Women Leaders Resolving Conflict in Higher Education: A Feminist Epistemological Perspective

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WOMEN LEADERS RESOLVING CONFLICT IN HIGHER EDUCATION:
A FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation
Presented to
The Morgridge College of Education
University of Denver

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by
Maureen C. Silva
August 2010
Advisor: Frank Tuitt, Ph.D.
In an American postsecondary context, conflict is inherent (Gianneschi & Yanagiura, 2006; Valian, 1999). Successful navigation of conflict in the academy is vital for those who aspire to leadership positions (Nadler & Nadler, 1987; Walters, Stuhlmacher, & Meyer, 1998). Presently, however, women face significant barriers to achieving success in higher education administration, including gender expectations for conflict resolution behavior (Bartunek, 1992; Bowles, Babcock, & McGinn, 2005; Gayle, Preiss, & Allen, 2002).

While a considerable body of literature exists for understanding gender negotiation, it remains rooted in a masculine paradigm (Kolb & Putnam, 2006; Shuter & Turner, 1997), and, as such, established theories lack a feminist epistemological perspective. Consequently, my primary research question is, How do women leaders experience and perceive conflict in the higher education work environment? I conduct a qualitative study that examines workplace conflict experiences of 15 women leaders from diverse personal and professional backgrounds.

Hartsock’s (1983) three-tiered gender-sensitive analysis of power, updated to include multicultural perspectives, serves as my theoretical framework. It is a lens through which I evaluate theories, finding multicultural organizational, higher education conflict, and gender negotiation theories most applicable to this study. The framework
also creates the foundation upon which I build my study. Specifically, I determine that a feminist research method is most relevant to this investigation.

To analyze data obtained through in depth interviews, I employ a highly structured form of grounded theory called dimensional analysis. Based on my findings, I co-construct with study participants a Feminist Conflict Process Theory and Flowchart in which initially the nature of the relationship, and subsequently the level of risk to the relationship, institution, or self, is evaluated.

This study supports that which is observed in the conflict resolution practitioner literature, but is unique in its observation of factors that influence decisions within a dynamic conflict resolution process. My findings are significant to women who aspire to serve in leadership positions in higher education, as well as to the academy as a whole, for it expands our knowledge of women’s ontological and epistemological perspectives on resolving conflict in postsecondary education.
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When I was in elementary school, my father used to ask me what I thought I would study in graduate school. Our parents assumed that all five children would attend college; we all did, with three of us pursuing terminal degrees. Obviously, no acknowledgement would be complete without thanking my immediate family: my parents, Bob and Ruby, for their support and encouragement, planting the seeds of passion for education at such a young age; my sisters, Michele, Marta and Monica, for paving the way and believing I could accomplish my goals; my brother, Mark, for helping me to remember what is important in life—something vital on which to focus particularly during the arduous process of completing the dissertation.

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little “extra” time herself. Since that desperate appeal for her help, Dr. Gangone also provided me with critical insight, supported me when I struggled to make sense of the process, and always pushed me to expect more of myself than I thought I could. I have been a fortunate student to find three individuals who have treated me with high regard and respect throughout this process, leaving me feeling less like a student and more a scholar. Thank you.

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Because of these individuals who I have noted here, I will soon attain my doctorate degree. However, I realize that I have not simply added credentials to my resume; I have grown and been enriched in the process. I understand now more than ever the importance of valuing a person’s background, experiences, and history. I know that respect does not simply mean acknowledging differences; it means embracing those differences as complementary to our own. And I understand that my research cannot be simply a personal accomplishment. It must also serve as a benefit to society so that, collectively, we all learn.

In the pages that follow, the reader will observe my development as a scholar. Yet, the seed that was planted many years ago, while it has matured, it is not yet finished growing.
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Chapter One: Introduction

In an American postsecondary context, where resource scarcity, differing employee value systems, gender inequity, and changing demographics set the stage for workplace disagreements, conflict is inherent (Gianneschi & Yanagiura, 2006; Valian, 1999). According to Folger, Poole, and Stutman (2001), conflict is defined as “the interaction of interdependent people who perceive incompatible goals and interference from each other in achieving these goals” (p. 5). Unresolved disputes can destroy relationships and reduce productivity at the expense of an organization’s resources (Folger et al., 2001). Yet conflict is not always problematic; conflict that is constructively resolved can improve communication, refine systems, and strengthen teams (Folger et al., 2001). Moreover, in the higher education work environment in which objectives can vary from person to person and department to department, conflict resolution can serve as a mechanism for integrating competing goals (Birnbaum, 1988; Temple, 2008).

Successful navigation of conflict in the academy is vital for those who aspire to leadership positions (Nadler & Nadler, 1987; Rancer & Baukus, 1987; Walters et al., 1998). Presently, however, women face significant barriers to achieving success in higher education administration, in part because of gender expectations for conflict resolution behavior (Bartunek, 1992; Bowles et al., 2005; Gayle et al., 2002; Meyerson, 2001; Stamato, 1992; Wade, 2001). For example, men receive social benefit when
advocating for themselves, whereas women are exposed to social risks for the same behavior (Bowles & McGinn, 2008; Wade, 2001). A significant body of literature exists for understanding gender negotiation, including differences in resolving conflict between males and females, as defined by biological sex, as well as the influences of gender as a social construct on conflict resolution. However, this literature remains rooted in existing conflict theories developed in a masculine paradigm (Kolb & Putnam, 2006; Shuter & Turner, 1997).

My study examines conflict and conflict resolution from a feminist epistemological perspective. Specifically, my primary research question is: *How do women leaders experience and perceive conflict in the higher education work environment?* I sought to gain a truer understanding of conflict navigation in postsecondary administration by exploring the experiences and perspectives of a group of women leaders from diverse personal and professional backgrounds. I intend for this study to serve as a launching point for developing a more inclusive understanding of conflict experiences in higher education, thereby contributing to the strengthening of the academy on behalf of all learners, educators, and administrators.

**Background**

Conflict and conflict resolution for leaders in an organizational setting are often discussed in terms of management issues, a perspective that assumes a hierarchy of power in which supervisors are both responsible for and capable of effecting resolution. Such texts examine organizational processes for resolving problems or grievances (Arthur, 1995) or provide strategies for managing transition (Bridges, 1980; Kotter & Cohen, 2002). Management literature also explores leadership styles in an attempt to
find the most effective techniques for leading an organization, with employee disagreements identified as just one of many issues a leader must address (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; R. H. Rosen, 1996). However, this material does not focus on issues relating to everyday workplace conflict that leaders must address and resolve without the aid of a superior.

Even in higher education, where the management structure is less hierarchical (Bornstein, 2008), literature on leadership focuses on the broad issues leaders face and methods for managing those challenges (J. R. Davis, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2003). In the higher education leadership literature, the focus on concerns at the macro level, such as the struggle for external funding for higher education, often trumps issues at the micro level, such as individual and group conflict. Yet, internal conflicts in postsecondary environments can be as costly, in real financial terms, as externally related problems (Folger et al., 2001).

The field of conflict resolution, which examines individual and group conflict and the dispute resolution process from a variety of disciplinary perspectives (De Dreu, 2008), can be valuable in developing a deeper understanding of conflict situations in higher education. Negotiation, a resolution process between two or more parties (Moore, 2003; Wall & Blum, 1991), is touted as a critical skill for professionals in the workplace (De Dreu, 2008; Nadler & Nadler, 1987; Rancer & Baukus, 1987). Historically, however, negotiation research studies focused on gender report contradictory conclusions, and as a result, some negotiation and conflict resolution literature is presented as gender neutral (Bowles et al., 2005; Kolb & Putnam, 2006; Walters et al., 1998). Bowles, McGinn and Babcock (2005) note that extensive research on gender in
negotiation took place in the 1970s and 1980s, but by the 1990s most researchers had “discarded” gender as a variable. Cohen (1997), Fisher (1997), and Lebow (1996), for example, each discuss the role of cultural factors in the conflict resolution theories they present, yet none consider the impact of gender. Nonetheless, the importance of exploring gender and conflict in organizations remains critical. As Walters et al. (1998) note:

Regardless of whether men and women are predisposed to behave a certain way in conflict situations, the stereotype of cooperative women and competitive men persists in our society. Even the mere knowledge of sex-role stereotypes can create expectations about behavior that lead to a confirmation of these expectations. (p. 6)

The observation that sex-role stereotypes persists in relation to conflict resolution gave rise to a second wave of gender conflict studies (2005).

Nevertheless, the second wave scholarship in which gender is viewed as a social construct (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Gayle et al., 2002), remains rooted in theoretical assumptions established in a masculine paradigm (Kolb & Putnam, 2006; Shuter & Turner, 1997). Kolb and Putnam (2006) advocate the use of gender as a lens for exploring how a feminist orientation may influence both negotiation practice and theories. For this study, I sought to gain a deeper understanding of how women professionals from diverse backgrounds navigate and resolve conflict in the higher education administrative environment. In the next section, I summarize the status of women in higher education as a means of establishing the context for my investigation.

**Women in higher education.**

Women professionals in higher education face unique obstacles requiring resolution. Men continue to dominate high-paying, prestigious professions and
professional positions (Indvik, 2001; Niederle & Vesterlund, 2008; 1999). The global workplace continues to be influenced by biological sex (Powell & Graves, 2004), and underrepresented groups are often forced into silence as a result of discriminatory practices (1993). The causes of these disparities continue to be debated and researched, but the outcome is well-documented. In this section, I review not the specific data and statistics associated with gender inequity in the workplace, but the ways in which gender discrimination is manifested in higher education specifically.

Despite the progress made in the last 45 years, women professionals—particularly minority women—in postsecondary education continue to face inequity (Bensimon & Neumann, 1993; Bornstein, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2008; Kjeldal, Rindfleish, & Sheridan, 2005; Powell & Graves, 2004; Valian, 1999). Women continue to be paid less for equal work, to experience negative gender bias, to be overrepresented in less powerful positions, to lack access to vital resources, and to be deprived of important opportunities (Bornstein, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2008; Indvik, 2001). Further, women continue to have primary responsibility for their personal domestic situations, especially the care of children and aging parents, which makes it difficult to juggle professional demands with personal responsibilities (Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Valian, 1999). The result is a higher education work environment in which women feel isolated (Glazer-Raymo, 1999) or, because of their experience with gender bias, are not motivated to serve in leadership positions (Bornstein, 2008).

Certainly, more women have succeeded in higher education than ever before (Bornstein, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2008; Valian, 1999). Women serve in powerful leadership positions across the spectrum of institutions: from major public universities to
community and state colleges, from prestigious public and private universities to lower-tier or unranked colleges and for-profit educational institutions (Bornstein, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2008; Valian, 1999). Indeed, women presently hold the presidencies at Harvard, Princeton, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Glazer-Raymo, 2008), which are notable accomplishments.

Some women have achieved the top ranks because they are beneficiaries of good mentoring, and others have found institutional homes that view them as valued members of the community (Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Powell & Graves, 2004). Yet, still others find that the challenges women leaders face are many of the same challenges they have faced throughout their careers (Bornstein, 2008). As Bornstein (2008) states:

> Although we do not have comparable data about male provosts’ aspirations for the presidency, we do know that many, if not most women provosts have already spent much of their professional lives trying to balance family and work responsibilities in organizations that tend not to value or support activities in the private sphere. Women provosts are keenly aware that women presidents often earn less and juggle more responsibilities than men in comparable positions. (p. 166)

Many institutions have established commissions and special task forces to examine and address the issues that prevent women and minorities from achieving top positions (Glazer-Raymo, 2008). Yet, despite existing laws, regulations, and policies against discrimination, and even though there is a sufficient pipeline of women students and professionals capable of serving in all leadership positions (Bornstein, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Powell & Graves, 2004), women remain disproportionately represented in the lower administrative ranks within higher education. Even highly successful women continue to struggle with the present higher education atmosphere (Bornstein, 2008; Valian, 1999). As Valian (1999) summarizes, “There are invisible barriers; they will not
go away on their own; any objective differences in performance are insufficient to explain existing sex differences in salary, rank, and rates of promotion” (p. 1).

In higher education, the challenges for women professionals differ according to professional roles. Nearly one-third of those who serve in the role of president previously served in the chief academic administrative position (Spectrum initiative, 2008). Thus, it is important in this context to examine obstacles to faculty promotion. The primary obstacle is the challenge women face in achieving tenure, resulting in the overrepresentation of women in part-time and non-tenure track positions (Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Kjeldal et al., 2005). Factors contributing to the inability to achieve tenure include: (a) the subjective nature of tenure, with criteria not clearly defined and promotion decisions based on value judgments; (b) new female faculty members assigned to teaching time-consuming courses; and (c), in institutions that have few female faculty members, the assignment to numerous committees in order to help meet the institution’s need for gender balance (Bornstein, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Kjeldal et al., 2005; Valian, 1999). As a result, women faculty members are unable to concentrate on their research, which is critical to attaining tenure. Moreover, women faculty members are often prevented from accessing important resources. These resources are both tangible, such as equipment, library holdings, support staff, or internal research grants, and intangible, such as prestigious committee assignments (Kjeldal et al., 2005; Valian, 1999). Women are also excluded from important networking opportunities. Such exclusions may be overt, such as informal invitations to golf or drinks after work—important aspects of the normalizing process (Powell & Graves, 2004). Exclusions may also be covert, such as male deans negotiating special deals for new male faculty
members exclusively (Kjeldal et al., 2005). Such challenges significantly impact the ability of women to be positioned for top leadership positions in postsecondary education.

It is also important to examine the challenges women professionals face, given that nearly 20% of presidents have a higher education administrative rather than faculty background (Spectrum initiative, 2008). Kjeldal (2005) notes that women staff continue to be overrepresented in the lower ranks, such as in mid-level management and clerical positions. In her work on hiring and promotion practices for administrative professionals in higher education, Sagaria (1993) notes that gender imbalance in leadership positions is due in part to institutional hiring practices rather than candidates’ aspirations. Jo (2008) examines voluntary turnover among mid-level female administrators working at large, private institutions of higher education, finding three reasons that women choose to leave: (a) dissatisfaction with supervisor, including frustration with high supervisor turnover; (b) limited advancement opportunities, especially for fundraising professionals; and (c) demands for flexible hours. Jo (2008) also notes the exceptionally high cost to institutions as a result of staff turnover.

Bornstein (2008), writing specifically about the barriers to women becoming presidents in higher education, demonstrates the significance of the board’s role in selection of presidents, noting that boards are made up of corporate executives who have limited experience with women leaders in their own professional sphere, and thus are less comfortable with women professionals. Further, women in higher education have fewer opportunities to network with this level of leadership, whereas male leaders in higher education “build strong bonds with board members by joining them for golf and other
recreational activities as well as for vacations” (Bornstein, 2008, p. 170). Thus, lack of board-level exposure, bias in hiring practices, and unsupportive work environments contribute to the disparity between male and female representation in top leadership positions in the academy.

Bornstein (2008) blames many of these obstacles to women’s achievement on organizational culture. As she states, “In the essentially masculine work culture of higher education, women presidents and their constituents (boards, faculty, students, alumni, community leaders) have limited, if any, experience with women in top leadership positions” (p. 167). Culture also includes traditions and norms. For example, uninterrupted work is perceived as the most valuable career path, making it difficult for women who take career breaks to care for the family to achieve professional success as well (Powell & Graves, 2004). Women who are the first females to serve in a particular position face the most intense scrutiny. They do not meet gender expectations (Valian, 1999). However, according to Bornstein (2008), those women who are able to adapt to existing norms succeed.

Glazer-Raymo (1999), too, notes that women are expected to assimilate to the male norm in order to achieve success. As she states, “As long as men believe that women’s acceptance and mastery of male gamesmanship is a prerequisite for leadership positions, women will continue to find it difficult to overcome such extra-institutional barriers” (p. 164). The effort to fit into existing norms can be diametrically opposed to achieving success, however. Women face greater social risks when they advocate for themselves in the workplace (Bowles, Babcock, & Lai, 2007; Bowles et al., 2005; Wade, 2001). Further, women are expected to exhibit a balance of feminine and masculine traits.
and are devalued if they are too masculine or too feminine, but people often place a higher value on masculine traits than on feminine traits (Powell & Graves, 2004; Valian, 1999). Women are also held to a different standard of politeness, and assertive women are particularly difficult for others to accept (Valian, 1999). Moreover, according to Valian (1999), while men are seen as deserving their success, people tend to believe that a woman’s accomplishments are a result of luck, ease of tasks assigned, or exceptionally hard work. As she summarizes, “Our gender schemas for women do not include professional competence” (p. 126).

Finally, those women professionals who succeed in assimilation often must give up their personal interests to achieve success. For example, top level female managers are less likely to be married, whereas the opposite is true for male managers (Bornstein, 2008; Powell & Graves, 2004).

As I have briefly articulated here, the obstacles to women being promoted into top leadership positions are both tangible and intangible. They include obvious discriminatory practices, such as reserving important networking opportunities for male faculty. Barriers are also embedded in long-held traditions in the academy, such as time limits for achieving tenure. Finally, some impediments are difficult to detect, such as gender expectations, but they also prove to be the most difficult to overcome. Paradoxically, women who seek to succeed through assimilation could be doing so at great social risk, thereby damaging their own efforts.

Being aware of the obstacles to achieving leadership success is valuable preparation for those who aspire to top positions. However, an examination of various aspects of these barriers from a feminist perspective can both assist in leadership
preparation as well as inform the academy as a whole. Exploration and understanding can serve as a platform for meaningful changes. New perspectives can lead to fundamental shifts, creating a framework for more inclusive norms in the academy. Such a shift serves not just future women leaders, but also creates stronger organizations for all members of higher education communities.

In my study, I sought to examine one aspect of the barriers women face: conflict resolution in higher education administration. My investigation relies on a theoretical framework that re-examines power, a central constituting element of conflict, from a multicultural feminist perspective. This framework allowed me to more effectively evaluate relevant literature and provided a structure for the study itself.

**Theoretical framework.**

As I sought to understand how women from diverse backgrounds resolve conflict in the higher education work environment, I must first explore existing organizational and conflict resolution theories with a feminist lens. The organizational and conflict resolution fields of study share a concern with power (A. M. Davis & Salem, 1984; M. Rosen, 1984), which is central to feminist issues as well (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1993; Tong, 2009). As I establish my theoretical framework, I first provide an overview of Hartsock’s (1983) tri-leveled power analysis, which serves as a basis for a more inclusive discussion of power. I then amend Hartsock’s power rubric to include diverse points of view. This new rubric serves as a tool for evaluating power in the literature from a multicultural feminist perspective. It also serves as a foundation upon which I develop a research study that best meets my investigative goals.
Hartsock’s tri-leveled analysis of power.

Hartsock (1983) notes that feminists’ focus on women’s oppression and their opposition to exercising power, particularly during the 1960s and 1970s, prevents a deeper understanding of the construction and maintenance of male domination. She emphasizes the importance of more directly examining power. However, she notes that scholarship focused on power has been developed within a masculine paradigm. To compensate for this shortcoming, Hartsock (1983) employs a three-tiered analysis, critically using Marx’s (Marx, 1964, 1967, as cited in Hartsock, 1983) scholarship on class. Hartsock seeks not to redefine power, but to present a rubric against which one can evaluate the validity of power concepts from a feminist perspective (see Appendix A).

Regarding class, Hartsock (1983) acknowledges Marx’s theory that power and community are rooted in production, yet she rejects the idea that production is limited to a capitalist perspective, which assumes that domination exists in the production process. Instead, she argues, production must be viewed from a worker-focused concept of cooperation. The resultant idea of a *humane community*, in which production is assumed to be a shared process and therefore power is also shared, forms the basis for Hartsock’s (1983) first tier.

In Hartsock’s (1983) second and third level of analysis, she notes that Marx’s theories are presented as gender neutral, but in actuality they are gender-biased. As she describes:

Marx’s account of class domination, like market theorists’ account of power relations, operates with gender-blind and therefore gender-biased categories. By ignoring the genderedness of power relations he presents an incomplete account of relations of domination and of the possibilities for a more humane community. (pp. 5-6)
Hartsock (1983) addresses Marx’s gender bias by first examining male-constructed agonal communities, and then seeking to explore beyond the norms within these communities. As she observes, our public world was theoretically constructed in ancient Athens where “masculine sexuality was central . . . [and the] community was structured fundamentally by rivalry and competition” (p. 7).

Hartsock (1983) also examines issues of ontology and epistemology to understand Marx’s gender bias. Martin (2002) states that epistemology “concerns theories about how we know about the nature of reality—that is, how we know about how things are,” whereas ontology is “a set of assumptions about the nature of reality—how things are” (p. 30). According to Hartsock, Marx notes that individuals come to develop knowledge through a deep ontological perspective. In a capitalist society, the division of labor creates a different experience—that is a differing ontology—resulting in a different knowledge—or a differing epistemology. As such, Hartsock (1983) agrees with Marx’s argument that ideas assumed to be true in a capitalist society are the ideas of the ruling class, and thus are “an incorrect account of reality, an account only of appearances” (p. 9). She notes, however, that the ideas of the ruling class are only one aspect of a disingenuous account of reality. Marx fails to acknowledge gender differences, as evidenced by the sexual division of labor.

To compensate for this bias in Marx’s theories, Hartsock (1983) articulates in her second level of analysis the importance of acknowledging that our society is based in agonal communities—that is, in masculine values of competition and rivalry. Hartsock encourages learning directly from women about their experiences of power and community to gain an understanding of women’s ontology.
Finally, in Hartsock’s (1983) third tier, she again critically evaluates Marx’s concepts on the ruling class, stating that it is also vital to acknowledge the idea of “a ruling gender, defined by and dependent on the sexual division of labor” (p. 9). In this final tier, then, Hartsock emphasizes the importance of seeking a feminist epistemological perspective.

