A. I try to find a compromise solution.
 B. I attempt to deal with all of his and my concerns.
3. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.
 B. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.
4. A. I try to find a compromise solution.
 B. I sometimes sacrifice my own wishes for the wishes of the other person.
5. A. I consistently seek the other's help in working out a solution.
 B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
6. A. I try to avoid creating unpleasantness for myself.
 B. I try to win my position.
7. A. I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.
 B. I give up some points in exchange for others.
8. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.
 B. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
9. A. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.
 B. I make some effort to get my way.
10. A. I am firm in pursuing my goals.
 B. I try to find a compromise solution.
11. A. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
 B. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.
12. A. I sometimes avoid taking positions which would create controversy.
 B. I will let him/her have some of her/ his positions if he lets me have some of mine.
13. A. I propose a middle ground
 B. I press to get my points made.

THOMAS-KILMANN CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT

14. A. I tell him/her my ideas and ask her/ him for theirs.
B. I try to show her/him the logic and benefits of my position.
15. A. I might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve our relationship.
B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid tensions.
16. A. I try not to hurt the other's feelings.
B. I try to convince the other person of the merits of my position.
17. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.
B. I try to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
18. A. If it makes the other person happy, I might let him/her maintain his views.
B. I will let him/her have some of his/her positions if he lets me have some of mine.
19. A. I attempt to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
B. I try to postpone the issue until I have had some time to think it over.
20. A. I attempt to immediately work through our differences.
B. I try to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both of us.
21. A. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.
B. I always lean toward a direct discussion of the problem.
22. A. I try to find a position that is intermediate between her/his and mine.
B. I assert my wishes.
23. A. I am very often concerned with satisfying all our wishes.
B. There are times when I let others take responsibility for solving the problem.
24. A. If the other's position seems very important to him, I would try to meet his wishes.
B. I try to get him to settle for a compromise.
25. A. I try to show him the logic and benefits of my position.
B. In approaching negotiations, I try to be considerate of the other person's wishes.
26. A. I propose a middle ground.
B. I am nearly always concerned with satisfying all our wishes.

THOMAS-KILMANN CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT

27. A. I sometime avoid taking positions that would create controversy.
B. If it makes the other person happy, I might let him maintain his views.
28. A. I am usually firm in pursuing my goals.
B. I usually seek the other's help in working out a solution.
29. A. I propose a middle ground.
B. I feel that differences are not always worth worrying about.
30. A. I try not to hurt the other's feelings.
B. I always share the problem with the other person so that we can work it out.

APPENDIX D

Instruments (Board President)

BOARD PRESIDENT**THOMAS-KILMANN CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT****INSTRUCTION:**

By completing the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument, you will be participating in a study to identify the types of styles of conflict handling used by Pennsylvania superintendents and how board presidents' perceive those styles.

As you complete the Mode Instrument, consider situations in which you find his/her wishes differing from those of you board of directors. How does he/she usually respond to such situations?

On the following pages are several pairs of statements describing possible behavioral responses. For each pair, please circle the "A" or "B" statement which is most characteristic of his/her behavior.

In many cases, neither "A" nor "B" statement may be very typical of his/her behavior; but please select the response he/she would be more likely to use.

THOMAS-KILMAN CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT

1. A. There are times when she lets others take responsibility for solving the problem.
 B. Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, she tries to stress those things upon which we both agree.
2. A. She tries to find a compromise solution.
 B. She attempts to deal with all of her and my concerns.
3. A. She is usually firm in pursuing her goals.
 B. She might try to soothe other's feelings and preserve relationships.
4. A. She tries to find a compromise solution.
 B. She sometimes sacrifices her own wishes for the wishes of the other person.
5. A. She consistently seeks other's help in working out a solution.
 B. She tries to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
6. A. She tries to avoid creating unpleasantness for herself.
 B. She tries to win her position.
7. A. She tries to postpone the issue until she has had some time to think it over.
 B. She gives up some points in exchange for others.
8. A. She is usually firm in pursuing her goals.
 B. She attempts to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
9. A. She feels that differences are not always worth worrying about.
 B. She makes some effort to get her way.
10. A. She is firm in pursuing her goals.
 B. She tries to find a compromise solution.
11. A. She attempts to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
 B. She might try to soothe other's feelings and preserve the relationship.
12. A. She sometimes avoids taking positions which would create controversy.
 B. She will let them have some of their positions if they let him have some of her's.