**Updating Hartsock’s power rubric.**

While Hartsock (1983) does not specifically redefine power, she establishes a rubric for a gender sensitive definition of power to: (a) embrace the idea of shared participation in production; (b) seek out the female perspective on power and community—a feminist ontology; and (c) acknowledge the existence of a ruling gender and seek a feminist epistemology. Hartsock (1983) uses this power rubric as a basis for her work on standpoint theory. Hundleby (1997), however, criticizes Hartsock’s standpoint theory for “essentialism,” or “speaking for all women as if women were united by an essence of women and as if some universal property characterized the sexism suffered by different women” (p. 28). In later years, Hartsock (1997) acknowledges this shortcoming, comparing her error to that for which she criticizes Marx in relation to gender. She recognizes that she erroneously dismisses cultural differences and the importance of race in her standpoint theory research. She does not specifically apply this criticism to her tri-leveled power analysis. However, since there is no single women’s perspective (Breines, 2006; hooks, 2000; Rothenberg, 1992), it is important to update Hartsock’s power framework to include the ontological and epistemological perspectives of diverse groups of women, particularly those from minority and underprivileged
populations. Two key feminist theories are relevant to the idea of updating Hartsock’s power rubric: multicultural feminism and feminist epistemology.

*Multicultural feminism.*

Multicultural feminism considers the role of self in the context of a complex web of: (a) social relations, such as race and/or ethnicity, marital status, religion; (b) class, including socioeconomic, educational attainment; (c) sexuality, or gender, sexual orientation; and (d) citizenship, such as industrial or developing nations, colonialist or colonized (Butler, 1990, 1993; Hartsock, 1983; Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1993; Tong, 2009). Race and ethnicity are often dismissed as separate, subordinate issues to feminist issues (Breines, 2006; Hartsock, 1983; Mitchell, 1970); however, some scholars demonstrate that the centrality of race to minority women may overshadow any issue they face as women (Breines, 2006; hooks, 2000; Rothenberg, 1992). As hooks (2000) summarizes:

Women in lower-class and poor groups, particularly those who are non-white, would not have defined women’s liberation as women gaining social equality with men, since they are continually reminded in their everyday lives that all women do not share common social status. Concurrently, they know that many males in their social groups are exploited and oppressed. Knowing that men in their social groups do not have social, political, and economic power, they would not deem it liberating to share their social status. (p. 19)

Multicultural feminism addresses this shortcoming of feminist theories by acknowledging individual experiences of women within their various cultural communities (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1993; Tong, 2009).

Seeking to understand the ontological perspectives of women from diverse backgrounds more accurately represents reality. Just as Hartsock (1983) argues that Marx’s theory of power is gender bias, so, too, is Hartsock’s power rubric racially- and ethnically-biased. When she established the three-tiered analysis of power, she assumed
that all women’s experiences were the same, whereas multicultural feminist theories demonstrate that women’s experiences differ by ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition to addressing the ontological shortcomings in Hartsock’s (1983) power rubric, it also is important to explore the epistemological assumptions in Hartsock’s discussion on power. Multicultural feminism is valuable here as well, yet additional explorations in feminist epistemological research are needed. An understanding of epistemology and feminist epistemology are foundational for such an undertaking, which I address in the next section.

Feminist epistemology.

As Hartsock (1983) demonstrates, power must be fully examined in order to overcome oppression. A significant source of power is the possession of knowledge (Smith, 1990), and higher education—the work environment in which my research subjects are located—is, as Wilcox (1992) notes, the “custodian of knowledge” (p. xix) for all citizens. Epistemological theories are based on the premise that a general account of knowledge can exist, but feminist epistemological theories dispute this assertion (Alcoff & Potter, 1993). Theories of feminist epistemology seek to explain how women develop knowledge (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1997; Code, 1996; Hayes & Flannery, 2002). In order to more fully explore feminist epistemology, it is valuable to first understand it in the historical context of the study of epistemology.

Epistemology.

Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and knowledge development (Garry & Pearsall, 1996). Lloyd (1996) demonstrates that knowledge development theories in
western philosophy are rooted in the concepts of the “Man of Reason,” established via
Spinoza’s theories of reason over intuition, and Descartes’ Cartesian method—a
reasoning process in which one intellectually breaks down operations, requiring
“shedding the sensuous from thought” (p. 116). Because women are perceived as being
less able to reason, they are left to serve as keepers of the non-rational, such as intuition
and emotions. While Jaggar (1996) demonstrates that emotions are a vital part of
intellectual development, Lloyd (1996) asserts that the Man of Reason continues to
influence concepts of knowledge development today. As Lloyd notes, any repudiation of
reason is perceived as a repudiation of the rational, a statement that feelings and
imagination are superior to reason. Further, any critique of reason is perceived as a litany
of the “atrocities [Man of Reason] has perpetrated on women” (Lloyd, 1996, p. 127).

Reason is at the core of Perry’s (1970) seminal work on knowledge development,
which continues to serve as a foundation for much of the scholarly research in
epistemology. He articulates the moral and intellectual development of adults in nine
stages, which can be grouped into four categories (see Appendix B). The categories
include: (a) dualism/received knowledge, in which it is believed there are right and
wrong answers; (b) multiplicity/subjective knowledge, in which conflicting answers are
acknowledged and thus the subject trusts an inner voice for answers; (c)
relativism/procedural knowledge, where a reasoning process is employed to deal with
conflicting answers; and (d) commitment/constructed knowledge, in which prior
knowledge combined with experiences produce knowing. While Perry’s (1970) work is
considered foundational for the field of epistemology, his research included only male
subjects at one elite college, causing many theorists to question the gender bias in his
theories. As such, researchers explore a feminist epistemology, which I summarize in the next section

*Knowledge development in women.*

The prevailing thought in the 1980s was that women did not fit within existing human growth models because of their failure to move to a completely independent, disassociated state, causing them to be perceived as underdeveloped (Gilligan, 1982). While Gilligan’s (1982) work is not considered research in feminist epistemology specifically, she continues to be referenced in epistemological literature, particularly her *ethic of care* concept. Thus, it is important to understand her scholarship in this context. Gilligan (1982) relies upon three studies: (a) the college student study (i.e., 25 students selected at random from a sophomore level course on moral and political choice); (b) the abortion decision study (i.e., 29 women with diverse backgrounds from 15 to 33 years of age, referred through clinics); and (c) the rights and responsibilities study (i.e., eight males and eight females at various age levels ranging from 6 to 60), in which she conducts interviews consisting of the same sets of questions about conflict, choice, self, and morality. She concludes as follows:

> In view of the evidence that women perceive and construe social reality differently from men and that these differences center around experiences of attachment and separation, life transitions that invariably engage these experiences can be expected to involve women in a distinctive way. And because women’s sense of integrity appears to be entwined with an ethic of care, so that to see themselves as women is to see themselves in a relationship of connection, the major transition in women’s lives would seem to involve changes in understanding and activities of care. (p. 171)

Expanding upon this idea of an ethic of care in later years, Gilligan (1995) notes that the *dominant key* in society, law, politics and ethics is tuned to an ethic of justice, or separation, as opposed to an ethic of care, or connection. She argues that an ethic of
justice leads to violence, oppression, and the unjust use of power. Gilligan (1995) contends that only by listening for the voice of the oppressed—by “listening under the conversation” (p. 121)—can a different psychology, and therefore different political and philosophical theories, emerge.

Gilligan’s (1982) notion that gender impacts one’s social reality provides the foundation for Hartsock’s (1983) work on standpoint theory. Since Hartsock’s publication in the early 1980s, several scholars have explored standpoint theory (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Code, 1996; Collins, 2000, 2002; 2005). Sprague (2005) states:

In sum, standpoint epistemology integrates assumptions about the socially constructed character of subjects and also of the things we seek to understand with the materiality of the world and people’s practical activity in it. Knowers are specifically located in physical spaces, in systems of social relations, within circulating discourses. (p. 47)

Standpoint theory, then, is valuable in its acknowledgement of the social construction of reality and focus on moving beyond assumptions grounded in patriarchal paradigms. Feminist standpoint theory embraces research that is grounded in women’s realities, seeking to identify alternative norms and epistemologies (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Code, 1996; Collins, 2000, 2002; 2005).

Code (1996), too, emphasizes the importance of exploring feminist epistemology by seeking out a feminist experience. However, while she acknowledges the value of attending to women’s perspectives, she notes that there is no single feminine experience. Code (1996) is critical of Gilligan’s (1982, 1995) work and encourages researchers to be more diligent in their standpoint research. As Code states, researchers must be “more tentative, more qualified and nuanced in their interpretative moves” (p. 166). Research must be more sensitive to issues of societal and socio-economic status, discrimination,
and cultural factors that impact women’s experience. Indeed, several scholars have criticized the lack of inclusion of diverse women’s perspectives in the development of feminist epistemological theories (Alcoff & Potter, 1993; Collins, 2000; Hayes & Flannery, 2002). As Hayes and Flannery (2002) state:

There is also a notable lack of racial, cultural, and economic diversity among the women who have been studied for much of this literature. Issues related to sexual orientation and to mental or physical disabilities are rarely addressed. Generalizations about groups are sometimes made on the basis of the experience of a mere handful of women, with little attention to their differences within such groups. (p. 19)

Thus, it is vital that those who seek to understand feminine epistemology acknowledge the diversity of women, and therefore, acknowledge diversity of experiences.

*Multicultural power rubric.*

This recent work in feminist epistemology, then, is valuable in addressing the criticisms of Hartsock’s (1983) feminist standpoint work as well as her rubric for analyzing power. By amending the three tiers, Hartsock’s power rubric becomes more relevant to this study (see Appendix A). That is, in addition to acknowledging our societal roots in an agonal community, we must also acknowledge our roots in a racist community. Further, it is important to not only acknowledge a ruling class, but also a ruling gender and a ruling race. Consequently, a more appropriate power rubric for my investigation is one that: (a) views power from a shared perspective, (b) seeks to understand the multicultural feminist ontology, and (c) embraces a multicultural feminist epistemology. It is this amended version of Hartsock’s tri-level analysis of power that serves as a theoretical framework for my study. Specifically, this framework both provides an evaluative lens for my review of the relevant literature, and it is the foundation upon which I conducted my qualitative study.
Dissertation Overview

In this introductory chapter, I demonstrate the importance of seeking a truer epistemology for conflict resolution in the higher education workplace. Examining higher education and management literature, I observe that conflict resolution skills are vital for leaders in the academy, yet the postsecondary work environment is rooted in a masculine paradigm and continues to value male norms. As a result, women’s modes for resolving conflict are often devalued, and those women who attempt to adopt masculine norms for resolving conflict are viewed critically. In order to begin to affect change, it is first vital to explore a feminist perspective on navigating and resolving conflict. As such, my primary research question is, *How do women leaders experience and perceive conflict in the higher education work environment?*

Thus, this dissertation study seeks to move beyond empirical gender negotiation scholarship, which has been developed in a masculine paradigm as well, and instead learn directly from women with diverse backgrounds. My intention is to gain a feminist epistemological perspective on resolving conflict in the higher education workplace.

To understand a feminist epistemology, I establish a multicultural, gender-sensitive power rubric as my theoretical framework. This framework is an adaptation of Hartsock’s (1983) three-tiered gender-sensitive analysis of power, which I update to include sensitivity to multicultural perspectives.¹ In my literature review, I first use this framework as a lens through which I evaluate theories within two fields of study—

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¹ For the sake of simplicity, as I make reference to Hartsock’s power rubric from this point forward, I do not always denote the amendment. However, in my analysis of power throughout, I explicitly note the additional criteria for hearing the diverse perspectives of women.
organizational behavior and conflict resolution—to determine the scholarship most relevant to this investigation. My framework also served as a foundation upon which I designed my study, analyzed my data, and presented my findings.

Understanding postsecondary organizations is an important aspect of my research. Thus, I begin Chapter 2 by providing an overview of organizational theories more broadly, using Bolman and Deal’s (2003) organizational frames as a tool for summarizing the literature. I use Hartsock’s (1983) power rubric to determine that the multicultural organizational theory, as articulated by Fine (1995), is a most applicable to my study. I conclude the organizational literature review section of Chapter 2 by describing the uniqueness of higher education organizations, in which functional independence among the various organizational members provides a challenge for leaders. While some scholars recommend establishing a common culture to ensure organizational success, Taylor (1999), like Fine (1995), suggests that institutions are strengthened by embracing plurality rather than enforcing enculturation.

I follow this examination of organizational theories by reviewing relevant aspects of the conflict resolution literature in three primary areas: (a) conflict negotiation in organizations, including conflict in the higher education work environment; (b) gender and conflict resolution, focusing on gender negotiation in organizations; and (c) conflict and power. I find it difficult to use Hartsock’s (1983) power rubric to evaluate research on conflict within organizations because none of the studies I found met the criteria for a multicultural definition of power. Nonetheless, I determine that select research is important to consider. First, Dubinskas’ (1992) work on group identity and conflict in the workplace begins to explore multiple perspectives, so I am mindful of this work in
my analysis. Secondly, while the scholarship on conflict in higher education is limited, it is the environment in which my participants work, so it is important to consider. However, what little research has been conducted in this realm is focused exclusively on academic administrations, leaving a gap in the literature relating to other administrative areas, such as athletics, finance, resource development and student life. Finally, Brigg’s (2003) work on a multicultural view of power and conflict are important to consider in this study, even though he does not acknowledge gender separately.

Unlike the other areas I explored in the conflict resolution field, Hartsock’s (1983) tri-leveled analysis of power is a useful tool in evaluating the gender and negotiation research. Using my theoretical framework as a filter, I determined that neither the trait approach, in which men and women’s conflict differences are explored, nor the interpretive approach, in which gender is defined as a social construct, meets my criteria for defining power from a multicultural feminist perspective. However, Kolb and Putnam’s (2005, 2006) concept of gender as a lens meets the criteria for a feminist definition of power. Thus, I determine that it is pertinent to my study and has particular relevance to the selection of my research design. However, these authors do not acknowledge the importance of diverse feminine perspectives. As such, while I rely on Kolb and Putnam’s (2005, 2006) concept regarding the use of a gendered lens in my study, I am also focused on ensuring representation of diverse perspectives.

In Chapter 3, I determine the methodological justification for my investigation and provide a description of my research method. Using my theoretical framework as a foundation for this study, I determine that a qualitative study allows me to, as Code (1996) states, “listen under the conversation” (p. 121). Specifically, I employ a feminist
research method called dimensional analysis, which is a highly structured form of
grounded theory.

Feminist research methods are highly relevant for this investigation. The
overarching goal of feminist research methods is to improve women’s lives. In addition,
feminist research methods (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Lather,

1. acknowledge that knowledge production is not value-free;
2. seek the perspective of the oppressed;
3. acknowledge the significance of personal experience, subjectivity,
   worldview, emotions, motivations, and symbols; and
4. are employed throughout the study, from research question formation to
   the written documentation.

Typically, qualitative research methods are used in feminist research, but scholars
acknowledge the importance of utilizing the spectrum of methods—from qualitative to
quantitative—in order to honor individual experiences and reduce bias (1998).

I detail my findings in Chapter 4, summarizing my data and laying the
groundwork for analysis. In Chapter 5, I analyze my data in depth, exploring various
dimensions and connecting my analysis to existing literature in the conflict resolution
discipline. I conclude the dimensional analysis process by determining that the central
dimension—or that which holds most potential for explaining what I have observed in
conversations with my participants—is the dimension of relationships. Based on this
concept, I develop a Feminist Conflict Process Flow Chart, detailed in Chapter 6. The
flow chart demonstrates the dynamic process that a majority of my participants in their
approach to conflict. This flow chart includes an initial decision-making process regarding the nature of the relationship, which I call the relationship filter, and then subsequent process decisions based on the level of risk to the relationship, institution, or self. I conclude my research in Chapter 7 by summarizing factors that impacted this study and suggesting possible future research.

This study is significant to women who aspire to serve in leadership positions in higher education, as well as to the broader community as a whole, in that it expands our knowledge of women’s ontological and epistemological perspectives on resolving conflict in postsecondary education. Because it enhances our collective understanding, it contributes to developing a truer reflection of reality regarding how professionals resolve conflict, thereby strengthening the academy for all learners, educators and administrators.
Chapter Two: Review of Relevant Literature

Two fields of study are vital to my investigation of a feminist epistemological perspective on how women leaders resolve conflict in higher education: organizational theory and conflict resolution theory. I begin by exploring organizational theory using Bolman and Deal’s (2003) four frames to structure my review. I then use Hartsock’s (1983) power rubric to determine which theories are most relevant for this study. I conclude the organizational theory section of Chapter 2 with a description of higher education organizations more generally.

The second section of Chapter 2 includes a review of conflict resolution theories. I begin by providing a brief overview of the discipline. Given the interdisciplinary nature of conflict resolution, I focus specifically on those aspects of the field that are most relevant to this investigation: (a) conflict negotiation in organizations; (b) gender and conflict resolution in organizations; and (c) conflict theories and power. Again, employing my theoretical framework as an evaluative lens, I identify the conflict literature most useful to my research.

In this chapter, I find the multicultural organizational theories to be most relevant. As Fine (1995) notes, the goal of such theories is the process of moving toward multicultural organizations, in which diverse cultures are embraced, open dialogues from all perspectives are encouraged, and all voices are represented in decisions. I also use organizational research to provide a theoretical understanding of higher education
organizations, which are made up of units that have conflicting objectives and, as such, are described as loosely coupled (Glassman, 1973), integrative (Temple, 2008), and professional (Weick, 1976) organizations. Taylor (1999), like Fine (1995), calls for higher education to embrace the inherent plurality of these institutions, viewing diversity as its strength.

Hartsock’s (1983) power rubric also provides a mechanism for exploring relevant conflict resolution theories. Using the rubric, I find three areas relevant to my research: (a) Dubinskas’ (1992) use of group identity to explore culture’s impact on conflict in the workplace, (b) Kolb and Putnam’s (2005, 2006) suggestion for research to be undertaken using gender as a lens, and (c) Brigg’s (2003) research in multicultural views of power and conflict. Further, in this section of my literature review, I find a gap in the higher education conflict literature. While the experiences of academic administrators have been researched, conflict resolution research has not focused on those administrative staff members who are responsible for non-academic areas, such as finance, external relations, student life, etc.

Exploring Organizational Theories

Organizations are a part of our everyday lives (2003; 1989). Etzioni (1964) notes that organizations are characterized by a division in the responsibilities for labor, power, and communication, with a focus on a single goal attainment; one or more power centers focused on efficiency in processes; and the ability to move or replace existing organizational actors. All people rely on organizations as individuals, as citizens, and as social beings.
Organizational theory seeks to understand how organizations function (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Heffron, 1989). As Heffron states, “The primary concerns of organization theory are understanding and explaining organizations: their structures, the variables that affect their behavior, their internal processes, and the ways they affect and are affected by the behavior of their members” (Heffron, 1989, p. ix). Oversight of institutions is complex in today’s society, and there is a plethora of literature in organizational theory that further complicates the ability to understand these dynamics of organizations (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Bolman and Deal (2003) use the construct of frames to bring clarity to the abundance of organizational theories. Their four frames—structural, human resource, political, and symbolic—are useful tools for articulating various theories and their use. In this section, I provide an overview of organizational theory using Bolman and Deal’s frame structure. I follow this overview with a discussion of the perception and uses of power in these frames using Hartsock’s (1983) three-tiered analysis. I conclude by describing American postsecondary organizations and the status of women within them, connecting these discussions to my intended study.

**Structural frame.**

Organizational structuralists focus on human groupings that are rational, effective, and efficient (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Etzioni, 1964), with an emphasis on control. “The success of an organization is largely dependent on its ability to maintain control of its participants” (Etzioni, 1964, p. 58). Bolman and Deal (2003) note that there are six theoretical assumptions within the structural frame: (a) goals and objectives form the
core of an organization’s purpose; (b) specialization and clear division of labor contribute to efficiency and improved performance; (c) coordination and control are necessary to pull together individuals and units; (d) rationality ensures organizations can resist personal preference or external challenges; (e) goals, technology, workforce and environment drive the type of structure needed; and (f) analysis and restructuring are the tools to address challenges or structural deficiencies.

Rosen (1984) notes that management theories are rooted in the “social structure of bureaucracy and the capitalist mode of production in which [bureaucracy] is embedded” (p. 304). He argues that, while management theories are based on observations of current practice, they also serve to perpetuate practice. Thus, the assumptions within the structural frame regarding sources of power and control, which are rooted in the industrial age, are perpetuated today in a multitude of organizational types via management theories. Rosen (1996) suggests a leader in the human resource frame should possess: (a) vision, (b) trust, (c) participation, (d) learning, (e) diversity, (f) creativity, (g) integrity, and (h) community. Similarly, Kouzes and Posner (2002) outline five practices associated with exemplary leadership: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act, and (e) encourage the heart. The language used here is focused on empowering employees, in contrast to the structural frame in which the language is focused on controlling the employees.

**Human resource frame.**

Bolman and Deal (2003) describe the theories within the human resource frame as focusing on human needs, in which the organization depends upon people’s talents and
ideas. Heffron (1989) notes that the human relations approach has its roots in the humanist school of administration, which focuses organizational theory on the individual worker with the goal of creating “human-centered organizations” (p. 6). Organizations and their employees both benefit when there is a good fit between the two (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Within the human resource frame, theories hold that a leader must be invested in his/her employees, empower them, honor diverse viewpoints and backgrounds, and focus on the interpersonal dynamics of the team (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Leadership within the human resource frame is focused on the skills required to bring out employees’ talents (J. R. Davis, 2003; Kouzes & Posner, 2002; E. Oakley & Krug, 1991; R. H. Rosen, 1996).

**Political frame.**

Power and scarce resources, and the struggle to obtain both, lie at the core of theories within the political frame (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Heffron (1989) describes the political frame as the “power and politics school [of thought],” an approach that “views organizations as political systems permeated with conflict and power struggles to determine who gets what, when and how” (p. 7). As such, conflict becomes a central focus, although resolution is not as important as strategy and tactics.

Within the political frame, theorists hold that the struggle for resources is not isolated to the upper echelons of the organization (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Heffron, 1989). In describing political theories, Bolman and Deal (2003) note that organizations are made up of coalitions that have differences in perceptions, beliefs, interests, information, and values. Because of these differences, coalitions bargain, negotiate, and jockey for power
on a continual basis. Heffron (1989) reiterates this point when stating, “Power struggles and politics emerge as inevitable organizational processes that frequently subvert the nominal authority relationships defined by job descriptions and organization charts” (p. 206).

**Symbolic frame.**

In describing theories within the symbolic frame, Bolman and Deal (2003) state, “what is most important is not what happens, but what it means” (p. 242). They note that symbols—such as rituals, ceremonies, and descriptions of heroes and heroines—are tools that members use to communicate the culture of an organization. Manifestations, or symbols, of culture in organizations include modes of dressing, types of stories told, and informal and formal procedures. The interpretation of these manifestations are seen in the members’ beliefs, memories, values, and emotional responses (Martin, 1992; Trice & Beyer, 1993; Westwood & Linstead, 2001).

Weick (1995) calls the process of interpreting symbols *sensemaking*. As he explains, “[S]ensemaking is about the ways people generate what they interpret. . . . The concept of sensemaking highlights the action, activity, and creating that lays down the traces that are interpreted and then reinterpreted” (p. 13). While the interpretations will differ between members, culture is constituted in organizations in the resulting patterns (Martin, 1992).

More recent scholarship in this frame focuses on the multiplicity of cultures that exist in organizations, viewing as a valuable asset the many perspectives that individuals from a variety of backgrounds bring to organizations. *Multicultural organizations seek*
to embrace a variety of cultural experiences of its members (Fine, 1995; P. G. Taylor, 1999). Fine (1995) contends that it is unwise to ignore the perspectives of the many cultures represented in organizations, stating, “If organizations cannot transform themselves in ways that will allow and encourage people from vastly different cultural backgrounds to work together productively, they will not be able to achieve their organizational goals” (p. 3).

Arguing that an organization is strengthened when it transforms itself into a multicultural organization, Fine (1995) identifies three elements of a multicultural organization:

1. Values, encourages, and affirms diverse cultural modes of being and interacting;
2. Creates an organizational dialogue in which no one cultural perspective is presumed to be more valid than other perspectives; and
3. Empowers all cultural voices to participate fully in setting goals and making decisions. (p. 36)

Fine (1995) acknowledges that the process of creating multicultural organizations is not easy. “The process itself, however, is our final goal. What is important is not a stable vision of the multicultural organization, but a genuine process of change that invites and includes the full participation of all of us” (p. 201).

**Power and the four frames.**

Power, understood differently within each frame, is central to my research. Thus, in this section I use Hartsock’s (1983) power rubric to determine which organizational theory is most relevant to a study that seeks to understand a feminine experience of and perspective on navigating conflict in a higher education environment dominated by patriarchal norms.
**Power and the structural frame.**

With regard to power in the structural frame, Bolman and Deal (2003) state that structural theorists emphasize the importance of a controlling authority, which has the “legitimate prerogative to make binding decisions” (p. 192). Rosen (1984) notes that the traditional perspective of management theory in which the organization’s structure is modeled after western social hierarchy serves to legitimate the dominant power order. “[T]he very concepts of ‘manager’ and ‘management’ are social artifacts reflecting the social relations, or power order, in our society, based on hierarchical segmentation,” (M. Rosen, 1984, p. 305) by which the ruling elite is institutionalized. Etzioni (1964), too, notes the influence and importance of power in organizational structures. As he states, “Organizations . . . set norms and need to enforce them; they have rules and regulations and issue orders, which must be obeyed if the organization is to function effectively” (p. 51).

A discussion of race and gender underscores the idea that organizational structure legitimates the dominant order (Kersten, 2000). As Kersten states, “Put simply, race dialogue in the context of structural inequality will tend to reproduce those relations, unless there is a radical willingness to subject those very relations to critique” (Kersten, 2000, p. 240). Within a structural view of organizations, those in power positions have a legitimate hold on power. They are unlikely to question their own power, and therefore they act in ways that perpetuate the subjugation of others. Ely and Meyerson (2000) make a similar argument related to structures that perpetuate the domination of women.
Power, then, defined within this paradigm does not meet Hartsock’s (1983) three-tiered analysis of power. A hierarchical structure, modeled after the agonal community (Hartsock, 1983), does not emphasize cooperation nor does it specifically seek a feminine ontology. As Kersten (2000) notes, the structural frame perpetuates inequalities found in society, so the experiences of marginalized women are not valued. Further, a ruling gender is not acknowledged in the structural framework, thus a multicultural feminist epistemology is not sought. In sum, the structural frame is not relevant for my study.

_Power and the human resource frame._

The language used when discussing power within the human resource frame is less hierarchical, acknowledging that the empowerment of employees results in a more effective organization. As Bolman and Deal (2003) state, “human resource theorists place little emphasis on power” (p. 192). Further, there is an expectation for leaders within this frame to seek diverse viewpoints. “[T]he best leaders . . . love it when employees bring their special talents and perspectives to work” (R. H. Rosen, 1996, p. 206). For this reason, two aspects of power discussions within the human resource frame fulfill Hartsock’s (1983) three-tiered analysis of power: a humane community is central, with an emphasis on the importance of seeking diverse perspectives. However, the theory does not specify the importance of learning about the feminine experience, a central point in Hartsock’s lens. Further, power within this frame does not acknowledge a ruling gender, thus it does not seek to understand a feminist epistemology. Thus, it only partially meets the criteria for a definition of power as established in the theoretical
framework for my investigation, making the human resource frame not pertinent to my investigation.

**Power and the political frame.**

Unlike the structural frame, which assumes that power is held by those who occupy the top positions in organizations, in the political frame power is assumed to be distributed throughout the organizational membership (Heffron, 1989). Therefore, power is defined more broadly in the political frame; power is not only associated with decision-making, rank, and resources, but also with information, personal connection, and other non-tangibles (Bolman & Deal, 2003; Heffron, 1989).

The perspective of power within the political frame, however, does not meet Hartsock’s (1983) multicultural feminist criterion for defining power. First, while there is an acknowledgement that power is diffused throughout organizations, the mode of controlled production, not shared production, remains at the core of the political frame. Secondly, while there is an acknowledgement of the heterogeneous nature of organizations, this understanding is simply necessary in order to succeed as a manager—a view reminiscent of the focus on competition and rivalry within an agonal community. There is no focus on gaining an understanding of the multicultural feminine experience. Finally, while political researchers acknowledge gender and cultural diversity in the workplace, they do not seek to explore the epistemological underpinnings of organizations. That is, they do not question the white, male, western notions perpetuated in organizations and the resultant discrimination against others. Without questioning, it is impossible to acknowledge a ruling gender and, therefore, leaves no room for exploring a
feminist epistemology. Despite the centrality of conflict within the political frame, the political organization theories are not relevant for my study.

**Power and the symbolic frame.**

The issue of power within the symbolic frame is reflected in the idea of a dominant culture. Administrative rules and policies can serve to establish and endorse a dominant culture, and administrative systems impose the dominant culture’s standards on all. Grubbs (2000) describes three forms of intercultural engagement within organizations that result in cultural imperialism: (a) cultural domination, (b) cultural imposition, and (c) cultural fragmentation. Cultural fragmentation “appears both as an instrument, and as a consequence, of the rule by an imperial power” (Grubbs, 2000, p. 229). Ogbor (2001) articulates that corporate culture is a form of corporate hegemony, stating that:

>S]tudies have shown how corporate culture serves as a means through which organizations reproduce the structure of power relationship in the wider society because through it the diversity within the larger society is smoothly reconciled with the values of the dominant ‘white values’ in the organization. (p. 601)

Fine (1995) holds that organizational theories in general are “theories for white men” (p. 20), supporting her argument with an historical overview of organizational theory development and its connection to the white male experience. Gherardi (1995) discusses the concept of power from a gendered perspective. “[I]f organizational culture expresses a gender regime which systematically devalues everything connected with female, the organization can never become democratic, whatever affirmative action it may introduce, and whatever equal opportunity legislation may be promulgated” (Gherardi, 1995, p. 9).
Examining this perspective on power through Hartsock’s (1983) three-tiered analysis, the theories represented in the symbolic frame meet her criteria. Through the process of sensemaking, there is an implied value in creating a humane community. Further, researchers in the field of organizational culture, particularly in the last decade, focus on hearing the perspectives of women and minorities and exploring their cultural experiences. In doing so, those researchers focused on gender and multicultural organizations acknowledge the concept of a ruling gender. Further, multicultural organizational theories, which fall within the symbolic frame, are most closely connected to multicultural feminist theories and the related concepts of feminist epistemology. Thus, I conclude that multicultural theories serve as a valuable lens for my research on women professionals from diverse backgrounds in higher education.

Multicultural organizational theories are based in the understanding that those who have power often establish the workplace norms (Fine, 1995; Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2008; Valian, 1999). Further, the source of power is knowledge (1992), which the dominant culture manifests through discourse (2001). Because women are not proportionally represented at the top ranks in higher education (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2008; Valian, 1999), patriarchal norms are preserved through knowledge production and discourse. Hence, in order to employ multicultural organization theories for this study, it is vital to first understand higher education organizations and the culture within them.

**Higher education organizations.**

Here I provide a brief overview of postsecondary education institutions within the context of organizational studies. I do not intend to describe these higher education
organizations in detail. Rather I focus on key elements that make postsecondary organizations unique, and to connect that understanding of them to multicultural organizational theories. I begin by describing higher education organizations more broadly.

Thelin (2004) notes that the oldest corporation in the United States is not a commercial business, but rather Harvard College. Bok (2003) states that higher education institutions have “emerged as the nation’s chief source for three ingredients most essential to continued growth and prosperity: highly trained specialists, expert knowledge, and scientific advances” (p. 1). Altbach, Berndahl, and Gumport (2005) describe the contemporary institution of higher education as “the most important institution in the complex process of knowledge creation and distribution” (p. 15). Silver (2003) describes the complexities of higher education institutions as they relate to multiple constituencies, both internally and externally. He states:

The university has to serve powerful external recruitment, employment, funding, professional and disciplinary constituencies and a range of gatekeeper expectations. It has to negotiate and balance strongly embedded historical values and those pressed urgently by the patron state and others. The university is a ‘collection’ of groups, all with their own touchstones of academic and professional behaviour (sic), scholarly values and critical endeavour (sic), which are capable of opening up rifts with its real or perceived values and behaviours (sic). (p. 166)

Postsecondary institutions, then, are complex organizations that serve at the crossroads between business and knowledge development. They are interdependent on economic development, but they are subject to varying levels of influence from outside entities. Indeed, even the internal groups are only peripherally dependent on each other (Birnbaum, 1988; Etzioni, 1964; Temple, 2008).
Organizations of higher education are unique in the way they function as well. Birnbaum (1988) states that “the differences between academic institutions and business firms are significant enough that systems of coordination and control effective in one of these types of organization might not have the same consequences in the other” (p. 21). The author outlines these differences that include issues of governance, organizational control, and internal and external constraints. Building upon Birnbaum’s (1988) ideas, Temple (2008) describes integrative organizations as those that do not have a single purpose, such as police organizations, local governments, and universities. Temple contrasts integrative organizations with purposive organizations, or institutions that are focused on one single goal. As he states:

in purposive organisations, it is at least in principle possible to make an intellectually defensible choice between priorities. . . . In contrast, the chief executive of an integrative organisation (sic) . . . finds on her desk competing demands for resources to serve ends that cannot, even in principle, be compared with one another; there is simply no common unit of measurement, either operationally or in terms of outcomes. (Temple, 2008, p. 100).

In integrative organizations such as higher education, various units and/or individual faculty members may have conflicting objectives that challenge leaders to integrate these disparate objectives for the benefit of the organization as a whole.

Etzioni’s (1964) articulation of administrative vs. professional authority in organizations brings clarity to those leadership challenges that Temple (2008) suggests exist in integrative organizations. Those with administrative authority maintain power through an established hierarchy, whereas those with professional authority maintain power through their possession of knowledge, as is the case with faculty. According to Etzioni (1964), administrators in what he terms professional organizations—or
organizations in which at least 50% of its members have professional authority—are in charge of secondary activities. In higher education, the primary activity is teaching and research, activities for which higher education leaders are not directly responsible.

Further, Etzioni points out that professionals decide for themselves to act or not to act, as do faculty. Faculty members determine their area of research, establish the curricula, and decide their teaching methods. Finally, Etzioni (1964) notes that professionals do not hold high regard for administrators, and professionals rather than administrators are most likely to reach the top position of professional organizations. While higher education has seen an increase in the number of presidents or chancellors appointed who have professional backgrounds outside of the academy, the top leadership position is predominantly selected from the academic ranks (King, 2007; Spectrum initiative, 2008).

Another way to understand Temple’s (2008) integrative organizations is through Weick’s (1976) concept of loose coupling. Glassman (1973) uses coupling to describe the degree to which an organization’s various units are both connected to and independent of each other or central management. Using Glassman’s idea, Weick (1976) describes the education environment to be loosely coupled. Weick states that loose coupling “convey[s] the image that coupled events are responsive, but that each event also preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness” (p. 3). For loosely coupled organizations such as higher education, some units can persist regardless of what is happening in other units. Further, each unit is uniquely sensitive to the external environment, allowing for quick adaptability at the unit level. Loosely
coupled organizations are also challenged in their ability to disseminate information or to develop a core identity (Weick, 1976).

The concepts of loose coupling, professional authority, and integrative organizations provide an explanation for the uniqueness of higher education organizations (Etzioni, 1964; Temple, 2008; Weick, 1976). The functional independence among the various organizational members and units demands a mechanism for creating a connection among them in order to ensure organizational success. Altbach et al. (2005) sees this connection in institutions’ common culture. As they state, “Universities share a common culture and a common reality: in many ways, there is a convergence of institutional models and norms” (p. 32). In the next section, I briefly discuss organizational culture in postsecondary education.

*Higher education organizational culture.*

Weick (1976) calls for the creation of a social reality to deal with loosely coupled organizations. “Given the ambiguity of loosely coupled structures, this suggests that there may be increased pressure on members to construct or negotiate some kind of social reality they can live with” (Weick, 1976, p. 13). Scott (1987) sees the process of sensemaking, and the resultant organizational culture, as critical for negotiating loosely coupled organizations. Creating cultural cohesion in higher education, however, is complicated by the very nature of such institutions. As Weick (1983) claims, “The sparsity of lateral linkages is reinforced by the norm of academic freedom” (Weick, 1983, p. 254).
Birnbaum (1988), too, argues that maintaining a strong organizational culture is a challenge. However, he emphasizes that in higher education’s increasingly complex environment, such work is vital, calling upon top institutional leaders to be actively engaged in cultural preservation. As he articulates:

In most settings, presidents cannot generate a new culture merely by continued and insistent reference to new ideas, goals, or symbols. However, they can strengthen and protect the existing culture by constantly articulating it, screening out personnel who challenge it, and in other ways continually rebuilding it. Culture, like other aspects of organizations and all other systems, constantly loses energy and moves toward entropy and disorder. A major function of the energy of administrators is to prevent the organization's culture from falling apart. (Birnbaum, 1988, p. 81)

Silver (2003) believes the theory of organizational culture has become “non-problematic and trivialized” (p. 167) in relation to higher education organizations. He states, “In terms of definitions derived in recent decades from theoretical assumptions about shared norms, values and assumptions, as well as symbols, myths or rituals, universities do not have a culture” (p. 167). Silver examines interview responses from a study designed to explore perceptions of innovations in higher education. The study was conducted between 1997 and 1999 at four institutions in the United Kingdom; more than 220 faculty members were interviewed. Through his analysis of the transcripts, Silver (2003) does not find evidence of shared experience—except when respondents spoke of tensions and conflict—and systematically refutes prior claims by academic researchers of the existence of a single culture in higher education organizations.

While Silver (2003) argues that cultural theories have no relevance to postsecondary work environments, his position reiterates the importance of Fine’s (1995) and Taylor’s (1999) perspectives on multicultural organizations as described previously.
Indeed, Silver acknowledges the validity of Taylor’s characterization of higher education environments as multicultural. Taylor suggests that by embracing plurality, rather than enforcing enculturation, institutions are strengthened. “The challenge of socialization becomes less a matter of the adjustment of the individual to the organizations, and more a matter of taking advantage of the experience/identities that new members bring with them” (P. G. Taylor, 1999, p. 137). Taylor, like Fine (1995), speaks of multiculturalism not as a static condition, but as a continual process.

In this section, I have determined that the symbolic frame contains the most relevant theories to this investigation. Specifically, the multicultural organizational theories lend themselves to a study that seeks to examine conflict resolution styles of women leaders in higher education who come from various cultural/ethnic/professional and institutional backgrounds. I also provide a brief description of higher education organizations to demonstrate its uniqueness among organizations. Next, I turn to the conflict resolution literature, which serves to deepen my understanding of the current research in that discipline.

**Exploring Conflict Resolution Theories**

The study of conflict resolution examines micro level issues of disputes, such as the sources and causes of conflict, conflict’s impact, and strategies for resolution (DeDreu & Gelfand, 2008). The field of conflict resolution is rooted in the realm of international conflict and collective bargaining (Lederach, 1995; Long & Brecke, 2003), with knowledge developed at the international level applied to disagreements: (a) in the business realm in the form of negotiation and bargaining (R. Fisher & Ury, 1991; Lebow,
in the legal realm in the form of restorative justice and court-appointed mediation (Bush & Folder, 2005; Zehr, 2002); and (c) in the social and organizational realm in the form of personal and organizational conflict resolution (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008; Folger et al., 2001; Pruitt & Kim, 2004). Churchman (2005) notes that conflict resolution has been examined from numerous angles, spanning more than 20 academic disciplines and resulting in over 100 theories for human aggression and in excess of 75 conflict management methods.

Some of these disciplines are more useful than others in examining employee differences in higher education. For example, Lederach (1995, 1997), whose research focus is international conflict, describes conflict in terms of levels and degrees of violence and articulates sources of conflict relating to issues of security and differences in ethnic customs or religious values. Contrast this language with that of Folger et al. (2001), whose research focus is on organizational and social conflict. They explain components of conflict in terms of incompatible goals or interference, and they attribute the source of conflict to poor interpersonal communication.

Moore (2003) describes the spectrum of resolution approaches, ranging from conflict avoidance to violence (see Figure 1). Negotiation—a highly valued skill in the workplace (Nadler & Nadler, 1987; Rancer & Baukus, 1987; Walters et al., 1998)—is a form of conflict resolution between two or more parties. As Walters et al. (1998) state:

Traditionally, the word negotiation evokes images of bargaining for contracts, salaries, benefits, or for the resolution of disputes. But in a larger sense, negotiation is concerned with how individuals attempt to acquire a multitude of organizational privileges and resources such as status, power, respect, and recognition. (p. 1)
Negotiation also encompasses commonly occurring differences of perspective that individuals face in daily life, including regular workplace activities (Bartunek, 1992; Folger et al., 2001; Kusztal, 2002).

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<tr>
<th>Private decision making by parties</th>
<th>Private third-party decision making</th>
<th>Legal (public) authoritative third-party decision making</th>
<th>Extralegal coerced decision making</th>
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<td>Conflict avoidance</td>
<td>Informal discussion and problem solving</td>
<td>Administrative decision</td>
<td>Non violent direct action</td>
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<td>Negotiation</td>
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**Figure 1. Continuum of Conflict Management and Resolution Approaches**

My investigation focuses on negotiation of interpersonal conflict in organizational settings. Thus, in this section I review negotiation research in two areas: (a) conflict negotiation in organizations, including conflict in the higher education work environment; and (b) gender negotiation research. The issue of power in conflict resolution theories has been widely debated among scholars, and so I also provide a brief overview of research on power more generally before I use Hartsock’s (1983) tri-level power rubric to determine which conflict theories are most relevant to my investigation.

**Conflict and organizations.**

Scholars have examined conflict in organizations from a variety of perspectives, including intergroup and interpersonal conflict, conflict management, and negotiation (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Callanan, Benzing, & Perri, 2006; DeChurch, Hamilton, & Haas, 2007; Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Pruitt & Kim, 2004). In addition, the research in organizational conflict spans
disciplines, including management, psychology, sociology, and communication. For example, Costantino and Merchant (1996) examine the nature of conflict in order to develop systems for managing conflict in organizations, while Olekalns, Putnam, Weingart and Metcalf (2008) focus on role of communication in workplace conflicts in order to improve the productivity of disputes.

In this section, I examine research on conflict in organizations generally, with a focus on research that is applicable to peer-to-peer conflict situations. I begin with a brief historical review of organizational conflict research to provide a context, and then I summarize current perspectives in organizational conflict. I then focus on workplace conflict research in three areas: (a) organizational culture and conflict, (b) conflict in higher education organizations, and (c) individual level of analysis. There is some overlap between organizational conflict with gender and conflict research that I cover separately. Given the centrality of gender to my research, I defer discussions of gender-related research in organizations to my subsequent section on gender and conflict.

*Current perspectives in organizational conflict.*

DeDrue and Gelfand (2008) argue that in order to progress in research, it is critical to understand the roots of scholarship from an historical perspective. Therefore, Jaffee (2008), who writes the first chapter in DeDrue and Gelfand’s text, traces organizational conflict theories to the rise of the factory system in which workers challenged owners. The workers were resistant to the loss of freedom and autonomy, and the business owners were focused on profitability. Scholars sought to create organizational systems for resolving these differences in values and objectives. As
owners increased their focus on productivity, scholars began to examine production methods, resulting in additional systematic, or bureaucratic, approaches for conflict resolution, or as Jeffee (2008) describes this phase of conflict research, “an engineering solution to a human problem” (p. 61). Eventually, human relations theories emerged to examine the social dynamics of employees, but Jaffee notes that bureaucratic theories of conflict coexisted alongside human relations theories despite contrasting perspectives because of “the compelling attraction of formal structure and instrumental rationality” (p. 65). In fact, Jaffee demonstrates how formal procedures and the desire for control continue to influence the current “postbureaucratic” theories, which purport to endorse organizational harmony through the establishment of a common organizational culture. However, Jaffee (2008) argues that postbureaucratic theories simply replace one form of control—structures, as found in bureaucratic theories—with another—informed consent, as achieved through the establishment of a common culture. Finally, Jaffee summarizes two current trends in organizational conflict: (a) studies of the microfoundations of conflict, which endorse employee ownership and control to enhance productivity; and (b) human dignity research, which is focused on conflict theories that honor human beings’ desires to maintain dignity in the workplace.

DeDrue and Gelfand (2008) provide a detailed overview of the current state of organizational conflict resolution research, so I proceed by discussing their work here. However while their text provides an adequate summary of existing organizational conflict theories, including articulating the ethnic and cultural diversity-related research, the authors fail to highlight existing gender-related research, a significant shortcoming in
their text. Nonetheless, their summary provides a useful launching point for my literature review on organizational conflict research in general, particularly given that I examine gender-related conflict research independently in the next section.