THOMAS-KILMANN CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT

13. A. She proposes a middle ground
 B. She presses to get her points made.
14. A. She tells them her ideas and ask them for theirs.
 B. She tries to show the logic and benefits of her position.
15. A. She might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve the relationship.
 B. She tries to do what is necessary to avoid tensions.
16. A. She tries not to hurt the other's feelings.
 B. She tries to convince the other person of the merits of her position.
17. A. She is usually firm in pursuing her goals.
 B. She tries to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
18. A. If it makes the other person happy, she might let him maintain his views.
 B. She will let him have some of his positions if they let him have some of her's.
19. A. She attempts to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
 B. She tries to postpone the issue until they have had some time to think it over.
20. A. She attempts to immediately work through our differences.
 B. She tries to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both parties.
21. A. In approaching negotiations, she tries to be considerate of the other person's wishes.
 B. She always leans toward a direct discussion of the problem.
22. A. She tries to find a position that is intermediate between their's and her's.
 B. She asserts her wishes.
23. A. She is very often concerned with satisfying all our wishes.
 B. There are times when she lets others take responsibility for solving the problem.
24. A. If the other's position seems very important to him, she will try to meet his wishes.
 B. She tries to get others to settle for a compromise.

THOMAS-KILMANN CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT

25. A. She tries to show others the logic and benefits of her position.
B. In approaching negotiations, she tries to be considerate of the other person's wishes.
26. A. She proposes a middle ground.
B. She is nearly always concerned with satisfying all our wishes.
27. A. She sometimes avoid taking positions that would create controversy.
B. If it makes the other person happy, she might let him maintain their views.
28. A. She is usually firm in pursuing her goals.
B. She usually seeks the other's help in working out a solution.
29. A. She propose a middle ground.
B. She feels that differences are not always worth worrying about.
30. A. She tries not to hurt the other's feelings.
B. She always shares the problem with the other person so that they can work it out.

THOMAS-KILMAN CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT

1. A. There are times when he lets others take responsibility for solving the problem.
 B. Rather than negotiate the things on which we disagree, he tries to stress those things upon which we both agree.
2. A. He tries to find a compromise solution.
 B. He attempts to deal with all of his and my concerns.
3. A. He is usually firm in pursuing his goals.
 B. He might try to soothe other's feelings and preserve relationships.
4. A. He tries to find a compromise solution.
 B. He sometimes sacrifices his own wishes for the wishes of the other person.
5. A. He consistently seeks other's help in working out a solution.
 B. He tries to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
6. A. He tries to avoid creating unpleasantness for himself.
 B. He tries to win his position.
7. A. He tries to postpone the issue until he has had some time to think it over.
 B. He gives up some points in exchange for others.
8. A. He is usually firm in pursuing his goals.
 B. He attempts to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
9. A. He feels that differences are not always worth worrying about.
 B. He makes some effort to get his way.
10. A. He is firm in pursuing his goals.
 B. He tries to find a compromise solution.
11. A. He attempts to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
 B. He might try to soothe other's feelings and preserve the relationship.
12. A. He sometimes avoids taking positions which would create controversy.
 B. He will let them have some of their positions if they let him have some of his.

THOMAS-KILMANN CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT

13. A. He proposes a middle ground
 B. He presses to get his points made.
14. A. He tells them his ideas and ask them for theirs.
 B. He tries to show the logic and benefits of his position.
15. A. He might try to soothe the other's feelings and preserve the relationship.
 B. He tries to do what is necessary to avoid tensions.
16. A. He tries not to hurt the other's feelings.
 B. He tries to convince the other person of the merits of his position.
17. A. He is usually firm in pursuing his goals.
 B. He tries to do what is necessary to avoid useless tensions.
18. A. If it makes the other person happy, he might let him maintain his views.
 B. He will let him have some of his positions if they let him have some of his.
19. A. He attempts to get all concerns and issues immediately out in the open.
 B. He tries to postpone the issue until they have had some time to think it over.
20. A. He attempts to immediately work through our differences.
 B. He tries to find a fair combination of gains and losses for both parties.
21. A. In approaching negotiations, he tries to be considerate of the other person's wishes.
 B. He always leans toward a direct discussion of the problem.
22. A. He tries to find a position that is intermediate between their's and his.
 B. He asserts his wishes.
23. A. He is very often concerned with satisfying all our wishes.
 B. There are times when he lets others take responsibility for solving the problem.
24. A. If the other's position seems very important to him, he will try to meet his wishes.
 B. He tries to get others to settle for a compromise.

THOMAS-KILMANN CONFLICT MODE INSTRUMENT

25. A. He tries to show other the logic and benefits of his position.
B. In approaching negotiations, he tries to be considerate of the other person's wishes.
26. A. He proposes a middle ground.
B. He is nearly always concerned with satisfying all our wishes.
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B. If it makes the other person happy, he might let him maintain their views.
28. A. He is usually firm in pursuing his goals.
B. He usually seeks the other's help in working out a solution.
29. A. He propose a middle ground.
B. He feels that differences are not always worth worrying about.
30. A. He tries not to hurt the other's feelings.
B. He always shares the problem with the other person so that they can work it out.