De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) integrate classic and contemporary scholarship on organizational conflict in the context of multiple *levels* of conflict, which they articulate as individual, group, and organizational levels. Using a process view to examine existing research, they observe commonalities across levels relating to sources, consequences, and management of conflict. Regarding sources of conflict, DeDrue and Gelfand (2008) find three that span across levels within the workplace: (a) *resource conflicts*, including conflicts of interest and conflicts of outcomes; (b) *values conflicts*, including ideological conflicts, relationship or affective conflicts, and cross-cultural influences on conflict; and (c) *socio-cognitive conflict of understanding*, including cognitive or task-related conflicts. In summarizing research on the consequences of conflict, DeDrue and Gelfand focus on contradictory findings regarding the value or damaging effects of conflict across levels. They note that conflict can enhance performance and induce change, but that it also can adversely impact employees’ well-being and serve a mechanism for defining social structures within organizations that perpetuate inequity found in society at-large. Finally, DeDrue and Gelfand (2008) articulate strategies found across levels in conflict management literature: (a) *unilateral action*, which includes withdraw, yielding, and dominating; (b) *joint action*, which includes negotiating, compromising, and mediating; and (c) *third-party decision-making*, which includes arbitrating, adjudicating or mediating.
In addition to these observations of organizational conflict that are common across levels, DeDrue and Gelfand (2008) discuss three theories in organizational conflict they deem important: (a) theories of cooperation and competition, which include concepts of interdependence; (b) theories on the role of rights and power in conflict and conflict resolution; and (c) dual concerns theory, in which high or low levels of concern for self are contrasted with high and low levels of concern for others, with an intermediate level of concern for self and others. DeDrue and Gelfand (2008) conclude their introductory chapter by suggesting the need for research across levels as it relates to: (a) time; (b) conjuncture, aspects of organizations that change slowly; and (c) events, or aspects that change rapidly.

In the previous section, I review organizational theories more broadly, concluding that multicultural organization theories are most relevant to my study. In this section, I provide a broad overview of the historical and current organizational conflict scholarship, which serves as a basis for a more in-depth review of research on the role of organizational culture in conflict and conflict in higher education organizations. In the next section of this literature review, I explore organizational conflict and culture specifically to better understand the linkages between multicultural organizational theories and theories of organizational conflict and culture.

Organizational culture and conflict.

Many scholars hold that an organization’s culture influences conflict and conflict resolution (Bartunek, 1992; Dubinskas, 1992; Gelfand, Leslie, & Keller, 2008; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Olekalns et al., 2008). Here, I describe the work of a few conflict and
culture scholars, including more recent work, a number of varying perspectives, and one meta-analysis.

Gelfand et al. (2008) define culture in this context as a “socially shared and normative way to manage conflict” (p. 139). They argue that it is vital to explore conflict norms in order to understand “the ways in which features of organizations constrain or enable how conflict is managed” (p. 139). These features include formal conflict management systems, common attitudes, social interactions, and shared working conditions. Gelfand et al. propose a two-dimensional typology of organizational conflict cultures that reflects the intersection of passive vs. active with agreeable versus disagreeable conflict management norms (see Figure 2). This intersection generates four distinct conflict cultures: (a) dominating, which contains active and disagreeable conflict management norms; (b) collaborative, which contains active and agreeable norms; (c) avoidant, which contains passive and agreeable norms; and (d) passive-aggressive, which contains passive and disagreeable norms. Gelfand et al. (2008) acknowledge that demographic and ethnic composition and social networks play a role in conflict cultures. However, they do not fully explore those implications. The researchers conclude that an organization’s culture reduces “the range of individual variation in strategies used to manage conflict in organizations” (p. 40).
Bartunek (1992) describes the relationship between the structural and cultural dimensions of conflict, noting that organizations with highly structured boundaries create an environment in which participants are likely to use accommodation, avoidance or even vengeance because the focus on productivity endorses the need to “keep up appearances that things are running smoothly” (p. 221). She contrasts this behavior with that found in organizations with independent boundaries, in which members use passive resistance, avoidance, and at times violence because the mechanisms for peaceful resolution are slow to develop in such environments. Bartunek (1992) notes that where avoidance and
tolerance are prevailing modes of operation, the existing structures and systems go unchallenged, thereby reinforcing established power and authority relationships.

Holt and DeVore (2005) conduct a meta-analysis of studies using iterations of the dual concerns theory, concluding that organizational culture and gender are relevant factors in the styles’ usage. While the conflict style names and the models vary slightly among the studies they examined (see Figure 3), according to Holt and DeVore each was based on Blake and Mouton’s (1964, as cited in J. L. Holt & C. J. DeVore, 2005) original work called the Managerial Grid, a dual concerns theory which contrasts concern for people with concern for productivity resulting in five conflict resolution styles: (a) smoothing, in which there is a high concern for people and a low concern for production; (b) withdrawing, in which there is an equally low concern for people and production; (c) compromising, in which there is a medium concern for people and production; (d) problem-solving, in which there is an equally high concern for people and production; and (e) forcing, in which there is a high concern for production and a low concern for people. Holt and DeVore (2005) contend that, “If dual concerns theory is valid, and if the instruments utilizing this theory are valid and reliable, then true differences regarding culture, gender, and organizational role should become clear through meta-analytic techniques” (p. 167). As it relates to culture, the researchers found common patterns among individualistic and collectivistic cultures, with members of the former culture more likely to chose forcing as a resolution style and members of the latter more likely to choose problem-solving, compromising or withdrawing. I elaborate on their conclusions relating to gender in the next section.
Figure 3. Holt & DeVore’s Overlay of Styles and Models

While Dubinskas (1992) concurs that culture influences conflict, he examines culture at the group level rather than the organizational level. Dubinskas links culture and the way people act in the workplace, noting that a continual loop connects practice and culture, with each reinforcing the other. In groups, the practice-culture loop serves as the mechanism through which group identity is established, as well as a means for differentiating between groups. According to Dubinskas (1992), when groups encounter conflict, differing cultural perspectives can impact resolution. As he states, “When disparate groups in an organization encounter each other with a strong need to coordinate
their actions, the drive to collaborate may be stymied by a fundamental disjuncture or clash between cultural systems” (p. 193).

A brief review of scholarship on culture and conflict reveals that culture has an influence on conflicts; organizational culture creates acceptable modes of conflict handling among its members. Cultural values, including concerns for members vs. productivity, also influence responses to conflict. Organizational structure can impact conflict resolution, particularly as it relates to boundaries. Finally, culture can vary by groups within organizations, with conflicting values and norms at the group level impacting resolution processes.

While multicultural theories were not explored specifically in the literature I reviewed, it is clear that there is overlap in this research and those found in the symbolic frame. This work coupled with higher education scholarship and gender negotiation research contributes to a better understanding of the organizational factors that could influence my study participants as they navigate conflict in the workplace. Given that my investigation will take place in the higher education organizational environment, it is important to also review the literature in the area of conflict in higher education organizations, which I do in the next section.

**Conflict in higher education organizations.**

Often issues have prompted conflict research in higher education, such as: (a) sexual harassment (Fuller, 1996), (b) grievance processes for students (Jameson, 1998; Warters, 2000), and (c) leadership challenges (Bing & Dye, 1992; Carroll, 1994; Findlen, 2000; Hartman, 1977). Research on conflict in an administrative context is limited
(Barsky, 2002; Graff, 1997; Holton, 1998; Stanley & Algert, 2007; West, 2006). Even more scarce is research on negotiation involving non-academic administrators, with the exception of a few studies exploring the interaction between academic and non-academic administrators (Graff, 1997; Stanley & Algert, 2007). Given the limited scholarship on conflict resolution processes of academic and non-academic administrators, in this section I focus on providing an overview of existing research in higher education conflict more broadly.

Holton (1998) reviews conflict in the postsecondary work environment from an organizational perspective. She observes that, historically, higher education’s approach to conflict was to avoid it by isolating faculty members within their discipline. Departments and academic units were established as independent entities, enabling faculty within their units to pursue research free from conflict with other faculty who potentially hold opposing points of view. “For years, the cracks which appear in our infrastructure in higher education were ignored or patched up” (Holton, 1998, p. 10). Holton argues that conflict avoidance hinders institutions’ progress. Valuable debates, which serve to strengthen the curricula, are suppressed, and the conflicts themselves fester, negatively impacting future interaction among colleagues.

Barsky (2002) examines conflict in higher education from a structural standpoint to determine the efficacy of existing organizational systems for handling conflict. He notes that conflict research and solutions have typically focused on developing systematic approaches to conflict, such as mediation centers and policies. Using an ethnographic method to gain an understanding of the experiences of the participants, Barsky concludes:
The voices of the participants in this study suggest that university administrators and conflict consultants should focus their efforts on structural sources of conflict, such as competition, hierarchy, a stressful work environment, and changes in the structure of the university. (Barsky, 2002, p. 172)

Structural solutions, according to Barsky, are critical to successful negotiation of conflict in higher education.

West (2006), on the other hand, points to cultural factors that contribute to successful conflict resolution in higher education. He uses a case study approach to explore conflict issues between faculty and administrators, finding that values and priorities are often the fodder for conflict. He concludes that institutions in which trust is a cultural value, dissension is more easily accepted. Stanley and Algert (2007) examine culture and conflict as well. As a foundation for their study involving interviews with 20 department academic heads, they outline four models that describe the cultural influences on conflict in higher education: (a) *bureaucratic*, in which rules and procedures drive resolution; (b) *political*, in which conflict is viewed as normal and inevitable; (c) *collegial*, in which conflict is viewed as abnormal and should be eliminated because the academy is a community of scholars; and (d) *anarchical*, which exists in institutions facing a decline in previously abundant resources. Stanley and Algert (2007), however, find that culture is relevant only when conflicts reach the state of being overwhelming to the conflict participants.

Finally, some scholars examine conflict at the individual level. Carroll (1994), for example, explores department chairpersons’ role conflicts—or conflicts that result from their serving dual roles: faculty leaders and faculty members, and Findlen (2000) argues that conflict is at the core of any higher education administrative position. Findlen
concludes that, because conflict resolution skills are vital to administrators, institutions must focus on conflict management preparation. He states:

A comprehensive approach to conflict management training needs to encompass conflict management processes and practices, analyses of the types of conflict in higher education, and an application of sound pedagogical strategies for modeling, reinforcing, and internalizing conflict management skills. (p. 48)

An institution suffers, according to Findlen, when its leaders are not aptly prepared to navigate conflict situations.

Although the literature on conflict in higher education is limited in scope, particularly as it relates to non-academic administrators, it is still important to consider in this study. Approximately half of my participants have a background in academic administration. Additionally, the studies related to academic administrators are focused at the individual level rather than the organizational level, as is the focus in my investigation and that which I elaborate upon in the next section.

**Individual level of analysis.**

As De Dreu and Gelfand (2008) conclude, scholars differ in their perspectives on the value and usefulness of conflict in organizations (Brigg, 2003; De Dreu, 2008; Friedman, Tidd, Currall, & Tsai, 2000), particularly as it impacts individuals on a personal level. De Dreu (2008) critically evaluates the generally accepted argument in the organizational field that conflict is valuable and should be encouraged in the workplace. She notes, “Conflict has been linked to learning, to higher levels of creativity and innovation, to improved quality of group decision-making, and to increased overall team effectiveness” (p. 5). However, in her analysis of existing research, De Dreu (2008) finds that conflict is valuable only under a narrow set of circumstances, and even when
those circumstances exist, the negative impact of conflict has a significant long-term impact on the parties involved. She concludes that it is best for individuals to mitigate or, if possible, prevent conflict in organizations.

Conversely, Friedman et al. (2000) note that conflict is an inevitable part of organizations, stating that conflict styles in organizations “represent a core dimension of managing interpersonal relations at work” (p. 49). The authors articulate an ongoing debate in which some conflict resolution researchers claim an individual’s conflict style adjusts as the situation dictates, and other scholars hold that individuals are fairly consistent in their conflict resolution approaches regardless of the situation. Friedman et al. (2000) assess the styles of 85 employees in a clinical medical department, concluding that individual employees are fairly consistent in their style. They further conclude that employees’ approaches to conflict shapes their work environment, which in turn impacts their stress level. As they state, “Depending on how people approach conflict, they can amplify or dampen naturally-emerging disputes, and make the environment one that is supportive or alienating for themselves” (p. 35).

In this study, I explore how my participants work through conflict situations with their peers, including everyday, work-related conflict, which Bartunek (1992) refers to as the private sphere of conflict resolution. Specifically, she uses the term behind the scenes conflict to describe workplace disputes between independent parties that are not aired publicly. She notes that participants often do not label these types of disputes as conflict, that there is an informal aspect to them in which rank and power have less influence, and emotions are more likely to be expressed in these conflict situations because participants
are often driven by feelings and impulses. However, Bartunek (1992) also notes that because of the acceptability of the nonrational expressions of emotions in these private settings, behind the scenes conflicts contribute to the rational appearance of public forms of conflict.

Kusztal (2002), like Bartunek (1992), endorses the need to explore the non-public form of conflict, which Kusztal calls emergent conflict. By examining the communication styles used in conflict situations, scholars can better understand “how conflict gets transformed in the process of organizational interaction” (p. 231). Using a grounded theory, the author finds four different discourse in use in the workplace: (a) discourse of bureaucracy, in which rules drive the solutions and formal structures drive the action; (b) discourse of professionalism, in which solutions are collegial and professional standards drive the outcome; (c) discourse of human connection, in which solutions are personal and actions are viewed in a cultural sense; and (d) political discourse, in which solution are strategic and differences of power and interests drive the outcome. Kusztal concludes that conflict arises when participants function from differing discourses.

Additional scholarship at the individual level is articulated below in the gender and conflict section. The observation here, however, is that conflict at the individual level of analysis is contradictory, with some scholars viewing it as important and others endorsing minimizing conflict in order to reduce the negative effects on employees. Important to my study is Bartunek’s (1992) and Kusztal’s (2002) emphasis on exploring emergent or behind the scenes conflict. Such scholarship not only contributes to
improved functioning in organizations, but also influences our understanding of conflict at the organizational level because of the positive impacts of these non-rational or private forms on the rational or public forms (1992).

**Gender and conflict.**

Gwartney-Gibbs and Lach (1994) note that, prior to publishing their article on gender and workplace disputes, little organizational conflict research had focused on gender. Using an intersection of gender role theory, sex stratification theory, and concepts of institutionalized work structures, the researchers create a model for the types of conflicts women have, the processes they use to resolve them, and the outcomes of those processes. Gwartney-Gibbs and Lach (1994) argue that gender differences in conflict resolution contribute to inequity in the workplace. Since their study, much has been written on the significance of gender differences in, for example, anger expression, conflict management, and sexual power in negotiation (Fitness, 2000; Golan, 2004; Kray & Locke, 2008; Lichtenstein, 2000; Mohammed & Angell, 2004).

Kolb and Putnam (2006) provide a comprehensive overview of gender negotiation research, observing that studies have examined gender negotiation on three levels: (a) gender differences or the trait approach, which is the most common (Eagly & Johnson, 1990; Gayle & Preiss, 2002; Gayle et al., 2002; Portello & Long, 1994; Rancer & Baukus, 1987); (b) an interpretive approach, in which gender is viewed as a social construction (Ely & Meyerson, 2000; Gayle et al., 2002); and (c) the use of gender as a lens (Kolb & Putnam, 2006; Shuter & Turner, 1997). As Kolb and Putnam (2006) describe the latter, “With its roots in postmodern literatures, this [gender as a lens]
perspective questions the apparent neutrality of what constitutes knowledge in a field, and it shows how power shapes certain truths and taken-for-granted assumptions” (p. 319). In this section, I use Kolb and Putnam’s three approaches to summarize gender negotiation research in organizations, concluding with a brief discussion on gender as a lens and its relevancy to my investigation. I elaborate on this concept in the Methodology section of Chapter 3.

**Trait approach.**

Previous explorations of the difference between male and female traits in negotiation situations have spanned a variety of disciplinary fields. In peace negotiations in Northern Ireland, for example, Golan (2004) notes that women demonstrated a concern for transparency and inclusiveness in the negotiation process. In organizational settings, Portello and Long (1994) find that female managers with high-instrumental traits—considered masculine traits—are more likely to use a dominating conflict style, while managers who exhibit both high-expressive and high-instrumental traits—what Portello and Long describe as androgynous traits—are more likely to use an integrating conflict style. In this section, I restrict my focus to gender negotiation research in the workplace.

Numerous studies claim that women possess inadequate negotiation skills, which contributes to the differential between male and female professional success (Babcock & Laschever, 1993; Greig, 2008; Nadler & Nadler, 1987). Sufficient negotiation skills include the ability to advocate for oneself and the confidence to ask for what one wants. For example, Nadler and Nadler (1987) find that insufficient negotiation skills result in women having fewer opportunities for promotion and earning less than men. Babcock
and Laschever (1993), citing research in psychology, organizational behavior, economics, and sociology, conclude that women professionals have fewer opportunities in the workplace because women find it difficult to request such opportunities. Similarly, Greig (2008) finds that women are at a disadvantage because they are less likely to negotiate, particularly with regard to salary levels and promotions. Eckel, de Oliveira, and Grossman (2008) observe women’s tendency to be egalitarian and to expect and ask for less in negotiations. Finally, Domagalski and Steelman (2007) explore whether gender and status affect anger expression, finding no gender-related differences between males and females, but finding that lower status males are more likely to express anger to those in superior roles than lower-status females.

While Domagalski and Steelman (2007) found no difference, they note that their work contradicts previous scholarship. Walters et al. (1998) observe many contradictory findings. They conduct a meta-analysis of gender differences in competitiveness in negotiations, citing several findings that support contradictory claims: (a) women are more competitive than men, (b) men are more competitive than women, (c) there is no difference in men’s and women’s competitiveness, and, (d) in the case of a few research reports, the results within the studies themselves were contradictory. Further, in studies that found differences between male and female competitiveness, Walters et al. (1998) examine the effect size—or the magnitude of the difference—concluding that no statistical significance exists. Knight, Guthrie, Page and Fabes (2002) focus their meta-analysis on aggression and gender differences, and here, too, find contradictory conclusions.
Kolb and Putnam (2006) observe that studies focused on gender differences assume the masculine negotiation perspective as the standard. As they state, “Without directly testing for the origins of gender differences, these explanations become tautological and are often marshaled after the fact to account for women’s deficiencies when they negotiate” (Kolb & Putnam, 2006, p. 316). Similarly, in their meta-analysis, Gayle et al. (2002) conclude that, “Results seem to suggest that the situation or context and stereotypical expectations played a distinct role in unraveling the sex or gender difference claims made in this body of literature” (p. 364).

Gayle et al. (2002) focused their analysis not only on the trait approach, which assumes that gender is a stable characteristic, but also on the gender socialization approach, which regards gender as a socially constructed concept. Kolb and Putnam (2006) call the gender socialization approach the interpretive approach, which I review next.

**Interpretive approach.**

As I describe in Chapter 2, gender is not equivalent to biological sex, but instead is a social construct with multiple dimensions. Gender is a social relationship—it is both dependent and independent of social connections individuals have with each other (Fine, 1995; Flax, 1990). Gender is also a category of thought that influences gender expectations in both overt and subtle ways (Glazer-Raymo, 1999, 2008; Valian, 1999). Finally, gender is a central constituting element, influenced by both an individual’s self-perception, as well as the cultural perception of an individual’s gender (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1993; Tong, 2009). Accordingly, the interpretive approach to gender
negotiation research explores the influences of the sociocultural environment on responses to negotiation situations. Stamato (1992) summarizes the interpretive approach in the legal field as follows:

We see that what appear to be less effective negotiation skills or unwillingness to press a claim or persist in a grievance, may instead be a number of other things, including discomfort with the way the issues are framed, or with the forum in which they are being negotiated, mediated, and otherwise managed, in or outside the looming shadow of court. (p. 381)

Bowles et al. (2005) describe research focused on gender as a socially constructed concept as the second generation of gender negotiation research. They propose two categories of moderators that influence gender differences in negotiation: situational ambiguity and gender triggers, concluding that reduction in ambiguity reduces gender effects, and gender triggers enhance them. Further exploring these gender triggers, Bowles, Babcock, and Lai (2007), reject the “fix the women” (p. 85) solutions in trait characteristic research, citing the enhanced social risk women face for deviating from gender expectations, or gender schemas as Valian (1999) terms them. Wade (2001) demonstrates that gender schemas allow women to advocate for someone else effectively, but when they advocate for themselves, they often lose more than they gain. As Bowles and McGinn (2008) summarize, “This research shows that it is reasonable for women at times to be more reticent than men to ask for higher pay, because they have to weigh relatively greater social risks against the economic benefits of initiating negotiation” (p. 398).

In addition to work relating to gender schemas, second generation gender negotiation researchers examine issues of perception. Randel and Jaussi (2008) surveyed 262 professionals who were part of organizational teams to assess the role of gender
identity and sex dissimilarity in perceptions of conflict. The researchers conclude that an increased perception of relationship conflict exists in situations in which individuals have strong gender social identity that is highly differentiated from that of other team members. That is, individuals who identify strongly with the traditional gender schemas are more likely to perceive relationship conflicts to exist when members of their team are of differing genders who also identify strongly with the traditional gender schemas (Randel & Jaussi, 2008).

Niederle and Vesterlund (2008) seek to determine environments in which gender differences occur. They observe that while in certain situations women are as competitive as men, in highly competitive, mixed-sex settings, women are less comfortable with negotiating. Similar to Bowles and McGinn’s (2008) conclusion as it relates to social risk, Niederle and Vesterlund state, “competition imposes psychic costs on women while men receive a psychic benefit” (p. 449). Women hesitate to display competitiveness in situations where there is a higher social risk for doing so, giving their male colleagues an advantage.

Kolb and Putnam (2006) acknowledge the value of the interpretive approach, which has connected research on gender as a social construct to the negotiation field, deepening the understanding of issues women face in negotiation. However, the authors are also critical of this second generation research for failing to include organizational context in the studies. As they state, “Without attending to these issues [of context], even this contemporary work may reinforce existing stereotypes and practices” (p. 321). They advocate the use of gender as a lens to prevent the perpetuation of gender stereotypes in
gender negotiation research, a concept that I elaborate on in the final section of exploring gender and conflict.

**Gender as a lens.**

Kolb and Putnam (2005, 2006) note that, currently, negotiation theories advocate for individualistic approaches, leaving underdeveloped the understanding of how interdependence is constructed and affects bargaining. Conflict resolution practitioners have observed issues related to interdependence, social interaction, and power (Donohue & Kolt, 1992; Folger et al., 2001; Greenhalgh, 1987; Heitler, 1990; Moore, 2003). Donohue and Kolt (1992), for example, argue that a disputant’s relationship with the other party can be an important factor in decisions about the resolution process. Heitler (1990) makes a similar observation, stating, “The nature of the players’ relationship—long or short term, trusting or distrustful, etc.—is another factor influencing response styles in any given game interaction” (p. 13).

Practitioners’ observations have not been corroborated through empirical research in part because of the structure of the studies, which include the use of lab-based teams in which there is no relationship history before or after the study (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; Eckel et al., 2008; Molm, 1985; Putnam, 1988; Wolf et al., 2009). Kolb and Putnam (2005) argue that it is important to examine that which is not articulated in established conflict resolution theories. Specifically related to gender negotiation, they endorse examining current theoretical assumptions from a feminist perspective. Kolb and Putnam (2005) demonstrate that established conflict resolution theories perpetuate gender stereotypes. As these scholars state:
Using [gender as a lens], we have examined the gendered nature of negotiation itself by exploring how the theory, research, and norms of practice privilege certain ways of being (that is, masculine) and marginalize others, that is, the feminine. This point underscores the assumption that gender relations are always situated in power. Using this lens, we focus on what is silenced or ignored in the field. (Kolb & Putnam, 2006, p. 319)

With gender as a lens, Kolb and Putnam believe that researchers can begin to better understand the social processes involved in conflict resolution.

One study that seeks a feminist perspective is Shuter and Turner’s (1997) mixed methods exploration of conflict differences and similarities among African American and European American women working in corporations. They use standpoint theory, which is rooted in Hartsock’s (1983, 1997) standpoint work. The authors’ central finding is that African American women are more apt to use a direct approach, whereas European American women are more likely to use an indirect approach. Shuter and Turner (1997) focus on investigating the participants’ perception of conflict in the workplace. However, in addition to open-ended questions in their instrument, they also presented the participants with four common conflict methods, theories for which are based on a masculine paradigm. The scholars encourage future scholars to explore beyond these approaches in future research.

This idea of a gendered lens relates directly to my investigation in which I sought to learn the epistemological perspective on conflict of a multicultural group of women. I sought to understand the way they know conflict. In other words, I used gender as a lens through which I gazed at conflict in the higher education workplace, and then I compared this perspective to existing literature to determine if this corresponds to or differs from existing theories on conflict.
As noted throughout this section, power is an important factor in gender negotiation research specifically (Cupach & Canary, 1995; Domagalski & Steelman, 2007; Golan, 2004; Kolb & Putnam, 2005; Kray & Locke, 2008; Lichtenstein, 2000; Nadler & Nadler, 1987), as well as in conflict resolution more generally (Brigg, 2003; A. M. Davis & Salem, 1984; Mayer, 1987; Schieman & Reid, 2008; van Kleef, De Dreu, Pietroni, & Manstead, 2006). I conclude this section that explores conflict resolution theories by reviewing power and conflict research more generally and then using Hartsock’s (1983) multicultural, gender-sensitive power rubric as an evaluative lens for determining which conflict theories are most relevant to my study.

Conflict and power.

Power and conflict scholarship.

The role of power in the conflict resolution discipline has historically been debated, with a number of scholars claiming that power is overemphasized, and others expressing concern that power differentials should be equalized so resolution outcomes are equitable (A. M. Davis & Salem, 1984; Folger et al., 2001; Lichtenstein, 2000; Mayer, 1987). For example, Mayer (1987) notes that among mediation and negotiation professionals, power is considered problematic and its impact should be minimized. He states, “Power is equated with coercion, a noncooperative spirit and a breakdown in communication” (p. 75). In contrast to many of his colleagues, Mayer (1987) considers power simply a factor in interpersonal conflict, whether or not parties are cooperating or competing.
Power researchers in negotiation view power as central to conflict (Folger et al., 2001; Mayer, 1987). Folger et al. (2001) argue that all moves and counter moves in a conflict situation depend on power. Further, Mayer (1987) contends that power is both a means to an end as well as an end itself. He states that negotiators must understand power, learn to analyze it, and develop their own power in the negotiation process.

Sources of power in conflict resolution differ by disciplinary focus. In interpersonal conflicts, power can be attained through positional power, economic or social status, or physical strength (Folger et al., 2001). Power can also take less obvious forms, such as attractiveness, ability to persuade others, or alliance with powerful people. As Folger et al. (2001) summarize, “Anything that enables individuals to move toward their own goals or to interfere with another’s actions is a resource that can be used in conflicts” (p. 120). They argue, however, that power is only manifest through relationships. That is, in order for it to carry value, one party must endorse whatever form of power that the other possesses (Folger et al., 2001). Mayer (1987) summarizes the sources of power in ten power categories: (a) formal authority, (b) expert/information, (c) associational, (d) resource, (e) procedural, (f) sanction, (g) nuisance, (h) habitual, (i) moral, and (j) personal.

In this research, power is central to organizations and takes various forms. However, the role and value of power related to conflict differs depending upon the cultural paradigm. Brigg (2003) compares Western culture’s perception of disputes, in which the goal is to eliminate conflict, to world cultures in which conflict itself is seen to have value. Employing Foucault’s (1982, as cited in Brigg, 2003) power concepts, Brigg
states, “Power is not a commodity, and hence individuals and institutions do not *hold* power . . . power operates through actions upon the actions of both others and one’s self” (p. 292). Conversely, Lichtenstein (2000) compares power issues in feminism with power in the transformative mediation process, concluding that they are similar: (a) feminism seeks to balance power, as does the mediation process, and (b) feminists work to empower women, just as mediators seek to empower the weaker party.

**Evaluating conflict scholarship.**

The interdisciplinary nature of conflict resolution research makes it difficult to evaluate categories of conflict scholarship using Hartsock’s (1983) power rubric, as I have done with the frames in the organizational theory section. In particular, the research on conflict in organizations and on conflict and power as I describe above is diffuse, results are contradictory, and my review is not comprehensive. Further, much of this scholarship does not meet my criteria for a multicultural, gender sensitive definition of power. However, it is important for me to be mindful of aspects of this research throughout my study. Thus, here I identify the scholarship in these two areas that has relevance to my investigation, despite its limitations for my purposes.

First, Dubinskas’ (1992) work on group identity begins to explore diverse perspectives within cultures, meeting Hartsock’s (1983) first tier of analysis in which power is diffuse. While Dubinskas is not focused on gender or ethnicity specifically, his scholarship is important to consider nonetheless. Secondly, the scholarship on conflict in higher education also meets Hartsock’s first tier but not the second and third. Further, much of the scholarship in this area is narrowly focused on academic administrators.
However, it is important to consider because it is the environment in which my participants work, and many of my participants serve in academic administrative positions. Finally, Brigg’s (2003) work on a multicultural view of power and conflict is important to consider in this study. While Brigg does not consider gender specifically, he is focused on diverse cultural perspectives and their views of power.

While it is limited in its applicability to theories in the areas of conflict and organizations as well as conflict and power, Hartsock’s (1983) power rubric is useful in evaluating the gender and conflict literature. The trait approach is focused on gender differences, and some research has been conducted in this area related to diverse populations. As such, the trait approach meets the second tier criteria, in which multicultural experiences are explored. However, the trait approach does not acknowledge that there is a ruling gender, nor does it embrace the concept of shared power. Thus the trait approach to gender and conflict is not applicable to my study.

The interpretive approach acknowledges the social construction of gender, and as such, the concept of shared power, thus meeting Hartsock’s (1983) first tier. Further, the interpretive approach acknowledges the importance of understanding the experiences of women from multiple backgrounds, thus meeting Hartsock’s second tier criterion. However, while the interpretive approach acknowledges a ruling gender, the researcher is grounded in existing theories, thus does not seek a feminist epistemology. As such, the interpretive approach is not applicable to my investigation either.

In their review of conflict and gender, Kolb and Putnam (2005) demonstrate how patriarchal norms have shaped knowledge production in conflict resolution studies. Their
notion of gender as a lens is similar to my theoretical framework for this study and my criterion for a gender-sensitive perspective on power. With their focus on women more broadly, however, they fail to acknowledge that not all women hold the same perspective. While it is valuable to consider Kolb and Putnam’s (2006) advocacy for the use of feminist research methods in reexamining conflict and gender, it is important to also maintain a multicultural perspective within any such study. Hence, I embrace Kolb and Putnam’s (2005, 2006) challenge to seek a feminist perspective on conflict; however, I amend it to include a multicultural feminist perspective.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the existing literature in two fields of study relevant to my research: organizational theories and conflict in organizations. I use Bolman and Deal’s (2003) four frames (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic) for exploring the plethora of research on organizations. I then use Hartsock’s (1983) amended power rubric to determine that the multicultural organizational theories embrace a definition of power that views power as shared, and embraces a multicultural feminist ontology and epistemology. As such, the multicultural organizational theories are most relevant for my study. In the organizational theories section, I also describe the uniqueness of higher education organizations, the environment in which my participants work.

In the section on conflict resolution scholarship, I explore research on conflict in organizations, including higher education organizations specifically, conflict and gender, and conflict and power. While the interdisciplinary nature of conflict resolution theories
makes it difficult to evaluate categories of scholarship, I determine that Dubinskas’s
(1992) work on conflict and group identity and Brigg’s (2003) work on a multicultural
view of power and conflict are important to consider in this study.

Finally, after reviewing gender negotiation research, I focus on Kolb and
Putnam’s (2005) endorsement of revisiting gender and conflict with a gendered lens in
order to more fully understand how women perceive conflict in the postsecondary work
atmosphere, although their perspective does not acknowledge the importance of gaining a
multicultural feminist perspective. I conclude that further exploration of gender and
negotiation, using Kolb and Putnam’s (2005, 2006) gender lens concepts, amended to
include the multicultural definition of power that I establish in the introductory chapter of
this dissertation, would advance the understanding of how gender affects conflict
resolution in higher education organizational settings.

An understanding of these theories contributes to my study in numerous ways. As
I demonstrate in Chapter 3, my study remains in dialogue with theory throughout the
research process, informing the epistemology, methodology, and research design method.
The theories I determine relevant in this chapter provide the theoretical and
epistemological frame for my study. They contribute to my decisions regarding research
design. They also serve as a theoretical thread that is woven throughout the study,
playing a role, for example, in the development of relevant questions for my interviews.
Further, the guidance provided through an understanding of these theories is valuable as I
employ the dimensional analysis form of grounded theory in my data analysis.
In the next chapter, I provide a theoretical justification for using feminist research methods for my investigation. Specifically, I articulate the methodology and method of the research design, and I provide a detailed description of the structure for my study of women leaders and their styles of resolving conflict in higher education.
Chapter Three: Research Design

The decision regarding the design of a study is as critical as the study itself (Berg, 2007). There were two important factors for me to consider as I determined the most appropriate design for my research: my theoretical framework and the gaps in the relevant literature. My theoretical framework establishes the importance of having a multicultural gender sensitive definition of power in order to gain a feminist epistemological perspective. To this point, my framework has served as a lens through which I have evaluated applicable literature. Further, as I have noted, power is a central constituting element in conflict and conflict resolution theories. Thus, as I explored an appropriate method for understanding women’s experience and perspective on resolving conflict in the higher education workplace, my framework served as a filtering tool here as well.

Additionally, as my review of relevant literature in Chapter 2 reveals, there are gaps in research germane to my investigation. First, Kolb and Putnam (2005, 2006) demonstrate that neither the trait approach nor the interpretive approach to gender negotiation is focused on a feminist epistemology because this scholarship remains rooted in a masculine paradigm. My literature exploration supports this notion; thus, my study can contribute to this gap in gender negotiation scholarship. Secondly, my exploration in higher education conflict research also reveals a gap. Scholars have explored issues related to academic administrators’ experiences with conflict resolution,
but they have not fully explored the experiences of administrators outside of academic units. Missing is research on the experiences of professionals in finance, resource development, student life, and athletics to name a few. My study addresses this gap as well.

My theoretical framework and these two gaps in relevant scholarship, then, served as critical pieces to consider as I determined the most effective means for answering my primary research question: *How do women leaders experience and perceive conflict in the higher education work environment?* In this chapter, I first provide the theoretical explanation for deciding to conduct a qualitative study. Specifically, I determined that a grounded theory research method called dimensional analysis would be most valuable in exploring my question. A unique element of dimensional analysis is that the researcher remains in conversation with the literature, which I have found to be informative and important to my research process.

In this chapter, after I articulate the methodological justification for my qualitative study, I also detail my study method, which includes interviews with 15 women from diverse professional and personal backgrounds who serve in a variety of leadership positions in postsecondary institutions. Further, I summarize my recruitment procedures and the interview setting, which are both highly relevant to my study. Additionally, an important element of my qualitative study is the issue of my positionality, which I describe in detail in this chapter as well. I conclude by describing the dimensional analysis process I used in analyzing my data and developing my theory, including summarizing the first phase of my research process—coding or differentiation.
Methodology

For my study, I sought to understand how leaders from various ethnic/cultural/professional/institutional backgrounds navigate conflict in postsecondary education. As I establish in Chapter 1, the higher education culture was founded on a masculine paradigm. While women have achieved levels of success that would suggest increased equity, cultural norms in postsecondary education continue to put women at a disadvantage professionally, with women from minority populations facing challenges that further complicate their ability to navigate the higher education environment (Bornstein, 2008; Glazer-Raymo, 1999; Valian, 1999). Additionally, as I articulate in Chapter 2, empirical research on conflict resolution ignore issues of interdependence, perpetuate gender stereotypes, and obfuscate issues of power. In this section, I provide a theoretical argument for using a qualitative feminist research method for my investigation in which I sought to gain a feminist epistemological perspective on conflict, while also remaining in conversation with existing conflict resolution theories.

Epistemology, methodology, and method are strongly connected in social science research (Letherby, 2003; Sprague, 2005). As I previously discussed, epistemology is a theory of knowledge (Garry & Pearsall, 1996; Letherby, 2003). Methodology relates to the theoretical argument for pursuing a particular study in a particular way, while method is the technique one uses in a given study (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Letherby, 2003; Naples, 2003). Naples (2003) holds that specific methods chosen for a study and how those methods are implemented are “profoundly shaped by our epistemological stance” (p. 3). Given that my theoretical framework for this investigation is based in a
multicultural feminist epistemology, a feminist research method would be most applicable for my study, as I demonstrate below.

Feminist researchers argue that much existing theory was developed in a masculine paradigm, and that in order to expand our understanding of women’s perspectives, it is important to design research studies that capture women’s points of view (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Hesse-Biber, 2007; Lather, 1992; Letherby, 2003; Naples, 2003). Feminist research methods were established as a mechanism for capturing the feminist perspective (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Hesse-Biber, 2007). Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007) describe feminist methods as offering a form of inquiry that is “inclusive of, and pays close attention to, elements such as personal experience, subjectivity, positionality, world view, and emotions” (p. 14). However, feminist research is not isolated to the research process itself. As Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007) summarize, feminist research is a “holistic endeavor that incorporates all stages of the research process, from theoretical to the practical, from the formulation of research questions to the write-up of research findings” (p. 4). Thus, in order to conduct feminist research, a feminist lens must be incorporated throughout the study.

Feminist research typically takes the form of qualitative studies (A. Oakley, 1998; Sprague, 2005). Strauss and Corbin (1990) describe quantitative research as involving statistical procedures, whereas qualitative research does not. Berg (2007) states that the focus for quantitative research is to find the explanation of an act, whereas a qualitative study seeks to describe the situation. Berg states that qualitative research is focused on human beings’ life-worlds, which include “emotions, motivations, symbols, and their
meanings, empathy, and other subjective aspects associated with naturally evolving lives of individuals and groups” (p. 14). He holds that through a qualitative study, a researcher can see the “naturally emerging languages and the meanings individuals assign to experience” (p. 14).

Feminists embrace qualitative research methods to understand, in part, the role that gender has in existing theories (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Lather, 1992; A. Oakley, 1998; Sprague, 2005). As Sprague (2005) states:

Each methodology is founded on either explicit or, more often, unexamined assumptions about what knowledge is and how knowing is best accomplished; together, these assumptions constitute a particular epistemology. (p. 5)

Noting that knowledge and knowledge production is not value-free, Sprague argues that a qualitative method allows the researcher to fully examine the perspective of the oppressed without the distortion of theories established on a differing epistemological perspective.

Scholars have debated the value of qualitative vs. quantitative research methods, engaging in what Oakley (1998) describes as the paradigm argument. Focusing on feminists’ view of qualitative methodologies, the author contrasts feminist researchers’ assertion that quantitative studies perpetuate the mainstream—or malestream—perspective, and quantitative researchers’ dismissal of qualitative research as lacking objectivity. However, Oakley notes that the paradigm argument creates a false dichotomy, contending that qualitative and quantitative research methods are part of a continuum. Further, Oakley (1998) notes the challenges associated with a singular focus on qualitative research. As she states:
The danger of rooting knowledge in the description of the individual experiences is that one never moves beyond them. The grounding of research questions and findings in women’s experiences of everyday life is a laudatory feminist aim . . . But the subjectivity of the researcher remains, as in all science, a potential influence on the knowledge claims that are made. (p. 723)

Oakley (1998) suggests feminist researchers move away from the paradigm argument, noting that scholars’ rejection of reason and science is “essentialist thinking that buys into the very paradox that it protests” (p. 725). Oakley encourages scholars to embrace both qualitative and quantitative methods, which would serve to ensure respect for participants’ autonomy and minimize bias, allowing for the creation of a more appropriate knowledge for women.

Conflict scholars have called for qualitative methods, with a focus on gender, as important to the field of conflict resolution (Kolb & Putnam, 2005; Shuter & Turner, 1997). Particularly relevant to my study is Kolb and Putnam’s (2005) endorsement of feminist research methods—or gender as a lens—to explore the gaps in gender negotiation research. The authors outline three areas in which a gender lens can be valuable: social positioning, legitimacy, and interdependence. First, they note it is important to understand how an organization’s hierarchy impacts bargaining and negotiation—the “conditions under which gender becomes salient” (p. 141). One’s position within the organization and the relative power associated with that position could influence choices and impose constraints, regardless of one’s gender. Secondly, power is also a factor in negotiation situations in which one party attempts to delegitimize the other party—the point at which gender salience occurs. Thus, these negotiation scholars advocate for research on the micro-processes of negotiation. Thirdly, Kolb and Putnam (2005, 2006) hold that a gender lens can help transform the perspective on relationships
in negotiation to instead reframe “such traditional concepts as interdependence and bargaining power” (p. 320).

The gender lens concepts Kolb and Putnam (2005, 2006) present are highly relevant for a study on women leaders’ ability to resolve and navigate conflict in higher education. By seeking to learn directly from my participants, my goal is neither to confirm nor deny existing ideas on conflict and conflict resolution in the workplace, but rather to focus on understanding the conflicts from the perspective of a diverse group of women leaders in higher education. Such a study has a potential to uncover aspects of the three elements that Kolb and Putnam (2005, 2006) address—the conditions under which gender becomes salient in negotiation practices, the role that positional power plays in gender negotiation, and the relevancy of interdependence in negotiation—although, as I elaborate on below, the latter notion is particularly illuminated in this study.

While Kolb and Putnam (2005, 2006) do not articulate the importance of listening to the perspectives of women from diverse backgrounds, it is important to reiterate here that there is no single women’s perspective (Breines, 2006; hooks, 2000). Smith (1990) encourages researchers to acknowledge their position of privilege and to avoid speaking for oppressed individuals. As she states:

We may not rewrite the other’s world or impose upon it a conceptual framework that extracts from it what fits with ours. Their reality, their varieties of experience, must be unconditional datum. It is the place from which inquiry begins. (p. 25)

Similarly, Brooks and Hesse-Biber (2007) note that, “Like many feminists, postmodernists challenge social science research paradigms such as positivism and reject
notions of universality, objectivity, and truth with a capital ‘T’ in favor of multiple, situated, and constructed interpretations of social reality” (p. 20).

Consequently, as I articulate in the Method section below, it is vital that I prioritize diversity in participant selection and recognize my position of privilege throughout the research process. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge that while this study is focused on gaining perspectives of a diverse group of women, the extent to which I concentrate on a particular cultural or ethnic perspective is limited. That is, in this study I focused on recruiting a diverse pool of participants so that the perspectives presented are not limited to those of one group of individuals. As such, while my research questions highlight conflict experiences of women leaders in order to explore possible gender biases, I did not seek to illuminate experiences related to other biases, such as race or sexual orientation. Nonetheless, as I articulate in the concluding chapter, such multicultural perspectives must be explored in depth in future studies as scholars seek to gain a truer understanding of how professionals from all backgrounds and genders navigate conflict in the workplace.

Finally, the decision to use a feminist method does not dismiss Oakley’s (1998) concern that a quantitative perspective would also be valuable to this kind of investigation. However, I have elected to confine my research to a qualitative method for this study. In my concluding chapter, I address potential quantitative approaches that can serve to enhance the value of my findings.

In the next section, I provide a brief overview of various feminist methods, focusing on that which is most applicable to my study. I could choose any number of
feminist research methods that would contribute to an understanding of women leaders’ experiences and perceptions of conflict in higher education. However, personal, professional, and methodological reasons contribute to my decision to select the grounded theory called dimensional analysis.

**Feminist research methods.**

At the core of feminist research is the idea that research should result in improvement of women’s lives. As Letherby (2003) states, “Feminist researchers start with the political commitment to produce useful knowledge that will make a difference to women’s lives through social and individual change” (p. 4). Reinharz (1992) describes several feminist methods: (a) action research, (b) ethnography, (c) oral history, (d) content analysis, (e) case studies, and (f) interview methods, all of which are qualitative. Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2007) offer a similar list: (a) oral history, (b) ethnography, (c) content analysis, and (d) in-depth interviewing, but they do not include case studies. Hesse-Biber and Leavy also include survey research and endorse the use of mixed methods. Given my focus on conducting a qualitative study, I limit my summary here to qualitative feminist research methods.