APPENDIX E
Situational Survey

BOARD PRESIDENT

Think of your superintendent in these conflict situations and choose the description which would best describe how you think he or she behaves:

1. Contract negotiations with the teachers.

- A. Competing.
- B. Collaborating.
- C. Compromising.
- D. Avoiding.
- E. Accomodating

2. Citizen unrest at a local school board meeting.

- A. Competing.
- B. Collaborating.
- C. Compromising.
- D. Avoiding.
- E. Accomodating

3. School board member-superintendent disagreement in work session.

- A. Competing.
- B. Collaborating.
- C. Compromising.
- D. Avoiding.
- E. Accomodating

4. Teacher-superintendent disagreement on personnel matter.

- A. Competing.
- B. Collaborating.
- C. Compromising.
- D. Avoiding.
- E. Accomodating

5. Strategic planning / Outcomes based education adoption process.

- A. Competing.
 - B. Collaborating.
 - C. Compromising.
 - D. Avoiding.
 - E. Accomodating
-

APPENDIX F

Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators



Youngstown State University / One University Plaza / Youngstown, Ohio 44555-0001

Mr. Albert Jones
PASA Legislative Committee
3591 Sharon Road,
West Middlesex, PA 16159-9799

Dear Mr. Jones:

As part of my doctoral dissertation I need a "panel of experts" to support my assumption that the below listed items are typical conflictual situations that school superintendents in Pennsylvania experience. I have chosen the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators because they are the organization in the state which represents superintendents' interests.

I am requesting for you to present these to your committee for consideration. If indeed they agree that these situations are typical, please notify me in writing with their response and the names of the committee members involved.

In advance, thank you for your support of my research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lawrence R. Connelly, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style.

Lawrence R. Connelly, Jr.
Superintendent, Mercer Schools

Conflict Situations:

- 1. Contract negotiations with the teachers.**
- 2. Citizen unrest at a local school board meeting.**
- 3. School board member - superintendent disagreement in work session.**
- 4. Teacher - superintendent disagreement on personnel matter.**
- 5. Strategic planning / outcome based education adoption process.**

WEST MIDDLESEX AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Educating the youth of: West Middlesex Borough, Lackawannock and Shenango Townships

Albert J. Jones, Superintendent
 Low Building
 3591 Sharon Road
 West Middlesex, Pennsylvania 16159-9799
 Telephone: Area Code 412 528-2002
 Fax: 412-528-0380



"An Equal Opportunity Employer"

May 7, 1998

Mr. Lawrence R. Connelly Jr., Superintendent
 Mercer Area School District
 Box 32
 Mercer, PA 16137

Re: Doctoral Dissertation
 Youngstown State University

Dear Mr. Connelly:

Please be informed that on April 29, 1998, in Harrisburg, I placed your request before the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators (PASA) Legislative Committee.

The committee members present were as follows: Chairman Dr. William J. Leary Jr., Superintendent Springfield Township School District; Dr. Wayne W. Doyle, Superintendent Gateway School District; Dr. Howard R. Ferguson, Superintendent Forest Area School District; Mr. Frank Flamish Jr., Superintendent Galetton Area School District; Mr. Albert J. Jones, Superintendent West Middlesex Area School District; Dr. Robert P. Miller, Superintendent South Middleton School District; Dr. Edwin H. Sponseller, Superintendent Chambersburg Area School District; Dr. Stephen M. Vak, Superintendent Kiski Area School District; Dr. Leo J. Gensante, Superintendent Hollidaysburg Area School District; and Dr. Donald Tylinski, Superintendent Freeport Area School District.

I presented a copy of your research assumptions that indicated typical conflict situations for superintendents.

The committee concurred that they tend to agree with such list with the following qualifiers: a) that list does not reflect any rank of order of importance b) items one through four are ongoing and item five may be temporary due to changing state legislation.

In closing, I was pleased to assist you on this matter. If you or anyone from Youngstown State University needs more information, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Albert J. Jones
 Superintendent
 AJJ:sr

APPENDIX G

Human Subjects Approval



Youngstown State University / One University Plaza / Youngstown, Ohio 44555-3091

Dean of Graduate Studies

(330) 742-3091

FAX (330) 742-1580

E-Mail: amgrad03@ysub.ysu.edu

September 25, 1997

Mr. Lawrence Connelly, Jr.
Department of Educational Administration
UNIVERSITY

Dear Mr. Connelly:

The Human Subjects Research Committee has reviewed your proposal, "Conflict Management Styles of PA Superintendents and Their Board President's Perceptions of Their Conflict Styles," (HSRC #97-38), and determined that it is exempt from review.

We wish you well in this study and look forward to hearing of your progress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter J. Kasvinsky', written over a large, stylized flourish.

Peter J. Kasvinsky
Dean of Graduate Studies

cc

c: Dr. Linda Wesson, Chair
Department of Educational Administration
HSRC Committee Members