Two types of research methods, ethnography and in-depth interviewing, are both useful for exploring a feminist epistemological perspective of conflict in higher education. In ethnographic research, the researcher is immersed in the study topic’s culture (Patton, 1990). With culture being central to ethnographic research, the goal is to create a picture that aptly describes the culture in which participants live or work, which requires intense fieldwork (Wolcott, 1997). Such fieldwork includes participant
observation, interviewing, and review of written and unwritten sources. As Wolcott (1997) notes, ethnography is both the research process as well as the output. While ethnographers differ in their perspective on the importance of the ethnographic written account, Wolcott views it as critical to the process as the fieldwork.

Letherby (2003) groups together life history, oral narrative, and interviewing, for each involves in-depth discussions with participants to gain insight into their lived experience. Hesse-Biber (2007) observes that feminist in-depth interviewing requires a focus on understanding oppressed groups’ lives, an acknowledgement of the potential power issues in the researcher-researched relationship, and reflexivity on the part of the researcher throughout the process. While both semi-structured and unstructured questions can be valuable in feminist research, Reinharz (1992) notes that open-ended questions explore “people’s view of reality and allows the researcher to generate theory” (p. 18). Hesse-Biber (2007) suggests that the interview should be more like a conversation, with questions jointly created by the researcher and participants. However, the author emphasizes the importance of listening, noting that while self-disclosure may be necessary for rapport-building, it is important that the researcher’s agenda does not become central to the dialog.

Both ethnography, with its focus on culture, and in-depth interviewing, with its focus on using women’s perspective to build theory, are viable methods for this investigation. Both lend themselves to a study that examines conflict resolution strategies of women from diverse backgrounds. Ethnography, however, poses challenges for me as a researcher. First is the time commitment required. As Reinharz (1992) notes,
ethnographic research is time consuming, and as a full-time working professional during the time I conducted my study, I could not afford the time necessary for an ethnographic study. Further, issues of gaining access to the field could be challenging for this study because of the sensitive nature of the topic: conflict and conflict resolution. Indeed, simply my presence during a conflict situation could change the nature of the conflict itself (Bowles et al., 2005).

Thus, in-depth interviewing is the most viable feminist research method for this study. In-depth interviewing allows the researcher to learn about the lives of research participants (Kvale, 1996). It is a method that comes close to an everyday conversation, but it is structured enough to allow the researcher to gain an understanding of a research topic from the perspective of the interviewee. It is also a method that allows the researcher to learn directly from women from diverse backgrounds.

Deciding on the appropriate method of data gathering is critical, but just as key is the decision a researcher makes regarding data analysis (Berg, 2007). Before I discuss in detail my data analysis, it is important for me to lay the theoretical foundation for data interpretation.

**Theoretical assumptions for data analysis.**

Jones, Torres, and Arminio (2006) note the range of data interpretation in qualitative research; it spans from phenomenology, which is a highly interpretive process that seeks meaning beyond what is said, to grounded theory, which is a highly structured process designed to analyze what is said. The scholars argue that the methodological basis of a study drives a researcher’s decisions regarding data analysis.
My theoretical framework, in which power is a central focus, suggests that theory development comes from listening to diverse women’s perspectives. One can develop a truer understanding of women’s experiences and perspectives by first seeking a multicultural gender-sensitive definition of power. Power issues in qualitative research can surface in multiple facets of the research process, including the relationship between the researcher and the researched, as well as the data analysis and write-up phases (Jones et al., 2006; Naples, 2003; Sprague, 2005). Grounded theory is a method that offers the co-construction of theory, which can serve to minimize issues relating to power (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Goulding, 2002); thus I determined that grounded theory is the most relevant for my study.

Goulding (2002) summarizes the roots of grounded theory, which began with a movement called *symbolic interactionism* in which the researcher enters the world of the participants to observe interactions with their surroundings. Seeking to provide structure and a systematic approach to collecting and analyzing data, Strauss and Glaser developed the grounded theory approach in the mid-1960s (Goulding, 2002). Since that time, the two scholars have developed divergent perspectives on the use of grounded theory, as have other grounded theory researchers. Today, some grounded theory methodologists focus their work on the entire research process, while others view grounded theory as a systematic approach solely for data analysis (Jones et al., 2006; Locke, 2001).

Goulding (2002) notes that often theorists discourage the use of grounded theory in cases where topics have been explored in depth, for existing literature can unduly influence the researcher and, therefore, the outcome of the study. Conversely,
dimensional analysis is a form of grounded theory that considers the context and existing literature as highly relevant to the formulation of theory (Goulding, 2002; Kools, McCarthy, Durham, & Robrecht, 1996; Schatzman, 1991). Goulding (2002) notes that in dimensional analysis, researchers are not capable of excluding, nor should they abandon, theory or their natural analytical tendencies in the research process. As she explains, “the dimensions of the problem have no form until the researcher takes a perspective or viewpoint on the information” (p. 82).

As I articulate in Chapter 2, Kolb and Putnam (2006) summarize the extensive work on gender conflict in organizations. They call for the use of gender as a lens in research in order to move beyond traditional theoretical assumptions about women’s perception and experience with conflict in organizational settings. However, in order to fully understand the unique perspectives that women have regarding conflict in the workplace, one cannot disregard existing theory. Grounded theory in the form of dimensional analysis allows me to consider existing theory in the research process while allowing the perspectives of study participants to serve as the grounding for new theory. As such, I used dimensional analysis grounded theory in the interpretation of my data for this investigation. I explore the specifics of grounded theory in the Data Analysis section below.

Having explored research methods and data analysis from a theoretical perspective, I now turn to specific details relating to the research process. In the next section, I summarize the ways in which this study was conducted, including: (a)
participant selection, (b) interview protocol construction, (c) issues of trustworthiness, and (d) specific details regarding processes for dimensional analysis.

**Method**

Above, I provide the theoretical foundations for my decision to use a qualitative research method in the form of dimensional analysis. I articulate from a theoretical perspective how this method was useful to understanding the ways women from diverse backgrounds resolve conflict in higher education. In this Method section, I outline the specific details of my study, with a focus on the importance of employing a feminist lens throughout the process.

Hartsock’s (1983) analytical tool for determining a gender sensitive definition of power, modified to include multicultural perspectives, provides a theoretical framework that, in the literature review section, serves as an evaluative tool to determine literature relevant to my study. The framework, in conjunction with relevant literature, is now useful as a theoretical thread to be woven throughout the investigation itself. With power being central to this framework, it is important for me to begin this discussion of method by elaborating upon issues of power.

A critical source of power in a research study is the researcher’s positionality (Charmaz, 2006; Jones et al., 2006). Jones et al. (2006) describe positionality as “the relationship between the researcher and his or her participants and the researcher and his or her topic” (p. 31). The authors note that power is inherent in these relationships. As such, I begin the detailed description of my study by relating my biography and the role of power in my study. I follow that discussion by describing my participant pool and the
research setting, which is closely related to the participants. I then detail the construction of the research tools used in the study. I also cover issues of credibility and trustworthiness specific to this qualitative study, and conclude this section by describing the dimensional analysis grounded theory process as it relates directly to my investigation.

**Role of researcher.**

In qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to fully understand his/her impact on the study (Jones et al., 2006; Sprague, 2005). One of the significant arguments for examining the role of the researcher is to address issues of power, particularly in the investigator-participant relationship (Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jones et al., 2006; Sprague, 2005). Given the centrality of power to the study, I begin my Method section with a detailed description of myself as the researcher. To guide this discussion, I use Hesse-Biber’s (2007) suggested questions to assess how I, as the researcher, intervene in this investigation. Her four questions are: (a) How does my biography shape this research process? (b) How do I impact the research questions I intend to ask? (c) How can my approach impact participants’ answers to the questions? (d) How does my personal economic, political, social context impact process?

**Biography.**

The first question Hesse-Biber (2007) encourages researchers to ask themselves is: *How does my biography shape this research process?* With the exception of 3½ years, my 26-year working career has been spent in higher education. During my undergraduate studies at the Florida Institute of Technology, I worked at the institution in
a full-time support staff position, serving in the graduate admissions, registrar’s, and information technology offices prior to graduation. After a brief hiatus between 1986 and 1990 working in for-profit and not-for-profit organizations, I returned to a position in postsecondary education at Capital University as an entry-level professional fundraiser.

In 1995, I moved to Colorado and accepted a mid-level position at the Colorado School of Mines (CSM) Foundation, which was an entity separate from CSM but with the sole purpose of serving the school. During my 10-year tenure at CSM, I was promoted several times, lastly serving as the Assistant Vice President for Institutional Advancement and Assistant Campaign Director. I also pursued my master’s of nonprofit management degree in the three years prior to my departure.

Shortly after being accepted into the University of Denver’s (DU) Ph.D. program in higher education, I accepted a part-time professional position in DU’s College of Education. I held this position for less than one year before being promoted to a full-time leadership position in DU’s central fundraising office. Until October, 2009, I served as the Associate Vice Chancellor and Campaign Director in the University Advancement office.

In addition to my professional roles in higher education administration, my degree program emphasis is in organization and governance. Further, I was sponsored by the University to attend the Higher Education Resource Services (HERS) Bryn Mawr Summer Institute in 2008, which is the setting for my investigation. As outlined below, my study participants were drawn from the 2009 Summer Institute attendee list. The Summer Institute is for women administrative leaders in higher education. The faculty
members of the Institute are women in postsecondary leadership positions from around the country. The HERS national office is located on the University of Denver campus.

I am, then, a member of the group I intend to study by virtue of being an alumna of the HERS Summer Institute as well as a female administrative leader. Finally, for the HERS Bryn Mawr Summer Institute 2009, I also served as a member of the faculty, presenting on fundraising in higher education.

My insider status both assisted and hindered the research process (Letherby, 2003; Sprague, 2005). First, with my insider status, my participants readily accepted and trusted me (Sprague, 2005). My dual role as researcher and a member of the faculty positioned as superior to the study participants, potentially exacerbating the power position I held as the researcher (Kvale, 1996; Letherby, 2003; Sprague, 2005). Conversely, some of my study participants were far more experienced as an academic researcher than I am, and thus held more power in the research process than I. Given this duality, I continually worked to balance my status as an insider throughout the research process. As Letherby (2003) notes, “The research process is a complex endeavor, and the researcher’s status as ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ is subject to constant negotiation between all parties” (p. 133).

Jones (2006) notes that identifying power imbalances and anticipating ways in which power imbalances can influence the findings are critical to minimizing the potential impact of power. As such, I sought to interact on a peer level with participants during meals and social opportunities. I continually thanked the HERS Bryn Mawr class of 2009 for their warm welcome of me, and during my session in which I taught
fundraising, I worked hard to include the voices of others in the class who had fundraising experience to ensure that I was not taking a stance of superiority. Finally, during my one-on-one interviews, I greeted my study participants as peers, created a warm, welcoming environment in the interview room, and throughout the interview process sought to make personal connections with them. Finally, I hand wrote personal notes to all participants after the interviews and placed them in their dorm mailboxes.

Impact on research questions.

Hesse-Biber’s (2007) second question relates to how I impact the research questions. My primary research question—which is *How do women leaders experience and perceive conflict in the higher education work environment*—and more broadly my interest in conflict resolution in higher education, has been shaped by my experience as a professional in the postsecondary work environment. Early in my doctoral program, I identified conflict resolution as a cognate because of my belief that most institutions could be stronger and more productive without the negative conflict employees experience in the postsecondary workplace. I believe that conflict as typically resolved in higher education results in protectionism and self-preservation—modes of functioning that are, in my experience, counterproductive for all involved. In addition, my own experiences as a woman professional led me to add a feminist lens to my research interest in conflict.

Further, the language often used in conflict resolution literature did not fit my frame of reference for and my experience in resolving conflict. For example, Fisher and Ury (1991) suggest that the first step in their win-win approach to conflict resolution is to
separate the people from the problem. I, for one, am highly aware of and sensitive to the other person in conflict situations, so this suggestion to set aside my relationship and the whole of the human being from the conflict situation was incongruous to me as an individual and a professional. I felt that there was something missing from the conflict resolution literature.

While these ideas led me to my primary research question, my interview questions, as I elaborate upon later, have been guided by the literature. While many forms of grounded theory suggest disconnecting the literature from the study so as not to bias oneself in the analysis process, dimensional analysis endorses the role of the literature and the perspective of researcher. As such, the influence of theory and my personal/professional biographical background are appropriate for this investigation.

Impact on participants’ answers.

The third critical question that Hesse-Biber (2007) suggests a researcher ask him/herself is: How can my approach impact participants’ answers to the questions? I have a straight-forward style, both personally and professionally. I feel that honesty is the best approach, and I expect others to be equally as honest and forthcoming with their information.

At times, my straight-forward style has a negative impact on my colleagues and friends, and I am cautious in most interactions. As I have matured, I have learned to choose my words carefully and to withhold comment on many things. I also understand that I cannot share my opinion with everyone. I am aware that when I share my opinion, it is not always accepted as just another piece of information. Because of my strong
personality, my opinions are often perceived as an edict, particularly in cases where I have more power in the relationship.

As my personality type relates to this investigation, I was cognizant of the need to be fully aware of my strong personality in every interview. I was careful with the tone in my voice, and I refrained from comment except where it served to encourage continued sharing. For example, during my conversation with one participant, Katrice, I contrasted her cautious style with the dangers of my tendency to move too quickly. I stated,

You know it’s fascinating to me to be talking to you. You do have that very definite difference of approach and you’re kind of testing one with the other very cautiously to see how it goes. And my tendency is to throw it out there, and you know I’ve politically damaged myself in that. (Maureen)

In addition to affirming statements to my participants throughout the conversations, I also laughed frequently with them, which I noted throughout the transcription. Laughter created a personal connection with them and affirmed that what they were saying had relevance, as demonstrated in this comment I made to Linda,

I hope he’s a lot more enthusiastic! (Laughter). So the good news is that your level of productivity and professionalism is going to be a breath of fresh air for everybody. (Maureen)

During the interview, I worked to create an environment that did not have any significant real or perceived power imbalances so that my traits did not impact the outcome of my investigation.

**Impact of background.**

Hesse-Biber’s (2007) final question relates to my personal economic, political, and social background and how it could impact the research process. Jones et al. (2006) note that in the research process, “Power relations are present as a result of one’s position
as an authority or through race, gender, and social class privilege” (p. 101). The authors differentiate between personal identities, or traits as I have described above, and social identities, including “gender, ethnicity and/or race, social class, sexual orientation, religion, or disabilities” (p. 102). In this section, I will outline my background as it relates to social identities in order to address that aspect of power.

My mother was Spanish and Native American; my father was Portuguese. I consider myself Latina, but I have historically not been active in the Latina/o community, nor am I presently. My immediate family moved away from my extended family over 40 years ago. While my extended family is tied to the Latina/o community and I have visited them frequently over the years, my exposure to Latina/o culture has been limited.

My father served in the Air Force, so I was born in Lubbock, Texas, but I was raised in Dayton, Ohio. I am the youngest in a family of five children. My parents were married for 35 years before my father passed away. I grew up in a large, suburban house with a large yard. My neighborhood was exceptionally safe, with children in many of the surrounding houses free to play with little supervision during the day and even after dark. Most of the men worked and the women stayed home to care for children. My mother never worked as I was growing up, although she also struggled with the identities of mother and wife. She attempted to distract herself from these duties by taking art and sewing classes. Some of my youngest memories were of the two of us leaving the house almost immediately after my siblings were sent off to school and not returning until she had to be home for the children and to fix my father dinner.
My family has always placed a high value on education. Conversations with my father typically involved my educational performance (A’s were expected), and my future educational plans. In elementary school, I recall my father asking me in what area I would be getting my master’s degree; a bachelor’s degree was assumed. Consequently, each of my siblings had at least some college. When I complete my Ph.D. program, three of the five children will hold a terminal degree.

I am a middle-aged woman who has been married for 19 years to a white male. My husband and I have two children and live in an upper income, suburban neighborhood in Colorado. My husband and I have historically both worked or had a decent, steady income. I have never been without health insurance or a car. I have a master’s degree; my husband has a broadcasting certification and has studied at the undergraduate level. Together our earnings are in the top 10% of the U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

My politics are liberal, but I grew up in a politically conservative household. Additionally, I was raised Catholic, but my father did not attend church and my mother did not require me to attend mass weekly. As an adult, I have been active on and off in Christian churches, and I am currently somewhat active in a liberal-leaning Christian church.

My position as a woman leader in higher education does not automatically translate to insider status for the group that I interviewed. First, I interviewed women who currently work in a variety of professional positions. My extensive background in higher education administration is closely linked to the backgrounds of some of the study
participants. Others, however, particularly those with academic backgrounds and who have served in faculty positions, will not relate to my administrative-only background, despite my current status as a Ph.D. student. My research project helped to build connection to those participants to some degree, but not entirely, in part because I do not intend to pursue a faculty or academic position upon graduation, and do not intend to continue my research extensively as would a faculty member.

Secondly, I interviewed women from differing economic and cultural backgrounds. Although my socio-economic ties are to the middle class rather than upper class, my experiences most closely relate to those of a white, heterosexual woman of privilege. This is the area with the most potential for bias in my research, possibly having an impact on my data collection, analysis, and dissemination. Thus, this is the area I have been the most cognizant of in the research process. In the data analysis section, I elaborate upon my efforts to minimize the impact in this area.

Participants and locale.

Sample and research site.

There is a direct connection between my sample and the research site, and so I discuss them together here. Jones et al. (2006) note that sample selection is a further extension of the researcher’s theoretical, methodological, and interpretive stance. The target population (Hittleman & Simon, 2002) for this study was a diverse group of women from a variety of higher education institutions. Those who were invited to attend the HERS Leadership Institute at Bryn Mawr 2009 were administrative leaders ranging from newly appointed to veteran administrators working in all aspects of the higher
education environment. The titles of HERS Bryn Mawr attendees included: (a) directors and associate/assistant directors, (b) department chairs and department heads, (c) vice presidents, and (d) deans. However, no women in top leadership positions, such as president or chancellor, attended the seminar. The women’s ages ranged from late 20s to late 60s, and they were from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

I was fortunate to achieve my goal of interviewing a diverse group of women (see Appendix C). As summarized in Table 1, I had five participants from large, three from mid-sized, and three from small public institutions. I also had one from a large and three from small private institutions. I did not have any representatives from either a mid-sized private institution or a minority serving institution (MSI). According to the HERS president, no participants at the HERS Bryn Mawr 2009 came from MSIs; they deferred their attendance due to institutional budget constraints (see Appendix D).

Additionally, while I did not conduct a demographic survey with participants, I ascertained the following via personal communication with 14 of 15 participants: two are African American, one is Asian American, one is Latina American, and ten are White Americans (see Table 2). Further, one participant identifies as a lesbian. I attempted to recruit additional participants from non-white backgrounds, but one declined and two were from MSIs and, as I noted previously, were unable to attend the HERS 2009 Summer Institute due to budgetary constraints.
Table 1.

Participant List by Institutional Type

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<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Public Institutions</th>
<th>Private Institutions</th>
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Table 2.

*Participants by Ethnic Background*

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<th>Latina American</th>
<th>East Asian American</th>
<th>Native American</th>
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* Unable to confirm ethnic background data.
Finally, six participants served in academic units, one worked in the registrar’s area, three worked in student life areas, two served in external relations, and two were information technology professionals (see Table 3). Of these professionals, Chris, Irene,
and Mary served as Deans, and Linda and Tamera were recently appointed Vice Presidents. The others served either as directors or chairs, assistant or associate deans in academic units, or assistant or associate vice presidents.

As I note previously, my theoretical foundation focuses on a multicultural feminist epistemology, and, as I establish in the literature review, there is no one feminist perspective (Collins, 2000, 2002; Fine, 1995; hooks, 2000; J. M. Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). Indeed, discrimination due to racial, ethnical, cultural, or sexual orientation biases may impact a woman’s professional experience more than gender discrimination. However, in this study I did not focus on my participants’ experiences beyond gender bias. Instead I focused on gaining multicultural perspectives on conflict and conflict resolution through diverse representation in my participant pool—ethnically, culturally, professionally, organizationally, and in terms of sexual orientation. That is, my intent for this study was to understand the perspectives of a diverse group of women to determine whether their perspectives collectively differ from that articulated in existing conflict resolution theories.

As I note previously, I found a diverse group of women in one location during the HERS Bryn Mawr 2009 Summer Institute. Berg (2007) notes that a research site is often chosen based on the access to the appropriate population. The HERS Bryn Mawr Summer Institute is a residential women’s leadership institute; I attended the 2008 Summer Institute. Participants in HERS Bryn Mawr are recommended by the individual’s home institution. Some HERS participants are fully sponsored by their employers, others are partially sponsored, and some have no sponsorship support.
Participants are typically representative of every institutional type, including large and small public, large and small private, Minority Serving Institutions, co-education and single-sex, and those institutions ranked as the top and bottom tiers by national college and university rankings. The women leaders who attend HERS Bryn Mawr hold a variety of academic and non-academic administrative positions, including: (a) deans, department chairs and associate provosts; (b) directors of student services, human resources, financial resources, and development; and (c) chief diversity officers and external relations positions.

Selecting participants from this group so that they represented a variety of personal, professional and institutional backgrounds and types resulted in a convenience sample (Berg, 2007). Berg (2007) notes it is vital to evaluate convenience samples for appropriateness of fit. This sample is highly appropriate for this study because a selection of women from this group maximized my chances of learning how women leaders from various backgrounds and experiences resolve conflict in higher education. Patton (1990) terms populations “from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research” (p. 169) as purposeful sampling. Further, he describes cases selected to maximize the diversity in the sample as maximum case sampling, and he notes that such a sample can alleviate issues associated with homogeneous samples. As Patton (1990) states, “Any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared aspects or impact of a program” (p. 172). The opportunity to interview a group that can be representative of various cultures, institutional types, and
professional experiences outweighs the potential challenges associated with convenience sampling, which in this case includes the potential bias associated with participants being selected by their home institution. That is, it is possible these women have learned how to manage conflict better than their peers, for example, and as such are not representative of how a majority of women navigate conflict.

A final consideration regarding participants is sample size. In qualitative research, the appropriate sample size depends upon a number of factors (Jones et al., 2006; Kvale, 1996; Patton, 1990). Patton (1990) states that, “Sample size depends on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what’s at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resource” (p. 184). My sample was chosen from participants at HERS Bryn Mawr Summer Institute 2009, at which there were approximately 50 participants, and from the Bryn Mawr Summer Institute 2008, at which there were approximately 65 participants. I was in residence for 1 week during the 2009 Summer Institute. My sample size was 15 participants, sufficient to enable me to achieve a cross-section of institutional and position types and a variety of personal and professional backgrounds. Thirteen participants were interviewed in person for 1 to 1.5 hours at the Summer Institute. Two participants attended the 2008 HERS Bryn Mawr, one of whom was interviewed in person in her office and one was interviewed over the phone. I knew the latter two participants from my own attendance at the 2008 HERS Summer Institute and had kept in personal touch with them. Their personal and professional backgrounds were valuable for this investigation, filling critical areas of my participant matrix. Additionally, I also
conducted 45-minute follow-up phone interviews with all 15 participants in October and November, 2009, resulting in a total of 29.08 hours of transcribed interviews from the initial and follow-up interviews.

**Recruitment procedures.**

Jones et al. (2006) discuss the value of having gatekeepers and key informants to access participants for the study and then to help evaluate them. The President of HERS holds both roles for this investigation. I know her as a member of the University of Denver community, from my participation in HERS last summer, and through professional networking events. I have given her professional fundraising advice regarding solicitation of HERS alumni to support the organization. She has been an enthusiastic supporter of this study, and she provided me with a list of HERS Bryn Mawr 2009 attendees. I reviewed the list to assess the positions and institutional types and sizes, using the internet where possible to determine prospective participants’ cultural or ethnic backgrounds. After informing the HERS President of the participants I wished to invite to participate in the study, she sent them an email explaining my role at the HERS Bryn Mawr Summer Institute 2009 so that they knew my study was approved by the organization. She also clearly explained that participating in the study would be voluntary. I followed up her communication with an email invitation to prospective study participants, describing my investigation and attaching the informed consent form with instructions on sending the signed informed consent back to me (see Appendix E). Jones et al. (2006) note that the introduction of the informed consent form has potential for demonstrating the power differential between the researcher and the researched.
Given that the participants work in a higher education environment in which research is
the norm, this issue of power was minimized. All of them signed it without questions.

Many participants did not respond to my email request because, as they later
noted, they were preparing to be gone from their homes and jobs for 3 weeks. They were
also uncertain of the time commitment HERS would have for them during my week on
campus. As a result, when I arrived on campus, I had only three participants scheduled
for interviews. Also, I discussed the issue with the HERS President, who invited me to
attend the Summer Institute morning announcements on Monday, June 29, 2009. She
introduced me to the group after her announcements and then left the room. I described
my study and requested additional participation. I filled the remaining time slots
immediately afterward. Four of the original 12 participants that I had emailed never
responded or declined to participate, with eight scheduling either via email or in person.
Out of concern for getting a good cross section of personal and professional backgrounds,
I invited a few women from the HERS Bryn Mawr 2008 class to participate in my study.
One agreed but noted she was exceptionally busy. I selected two of the participants from
the HERS Bryn Mawr 2008 class to participate because they enhanced the participant
pool based on their professional and/or personal backgrounds. Additionally, two other
HERS Bryn Mawr 2009 attendees offered to participate in my study, but with a total of
15 participants scheduled to be interviewed, I reported to them that I had the pool I
needed.

The follow-up interviews with my 15 participants were arranged via email and
phone calls, and were conducted at a time that was convenient for them. Given the time
commitment of roughly 45 minutes on the phone, it took 1.5 months to schedule and complete all 15 follow-up interviews.

Interview settings.

At the 2009 Summer Institute, I was provided a suite in the dorms that the participants were staying in, allowing me to interview my study participants in private and ensuring confidentiality. Jones et al. (2006) defines confidentiality as “the treatment of information that an individual has knowingly disclosed in a researcher relationship, with an expectation that this information will not be disclosed to unauthorized parties without consent” (p. 155). In order to minimize participant exposure, the interviews were conducted individually. During the interview, I had an iPod digital recording device to audio record the interview and a note pad on which to take handwritten notes during the interview. The battery ran down during one participant’s interview, so while it was recharging, we continued the interview with me taking detailed notes. I did not use any of the participants’ names during the interviews to maximize confidentiality, instead referring to them on the audio recording with their pseudonyms. I also used pseudonyms for participants in all written material (Emerson, 2001), and I eliminated from my write-ups any information that could specifically identify the participants’ home institution. The audiotapes have been secured in a locked location in my home and stored in a secure location on my computer.

During the initial interview, I followed the interview protocol (see Appendix F), which was piloted in a prior research study conducted for a doctoral course (see Appendix G). I began by framing the interview (Kvale, 1996), or providing a brief
overview of the purpose of the study. I then asked participants open-ended questions regarding their experiences with conflict in their professional position (e.g., either current or past), the ways in which they resolve conflicts, and other reflections on the conflict and resolution process that the participants had to offer.

The first round of in-person interviews were scheduled to be 1.5 hours long, but ranged in length from 55 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes. Additional discussions on the construction of the interview protocol, which was piloted in a previous research study, are included in the Research Tools section below.

Grounded theory calls for the initial perspectives on the data to drive the formulation of concepts, which are then checked via member checking (Charmaz, 2006; Jones et al., 2006). Jones et al. (2006) summarizes the member checking technique as one that “provides participants with the opportunity to react to the findings and interpretations that emerged as a result of his or her participation” (p. 99). In the fall of 2009, I contacted participants via email to schedule a follow-up phone interview. I also attached to the email the transcriptions of our first interview to confirm that it accurately reflected the participants’ words.

The follow-up interview was used to test a model I had developed based on my data analysis, which I discuss in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5. During the follow-up phone interview, I was situated in a secure location so that I could place participants on speakerphone in order to record the follow-up interview. I reminded the participants that I would be placing them on speakerphone and would be recording the conversation. The follow-up phone interviews were scheduled for 45 minutes, but ranged in length from 30
minutes to 1 hour and 10 minutes. Most participants were in their offices during the follow-up interview, although two were in their home offices at the time of our conversation.

**Research tools.**

I employed the semi-structured interview format for this study because I wanted the opportunity for topics to be explored in detail (Kvale, 1996). Berg (2007) describes the semi-structured interview as involving “the implementation of a number of predetermined questions and special topics . . . [where] the interviewers are permitted (in fact, expected) to probe far beyond the answers to their prepared standardized questions” (p. 95). A standardized interview process would not allow participants to fully articulate their opinions and experiences, and the un-standardized interview, where the researcher must “develop, adapt, and generate questions and follow-up probes appropriate to each situation” (Berg, 2007, p. 94), may make it difficult to address issues central to this investigation. Thus, I selected the semi-structured interview.

Interview questions, like many other decisions for qualitative studies, need to be strongly connected to the theoretical framework and the methodological foundations of the study. Kolb and Putnam (2005) demonstrate the importance of exploring conflict with a gender lens, and my study’s theoretical framework endorses a multicultural, gender-sensitive power framework. For this investigation, the interview questions needed to be open enough so that I could explore the participants’ perspective of conflict and allow their language to define workplace conflict as they perceived it.
Kvale (1996) discusses the importance of introductory questions that “may yield spontaneous, rich, descriptions where the subjects themselves provide what they experience as the main dimensions of the phenomena investigated” (p. 133). I opened each interview with a broad statement: “Please describe how you view conflict in the workplace” (see Appendix H).

After the initial question, I clarified the type of conflict my investigation is focused on: conflict that does not involve a third-party mediator, thus excluding their involvement as a supervisor assisting in the conflict of the participants’ employees, or instances in which their supervisor resolved a conflict on their behalf. This served to focus the remaining questions. Kvale (1996) discusses this type of clarifying instructions as typically taking place in the introductory phase of the interview. I intentionally waited until after the participants had an opportunity to provide a more general statement about conflict because I did not want to place any parameters on their initial answers.

While my overarching goal for the research was to gain their perspective on conflict, a secondary element of the research concerned conflict in negotiation situations. Thus, after gaining a broad perspective on conflict, I narrowed the discussion and ask questions specific to conflict negotiation: “Please tell me about a conflict situation in which you were involved in your professional capacity.” I followed this question with specifying questions (Kvale, 1996): “What actions did you take in this situation?”, “Can you describe for me the conflict style you exhibited in this situation?”, “Can you describe for me the work culture or atmosphere in which this conflict took place?”, “Would you
describe the situation above as a conflict that was resolved or unresolved?”, and “To what would you attribute this outcome?”

After this initial set of questions, I used a similar format to explore the participants’ perspective on conflict that had a different outcome than the one they first described: “Can you provide an example of conflict in your past that you felt was (not) resolved?” I then followed up with specifying questions (Kvale, 1996) identical to the initial set of follow-up questions noted above.

Probing questions are used in interviews to gain additional clarity regarding the participants’ perceptions (Kvale, 1996). My goal was to hear the participants’ perception of conflict, so my probing questions included open-ended statements: “Are there other examples of conflict that you would like to share with me?” After each question throughout the interview, I also used probing questions that are not listed in the interview protocol but are used in everyday conversation. Probing questions included simple, encouraging verbal cues, such as, “Uh huh?” to encourage continued discussion. They also included overt probes (Kvale, 1996), such as my clarifying question to Miriam, “So she initially was quiet, but then in subsequent conversation is where you sensed the defensiveness?”; my summary comment to Linda, “So that’s interesting. You talked about you factored in the future. You were thinking about, well, if I don’t resolve this now, we’re going to have problems forever!”; and my encouraging question to Tamera, “And you’re so ready and willing and able to address it because you’re not seeing it as a problem, you’re seeing it as an opportunity?”
While this interview was structured to allow the participants to express their reality, it is through probing questions that there was an increased chance for my position of white privilege to surface because probing questions required me to translate their language into my language (Jones et al., 2006). I had to be keenly aware of this potential throughout the interview process, but in particular as I probed more deeply. I consciously selected their language while probing, rather than attempting to translate their language into mine.

In the final phase of the interview, I sought to learn about the participants’ perception of their conflict resolution styles. Again, relying upon theory relevant to my study, I asked two questions to determine if their style in the workplace differed from their personal style: “How would you describe your conflict resolution style in your professional capacity?” and “How would you describe your conflict resolution style outside of your professional capacity?” If the participants indicated that their styles differ, I asked a clarifying question: “To what would you attribute the difference in style?” I listened for the influences of workplace culture on their conflict resolution styles, without leading the respondents (Kvale, 1996).

In keeping with grounded theory, the interview protocol changed from the first iteration based on comments made by early participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In particular, I added three questions, based on issues prior participants had discussed that could have relevance for subsequent participants: “If [personal and professional styles] are different, do you think that your work style would benefit by having some of your personal style infused into it, or vice
versa?”, “Do you think gender has any impact on either these conflicts you’ve described, or conflict in general in your workplace?” and, “One participant noted the physical responses she has to conflict…do you have anything to say about that?”

As I note in the methodological section, I employed dimensional analysis as the analytical method for this study. Dimensional analysis endorses the use of theoretical perspectives in qualitative studies (Goulding, 2002). As such, I placed specifying questions relating to organizational culture and gender, which I determined in the literature review to be highly relevant to this study, in the interview protocol. I sought to compare participants’ responses to existing theories.

Finally, I developed a follow-up interview protocol that focused on a model I developed based on the initial interviews and that I elaborate upon in Chapters 4 and 5. I began the follow-up interview asking if they had any concerns regarding the transcription (see Appendix I). One participant felt that, despite eliminating institutional and personal names, information in the transcription would still enable someone to determine that she participated in the study. She asked that some of that information be blanked out. She was particularly concerned because of the confidential nature of some of our discussions, so I asked her to submit to me the sections of the transcriptions she felt the need to be eliminated. This alteration of the transcription in no way altered the findings of this study, and, as such, the requested statements have been eliminated from the transcriptions published in this dissertation.

After the initial question regarding transcriptions, I read the next section of my interview protocol verbatim. I did this so all participants were familiarized again with the
purpose of the study and understood that the intention of the follow-up interview, which was to test and gain input on this model.

The follow-up interview protocol changed from its initial form after a conversation with one participant who was particularly disturbed by some of the words used in the model, such as “avoid” and “use force,” and by the idea that someone would deem another person “unimportant.” While I explained to this participant that the model was an observation based on statements made to me during the first round of interviews, I suggested to her that I ask subsequent follow-up interview participants to reflect on the idea that the model itself carried with it negative connotations. As such, I added a statement to the interview protocol describing her reaction and asking for their reaction to the model. I also slightly altered the model to reflect what the participants had stated as their preferred mode of conflict resolution. None of the participants had concerns about the model as it was represented, although they were comfortable with the changes I made to the model. In Chapter 5, I discuss in detail the changes made to the model itself based on input from participants in the follow-up interview process, including one change made at the suggestion of the participant who found it to hold negative connotations.

**Credibility and trustworthiness.**

Berg (2007) notes that methodological and theoretical decisions inevitably impose “certain perspectives on reality” (p. 5), which impact the outcome of a study and reduce the investigation’s credibility. Triangulation, or what Berg calls “multiple lines of sight,” serves to improve the chances that what is found in a study is a truer reflection of reality. “By combining several lines of sight, researchers obtain a better, more substantive picture
of reality; a richer, more complete array of symbols and theoretical concepts; and a means of verifying many of these elements” (Berg, 2007, p. 5).

**Triangulation.**

Opinions differ on the role of triangulation. Denzin (2001) endorses the use of multiple triangulation methods: data, investigator, theory, and methodological, noting that sociologists’ work that is triangulated through multiple methods can be described as sophisticated rigor. Locke (2001) endorses the triangulation of multiple data sources, while Jones et al. (2006) simply focus on member checking as a means for data triangulation. Although Bloor (2001) acknowledges that triangulation and member checking serve to assist the researcher in reflexive evaluation, he notes the importance of acknowledging that qualitative data cannot be validated. As he states:

Neither technique can validate findings, but both techniques can be said to be relevant to the issue of validity, insofar as both techniques might yield new data which throw fresh light on the investigation and which provide a spur for deeper and richer analysis. (p. 393)

Creswell (2001), too, focuses on the role of verification of findings, noting that standards for quality differ depending upon the research method.

Accepting Bloor’s (2001) and Creswell’s (2001) arguments that triangulation cannot validate findings, I choose to use triangulation in the broader sense as a means of creating opportunities for richer data analysis and to improve the quality, thus the credibility, of my conclusion. Creswell notes that researcher bias is important to acknowledge when evaluating quality in quantitative research. Therefore, a valuable method of triangulation was to focus on my personal bias, which I detail in the Role of
Researcher section. I also have noted throughout this Method section the ways in which I needed to be cognizant of my white, heterosexual privilege.

Another means for triangulating data is through structure and discipline in the research process (Locke, 2001). As outlined in the Data Analysis section below, dimensional analysis follows a highly structured process (see Figure 4). This process was the second means of triangulating my data.

Bloor (2001) summarizes the use of member checking as relevant to validate findings. He states, “Member validation is a term used to denote an array of techniques which purport to validate findings by demonstrating a correspondence between the researcher’s analysis and collectivity members’ descriptions of their social worlds” (p. 387). Prior to conducting follow-up interviews with my participants, I tested this model by comparing each scenario to the model to determine the model’s fit. During my follow-up interview, in addition to asking them to reflect on the model, I summarized my comparisons of their scenarios to the model and altered the model based on their input.

My final form of triangulation was to remain in conversation with existing research. Throughout the research process, I returned to the literature when I came upon a reoccurring theme in order to compare it to past findings. Additionally, I explored the literature against each dimension during data analysis as I articulate in Chapter 5. Lastly, I reexamined current research as it related to the model.

In summary, my efforts to triangulate were broad. I was fully aware of my positionality throughout the study formulation, data collection, data analysis, and write up process. I continually reflected on my data by frequently returning to the existing
research. I selected a highly structured process and diligently followed the dimensional analysis method. Based on my detailed efforts in data analysis, I developed a model that reflected language my participants used. I then tested the model by: (a) comparing it to each scenario from the initial interviews, (b) gaining input from each participant, (c) altering the model based on this input, and (d) evaluating the model against past findings. These multiple points of triangulation not only fulfill Denzin’s (2001) criteria for sophisticated rigor, but more importantly give me a sense of confidence that the results of my study contributes to a truer understating of a feminist epistemological perspective on resolving conflict among higher education leaders.

**Data analysis.**

Jones et al. (2006) note that power in the research process gets *played out* in the data analysis and documentation stages. I began the research method section of my dissertation with an assessment of the ways my privilege could have impacted this study. In addition, I reiterate the criticality of being mindful of my positional power as researcher and a member of various dominant groups in both the data gathering as well as data analysis processes. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I provide detailed discussions of the data and outcomes. In this section, I describe the data analysis process, with a particular emphasis on how the analysis relates to issues of positionality and the role of the researcher. I also describe the initial stage of analysis, called designation.

**Dimensional analysis.**

Dimensional analysis is a form of grounded theory conceptualized by Leonard Schatzman (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). Schatzman was concerned with the
complexity of grounded theory in its application, which has the potential for preventing researchers from generating theory directly from data (Kools et al., 1996). Therefore he embedded dimensionality, or an individual’s natural ability to assess situations, into the process. As Kools et al. (1996) describe, “Dimensionality refers to an individual’s ability to address the complexity of a phenomenon by noting its attributes, context, processes, and meaning” (p. 315). Such dimensionality relies not just on the researcher’s perspective, but also on the existing scholarship related to the present study.

While dimensional analysis is informed by grounded theory’s core ideas, it differs in procedures, logic and epistemological assumptions (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). Epistemological differences between traditional grounded theory and dimensional analysis can be best understood in the basic questions asked of the researcher in the processes. Traditional grounded theory asks, “What is the basic social process that underlies the phenomenon of interest?” (Kools et al., 1996, p. 316), whereas dimensional analysis asks, “What all is involved here?” (Kools et al., 1996, p. 316). Schatzman (1991) contends that this broader view helps to minimize the chances that salient dimensions are overlooked.

In Figure 4, I provide a graphic description of the dimensional analysis process. In this overview of the data analysis for my investigation, I focus primarily on dimensional analysis as Schatzman (1991) and Kools et al. (1996) present. However, where traditional grounded theory and dimensional analysis overlap, I reference other grounded theory scholars as well.
Designation

Label properties within data into **Dimensions** via coding

Create a written documentation of process through **Memoing**. Continued until integration

**Differentiation**

Explore many dimensions for potential to be the central dimension—the one that provides the greatest potential for explanation

Choose the central dimension, called the **Perspective**

Relegate remaining dimensions into salient, relevant, marginal or irrelevant (as they relate to the Perspective)

Designate all but irrelevant dimensions into four categories:

- **Contexts**: dimensions that are peripheral to the perspective; boundaries for inquiry—situation/environment for dimensions
- **Conditions**: dimensions that facilitate, block, or shape actions/interactions
- **Processes**: intended or unintended actions because of conditions
- **Consequences**: outcomes of specific actions

Test, clarify & solidify conceptual linkages through theoretical sampling

**Integration/Reintegration**

Saturation of data has been reached

Integrate conceptions and components into theory

Communicate via written text

*Figure 4. Graphic Depiction of Dimensional Analysis*

Grounded theory calls for simultaneous data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Emerson, 2001; Goulding, 2002). For this investigation,
data was gathered during an initial in-person or phone interview and one follow-up phone interview with each participant, with the data collected in the form of transcriptions of the interviews. Given the intensity of the initial round of interviews, which took place over one week’s time, there was little time for me to analyze the data in order to significantly adjust my interview questions. Nonetheless, I enhanced the interview protocol with questions that some of my first participants posed or issues they brought up that were not part of my initial set of interview questions. During my follow-up interviews, however, I had time to analyze and collect data simultaneously, since the interviews took place over a month’s time. Once data are collected, dimensional analysis identifies the initial analysis phases as designation, which I describe in the next section.

Designation phase.

The first step in the dimensional analysis form of grounded theory is the designation phase, which allows the researcher to create dimensions from the raw data (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). There are two aspects to coding the data: open coding and family codes.

Open coding.

Corbin and Strauss (2008) define open coding as, “breaking apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data. At the same time, one is qualifying those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions” (p. 195). During the open coding process, I coded my participants’ answers using the options provided in the Atlas.ti program: open coding, code in vivo, and code by list. In Atlas.ti, open coding is the action of marking a section of data with a newly created code. In the open coding
process, I focused on creating codes using the terms that my participants used. For example, Tamera, my first interviewee, discussed her perspective on conflict by differentiating healthy and unhealthy conflict. As she stated:

See I approach conflict in very positive ways, so it’s very hard to think of things that are negative or conflict in an unhealthy way. . . . To me, conflict is healthy. If we all agreed with each other all the time . . . it would really slow things down. Conflict actually speeds things up in terms of getting those resolved and getting new ideas put on the table, and so I think that’s all healthy and good. (Tamera)

Consequently, I coded this section of data “healthy conflict” and “unhealthy conflict” to reflect both of Tamera’s perceptions of conflict.

Another process for creating codes in Atlas.ti is to use the *code in vivo* function. This process allows the researcher to use existing words in the data to create a new code. The researcher simply highlights the words that reflect the concept and presses the code in vivo button in the program. For example, Linda described her attempt to gain assistance from her superiors in a difficult conflict situation:

I never saw any kind of exertion on his part. ‘Why don’t the two of you come in here and let’s talk about this?’ None of that. Just ‘Deal with it’ sort of thing. (Linda)

As a result, I used the in vivo coding function to create a code called, “Just deal with it.”

The value of using the participants’ words to create codes, either via open coding or in vivo coding, enabled me to preserve the concepts as the participants reflected on them. If I were to summarize these ideas with my own words, I would be inappropriately influencing the presentation of the data with my biases. Open coding and in vivo coding enabled me to prevent my positionality from influencing the data (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; Jones et al., 2006). However, just as my position of white, heterosexual privilege has the potential to influence the data, so could the participants’ positionality. Thus, I
was careful to preserve each participant’s perspective by using her words in coding, even if one participant spoke of a concept that was similar to another participant’s. This coding process resulted in the creation of 940 codes.

The final form of the open coding option in Atlas.ti is “code by list.” That is, each new code was added to a code list, enabling the researcher to access existing codes for future coding. I used the code by list function in two situations: (a) If I was coding data as an organizational tool; and (b) If participants used the same words to describe a concept. An example of coding for organization would be when my participants answered my initial interview question regarding their view of conflict. I coded their answers either as “View of conflict” or “Definition of conflict” as a means of recording answers to this question. I also used codes from the existing code list when a participant described a perspective on conflict using identical terms as another participant. For example, Katrice, my second participant, spoke of being “methodical” in her approach to conflict, saying:

    and again, it’s very strategic. Maybe this is even beyond strategic, maybe it’s methodical in some ways. (Katrice)

I coded this section “Methodical.” Similarly, when my third participant, Michelle, described her approach to her second conflict scenario, she used the word “Methodical” as well:

    Determined, methodical, persistent, used all available resources. Hit the problem head on. (Michelle)

Consequently, rather than creating a new code for Michelle, I used the existing code “methodical” that was created when analyzing Katrice’s interview.
As previously noted, the free coding process generated 940 codes, with 604 codes reflecting one quote each, 217 codes reflecting two to four quotes each, and 90 codes reflecting five to 15 quotes each. Of the 26 codes that contained 16 or more quotes each, 13 were my organizational codes. While I attempted not to duplicate codes, I found that I often coded the same concept with two different terms. Also, as I noted above, I sought to preserve the language of each participant so that my positionality would not influence the findings, even if it meant creating a new code for the same concept. The next phase, creating family codes, enables the researcher to combine concepts and to begin to determine perspectives shared by numerous participants (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991).

*Family codes.*

The second step I took in the designation phase was to create codes that captured multiple perspectives. In Chapter 5: Data Analysis, I describe the details of the family codes and their significance to this research, while here I describe the actions I took in their creation.

In Atlas.ti, this process of gathering multiple codes into conceptually broader codes is called creating family codes. In Appendix J, I list the 31 family codes I created from my data. Some family codes, such as “negative behavior,” “negative,” and “positive,” were family codes that I created to visualize what my participants said about conflict in general. Similarly, the family code called “spectrum of conflict” represents the broad view of conflict that my participants held.
Several family codes were created in response to specific questions in my interview protocol. The family codes of “work culture/atmosphere,” and “gender” were created to summarize the data collected in response to questions specific to those topics, and the family code labeled as “style” includes all the style codes my participants identified when I requested that they describe their style in each conflict scenario. In this family code, I also included my participants’ answers to the inquiry regarding their overall professional and personal styles. In addition, as a means of creating order for myself as the researcher, I used the family code function to differentiate the various styles discussed. As such, I created eight “style” codes, all of which begin with the word “style.” These codes are: (a) style: attentive, (b) style: avoidance, (c) style: collaborative, (d) style: communicative, (e) style: confrontational, (f) style: defensive, (g) style: facilitator, and (h) style: persistent. I approached labeling the types of conflict in a similar fashion. I created one code called “Types” that encompassed all conflict types, and as a means for organizing the data, I also created the following six type codes: (a) type: decision making conflicts, (b) type: procedural conflicts, (c) type: program conflicts, (d) type: resources conflicts, (e) type: human resources conflicts, and (f) type: work activity conflicts.

Finally, I generated several family codes based on frequently occurring themes in the data. The themes I observed included: (a) race/ethnic culture, (b) leadership, (c) war language, (d) pause, (e) higher education, (f) allies, (g) problem people, (h) emotions, and (i) relationships. These family codes captured ideas that my participants discussed at various points of my interview, but they were not concepts about which I specifically
inquired. For example, many of my participants discussed the influence of the leadership on a particular conflict situation, and others reflected more generally about the role that a leader has in establishing a tone for resolving conflict within a unit. Thus, I labeled this theme as “leadership.”

During this initial data analysis phase, I also kept a journal to reflect the process I was using and to make notes of any observations, a step often referred to as memoing. The purpose of memoing is to document the process and to capture the analysis as it surfaces for the researcher (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). To a limited extent, I employed the memoing function in the Atlas.ti program, but most of my notations regarding observations and processing were documented via a hand-written journal.

**Differentiation phase.**

As I continued labeling my data, I moved into a phase of dimensional analysis called differentiation where I audited each dimension to determine the central dimension for my data (Kools et al., 1996). The central dimension, also known as the preference, is the dimension that has the greatest potential for explaining the observed phenomenon (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). In Chapter 5, I provide details of the data that I explored in the differentiation phase of my research. Here, I describe the actions I took in this phase of the research process.

Kools et al. (1996) note that during the differentiation phase, there is potential for the researcher to prematurely select a dimension that does not offer a full explanation of the data. In my case, I used the family code function in Atlas.ti to build codes that
conceptually represented several other codes, resulting in 31 family codes (see Appendix J). I also used the network view function in Atlas.ti to explore possible models that could explain what I was observing in the data. Finally, I used my memos and journal entries to explore elements I was observing in the data. Early concepts that surfaced included:

1. end goal, the idea that many participants were focused on the end goal when resolving conflict;
2. strategizing, the notion that my participants actively strategized for solutions to conflict situations;
3. trust and issues related to the ability to trust the other party in the conflict; and
4. relationship with the other party as central to decisions regarding approaches used in resolving conflict.

Existing research is important in the dimensional analysis form of grounded theory (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991); thus during the differentiation phase, I also returned to the literature in the conflict resolution discipline. I used this research to explore some of the concepts that were surfacing in my family coding process in order to both prevent myself from prematurely focusing on a central dimension and understand the unique or common elements of conflict the participants discussed. For example, I was interested to find that in the organizational conflict empirical scholarship, relationships are discussed from the perspective of conflict types; relationship conflicts are separate from task/Issues conflicts or resources conflicts. Yang and Mossholder (2004) demonstrate how task conflicts move into relationship conflicts when ego is involved. However, my participants spoke about relationships in conflict not as a
different type of conflict, but instead as central to determining their approach to resolving the conflict. While I could not find much in the organizational conflict empirical research on the role of relationships in the decision-making process for choosing a conflict resolution approach (Greenhalgh, 1987; Kolb & Putnam, 2005, 2006), my observations are supported in the practitioner literature (Donohue & Kolt, 1992; Folger et al., 2001; Greenhalgh, 1987; Heitler, 1990; Moore, 2003). Further, relationships are central in feminist and psychology scholarship (Belenky et al., 1997; Helgesen, 1995; Miller, 1986/1976).

Throughout data analysis, as Jones et al. (2006) note, the position of privilege must be in the forefront of the researcher’s mind. It is vital that the researcher’s positions do not overshadow the participants’ perspectives. It is particularly critical in the designation stage, for a researcher’s positionality has the potential to influence his/her selection of the central dimension. I addressed positionality in this phase of dimensional analysis in two primary ways. First, I focused on word preservation. In the interviews, I reflected back to my participants the words they used as I sought clarity. I continued this focus on preserving their words in my code creation. I used words that my participants used to generate codes and family codes, or dimensions, with the goal of preserving the participants’ original intent.

Secondly, with this focus on word preservation, in the data analysis process I continuously revisited the codes I captured in the dimensions as well as the original transcriptions. A regular review of the raw data also prevented me from replacing concepts captured in the dimensions with ideas I associated with those words.
Through word preservation and revisiting the original codes and raw data, I set aside my personal perspectives on conflict in order to fully understand my participants’ views of conflict. Thus, when selecting the central dimension, I was able to select a central dimension not based on my perceptions, but based on a deep understanding my participants’ views represented in each dimension. That is, I did not interpret the meanings of the dimensions based on my perspectives of the concepts, but based on my participants’ perspectives of the concepts.

Once I determined the central dimension, I then assessed each remaining dimension for its salience, relevance, marginality or irrelevance to the central dimension (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). I labeled dimensions irrelevant if they were too broad or too narrow to contribute to the perspective or to an overarching understanding of how women perceive conflict (see Appendix K). I labeled codes marginal if they referenced actions of others outside the dispute as well as if they described the environment, atmosphere, or culture in which the conflict took place. I labeled codes relevant if they described the actions of others in the conflict scenario or if they articulated the perspective of the participants regarding conflict in general. Finally, I labeled codes salient if they described the relationship of “Other” to the participant in the conflict scenario or if they described the actions of the participants.

In Appendix L, I list the irrelevant codes and provide a brief description of each. However, I do not elaborate on irrelevant codes in the data analysis chapter because they represent concepts that lack depth or were not directly applicable to my findings. Specifically, I do not provide detailed analysis of these irrelevant codes: (a) types, (b)
positive, (c) negative, (d) negative behavior, (e) spectrum of conflict, (f) race/ethnic culture, (g) leadership, and (h) war language. However, the latter three codes—“race/ethnic culture,” “leadership,” and “war language”—introduce interesting concepts. Therefore, while I do not address them in my data analysis, I revisit them in my concluding chapter to suggest future research that explores these concepts more fully.

The next step in the differentiation phase is to designate all but the irrelevant dimensions into four categories (see Appendix M): (a) contexts, (b) conditions, (c) processes, and (d) consequences (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). In Chapter 5, I provide supporting justification for decisions I made in this phase, while here I simply summarize the actions that I took.

Context dimensions are those that are peripheral to the perspective but that establish the boundaries for the inquiry. This includes both situational and environmental boundaries (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). The family codes I labeled as context dimensions include: (a) culture/atmosphere, (b) higher education, (c) gender, and (d) the specific conflict types (e.g., decision-making, procedural, program, resources, human resources, and work activity).

Dimensions designated as conditions are those that facilitate, prevent, or shape the actions or interactions observed (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). In this study, I determined that the family codes of allies and problem people were conditions as they relate to the preference, or the relationships dimension. Dimensions designated as processes are actions or interactions (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). Those that I designated as processes were emotions and pause, which were important actions in
conflict resolution process that my participants described, as I demonstrate in Chapter 6. Finally, consequences are dimensions that describe the outcomes of the interactions (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). Codes I designated as consequences related to styles: (a) attentive, (b) avoidance, (c) collaborative, (d) communicative, (e) confrontational, and (f) defensive.

Based on these relevant dimensions, their designation to the preference, and my observations, I developed the Feminist Conflict Process Model. This flow chart reflects the process 11 of my 15 study participants used in resolving conflict. I detail the development of this model in Chapter 5.

The final step in the differentiation phase is to use theoretical sampling to test, clarify, and solidify the conceptual linkages established to this point in the dimensional analysis process (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). In Chapter 6, I describe how I tested the model in three ways: (a) by comparing each conflict scenario that my participants described against the model, (b) by conducting follow-up interviews to gain input on the model from my participants, (c) and by comparing the model to existing conflict resolution and feminist literature.

First, I tested this model against each conflict scenario described in the study to ensure that my ideas were not driving the model, but instead that the participants’ perspective on conflict generated the model (see Appendix N). Secondly, the follow-up interviews, also called member-checking (Berg, 2007), served to confirm my observations and ensure that my position of privilege did not influence my data analysis (Jones et al., 2006). In the member-checking step, I explored whether the model fit their
experiences with conflict in the workplace and I altered it based on input from participants. I also determined which participants did not resonate with this model and documented their thoughts regarding the model that more aptly reflected their experiences.

Finally, the comparison of the model to existing literature served to determine if my observations were reflected in prior studies. I did not find conflict resolution empirical research that directly reflects my findings, although conflict resolution practitioner literature observes the significance of connections to the other party and feminist scholarship supports the notion that relationships are central to women in all aspects of their lives. The final phase of dimensional analysis is the Integration/Reintegration phase, which I briefly describe in the final section of this chapter.

**Integration/reintegration phase.**

Eventually, after member checking and continued labeling, my data became saturated (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). At that point, I moved on to what Schatzman (1991) calls integration/reintegration, meaning that the concepts become integrated into a theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). Also, in this final phase of dimensional analysis, the researcher begins the process of communicating this new theory in written form, which for this study is represented in my dissertation write-up. During the integration/reintegration phase, I recognize that the model I have used to depict my observations is a static model, whereas my observations are of a dynamic process. Thus, as I detail in the conclusion of Chapter 6, this model
changed from a hierarchical model to a flow chart that more accurately reflects my observations.

Conclusion

In this Research Design chapter, I provide the theoretical justification for using a feminist research method called dimensional analysis, which is a form of grounded theory. At the center of this decision was my theoretical framework, which emphasized the importance of addressing issues relating to power. Dimensional analysis provides a structured means for minimizing power differentials between me, as the researcher, and my study participants.

The gaps in the gender negotiation and higher education conflict literature, as I identified in my review of the literature, also contributed to my decision to use dimensional analysis. Specifically, existing research has not been focused on seeking a feminist epistemological perspective on conflict resolution, nor has the scholarship focused on non-academic administrators’ experiences with resolving conflict in the academy. In my study, I sought to address these gaps by interviewing 15 women from a variety of professional and personal backgrounds who, at the time of my interviews, served in leadership positions in institutions of higher education of varying sizes and purposes.

In this chapter, I also articulate the details of the study, including participant selection and locale, which are closely related; the research tools that I used; and my process for analyzing the data through dimensional analysis. Credibility and trustworthiness are also important to the research design, so here I describe my efforts to
improve the quality of my conclusions through triangulation, which included: (a) a continual focus throughout the study on my biases, (b) a structured process for analyzing the data, (c) a member-checking phase which prevented my positionality from overtly influencing my conclusions, and (d) a focus on continually considering existing research throughout my analysis.

I conclude the chapter by providing an overview of my actions in process of data collection, analysis, and theory development. This broad summary serves as a foundation and provides a precursor to the following chapters in which I provide supporting documentation for my conclusions and detail my process of theory development.
Chapter Four: Findings

At the conclusion of Chapter 3, I review the grounded theory process of dimensional analysis, providing details of my initial step in the designation phase: data coding (see Figure 4 in Chapter 3). Before I proceed with my analysis in Chapters 5 and 6, I first provide a broad overview of my findings in this chapter.

As I note previously, I obtained my data from two sources: 15 initial interviews and 15 follow-up interviews. As a result of the first round of interviews, I developed a model that summarizes my observation for how a majority—11 of 15—of my participants resolve conflict in the workplace. The follow-up interviews served as means of triangulating my research through member-checking, and this member-checking process was conducted in the final step of the differentiation phase of dimensional analysis. Consequently, here I summarize the initial interview data only, whereas I discuss the follow-up interview data in the pertinent phase of the data analysis process.

The initial round of interviews resulted in my participants reflecting a spectrum of conflict perceptions, ideas, and experiences. For example, some participants preferred to avoid conflict while others viewed it as their role in life: to engage in tough discussions where others cannot. My discussions also revealed the uniqueness of resolving conflict in higher education in which leaders can serve as both colleagues and supervisors with their professional peers. At the same time, my conversations reflected experiences observed in other conflict research. That is, while my participants described experiences
that were unique, they also reflected common occurrences in conflict between professionals as found in the literature.

The most surprising observation I made, even at a preliminary stage prior to a detailed analysis, was that my participants demonstrated flexibility in their styles depending upon the situation. I had anticipated that organizational culture would influence my participants’ conflict handling approaches, but that was not the case for anyone I interviewed. Additionally, they articulated a preferred state of resolving conflict—a collaborative approach that results in mutual resolution. However, their preferred method did not dictate their actions either. The situation did.

I have decided to use the interview protocol from my first round of interviews to structure this discussion (see Appendix H). I do this for several reasons. First, the questions were formatted from general to specific, which allows me to present the data similarly here. For example, I asked my participants to discuss their view of conflict before I informed them that my focus was on peer-to-peer conflicts in the workplace. Also, in order to minimize bias in the data, I was careful to ask gender-specific questions only after the participants reflected on conflict and conflict situations they had experienced more generally.

Secondly, the bulk of the questions centered around two to three scenarios that I asked the participants to discuss. Each scenario had a series of questions designed to help me explore various aspects of it. However, this format resulted in a plethora of data, so framing this discussion around the interview protocol allows me to make observations regarding those scenarios in aggregate. Finally, framing this discussion around the
interview protocol allows me to demonstrate the ways in which grounded theory impacted my data gathering process. For example, after talking to several participants, I added questions for subsequent participants. By using my interview protocol to structure this discussion, I was able to demonstrate where these additions took place.

It is important to note that I do not simply present the data from the transcripts. In this chapter, I make observations about the data, using quotations from the participants to support those observations. While a detailed analysis of the data is presented in the next chapter, in which I follow a fairly structured dimensional analysis process, in this chapter I seek to summarize the data in order to enhance the efficacy of the analysis process.

**View of Conflict**

The opening statement of my interview was: *Please describe how you view conflict in the workplace.* My goal was to gain insight from my participants regarding their view of conflict before narrowing the discussion to peer-to-peer conflict. Some participants’ responses were intellectual, providing a more formal definition of conflict. Others were analytical, offering general comments from a third-person perspective. Still others were personally reflective: what conflict means to me, does to me, feels to me. Those who struggled with the answer to my initial question were prompted with a follow-up question: *How would you define conflict?* I begin the overview of my participants’ views of conflict with the definitions provided.

**Definitions of conflict.**

Some participants offered a more formal description of conflict found in the workplace. Linda, for example, stated that conflict is:
When two or more people don’t agree on something. It could be money, it could be work load, it could be resources. There is a disagreement and there’s no consensus on what needs to occur. (Linda)

When prompted to define conflict, Tamera, Alma and Brenda also noted disagreement between two or more people. Tamera focused on processes, policies or programs, while Alma commented that political agendas create the most conflict in her work environment. Finally, Cheryl provided a list of potential types of conflicts in her definition:

There’s sometimes interpersonal conflict, there can be philosophical conflict, there can be ideological conflict, there can be curricular conflict... there’s lots of different kinds of conflict. (Cheryl)

Monica noted opposing viewpoints in situations or initiatives, but she added that physical conflict is rare in the workplace. As she stated,

I never really see physical conflict. So it’s definitely more verbal, body language, a sense you pick up. You know that someone is in conflict with you. (Monica)

Michelle, Brenda and Karla, later in their interviews, commented on the significance of observing body language in conflict situations. For example, Karla stated:

I can see the expression in their faces change, and so I stop. And I’ll say, ‘So what’s up, what’s going on here?’... acknowledging that there’s this issue and talk[ing] about it. It’s not a matter of win or lose. It’s a matter of understanding. (Karla)

In fact, body language was spoken of as so critical that one of my participants spoke of being at a significant disadvantage because she could not see others in one of her conflict situations. As Michelle articulated her experience:

I couldn’t see the body language or see what was going on, but I knew there was dead silence. (Michelle)

Michelle was unable to interpret the meaning of the “dead silence,” which made her uncomfortable because she was not physically present in the meeting.
These examples demonstrate participants who responded to my initial inquiry with what I view as formal definitions of conflict. For others, simply the perception of a difference of opinion, either through body language or by expressing it, was insufficient for them to describe the encounter as “conflict.” Indeed, these participants felt conflict was more than simply a disagreement. I describe their perceptions in the next section.

**Conflict: more than just a disagreement.**

Several participants spoke of conflict being more than a difference of opinion. Irene felt that conflict is beyond expressing different viewpoints, noting that it becomes conflict when personal interests get involved. At that point, more effort is required to resolve the conflict. Mary, too, believed that conflict exists only when differences escalate. As she stated:

> I view conflict as differences of opinion that maybe escalated beyond just a difference of opinion, where that difference might be expressed through things such as raising your voice. (Mary)

Brenda summarized this perspective that conflict is more than just disagreement by stating:

> Disagreement in and of itself does not necessarily mean there’s a conflict. A conflict arises when the disagreement occurs in a way that is damaging or nonproductive to people that are participating in the exchange. (Brenda)

While some participants defined conflict in a more formal fashion, and others perceived conflict as an interaction that had reached a level of being a problem, still others discussed conflict from a personal point of view. In the next section, I articulate these personal views of conflict.
**Personal views of conflict.**

Those who gave a personal perspective provided a broad spectrum of views.

Tamera was on one end of the spectrum, seeing conflict as simply part of doing business.

She said:

To me, conflict is healthy and if we all agreed with each other all the time we’d be a really boring world and we wouldn’t have any new or innovative things done in the workplace . . . Conflict actually speeds things up in terms of getting those resolved and getting new ideas put on the table, and so I think that’s all healthy and good. (Tamera)

On the opposite end of the spectrum from Tamera were Alma and Chris, both having stated that they avoid conflict “at all costs.” Such avoidance of conflict was not necessarily perceived as the ideal mode. Chris acknowledged:

sometimes I wait too long to confront a situation. Conflict just makes me uncomfortable. (Chris)

Somewhere between these two extreme perspectives was Katrice, who would avoid conflict if she responded instinctively. As she stated:

The first word that comes to mind is stressful. Just undeniably stressful. It leaves you with that pit in the stomach feeling of ‘Oh no, here we go again!’ (Katrice)

However, once Katrice has time to think clearly about the conflict, she “regroups” and attempts to find a way to “turn it around.”

Finally, of those who offered a personal perspective when asked my opening question, Cheryl said:

I’m a firm believer in collegiality. I believe in conflict mitigation. . . . I believe that conflict doesn’t have a place in academia and conflict doesn’t have a place in our faculty. I’m taking over as a new chair in August and there will be no raising of voices under my watch, there will be no yelling. I just won’t tolerate it, so generally speaking that’s my philosophy. (Cheryl)
Later, Cheryl described a particular colleague with whom she has had conflict and who exhibits bullying tendencies. She indicated that this person was on her mind when she made the above statement.

In addition to participants defining conflict and speaking of it in personal terms, some provided a more comprehensive view of conflict. I conclude this section on views of conflict with the general descriptions provided in my interviews.

**General views of conflict.**

Norma, Michelle, and Miriam described the spectrum of conflict in more general terms. Michelle, for example, stated that conflict:

> can be silent, it can be noisy, it can be through communication that is not necessarily ideal, but it takes many forms and many shapes. (Michelle)

Norma noted that conflict can be either worked through or it can get “hateful,” and Miriam described the extremes of conflict in this way:

> Conflict can be collegial, if you’re in an environment where you can talk about what the conflict is but acknowledge that maybe there’s no resolution. And I think it can play out in unhealthy ways, too, in maybe dialogues that escalate or raised voices or become unprofessional in some ways. (Miriam)

Finally, Katie offered a description of conflict specific to higher education. She stated:

> I think in the academic workplace, it’s just sort of an inherent part of what the academy is. In part due to tenure and the fact that there’s a bit more freedom from faculty to behave the way they wouldn’t in an industrial or private setting. (Katie)

Those who spoke of conflict in more general terms covered the spectrum. However, they did not give a sense of their personal comfort or discomfort with conflict. It seemed they simply accepted conflict as experiences one inevitably faces in the workplace.
Some of my participants, then, articulated a definition of conflict as between two or more participants relating to a spectrum of issues and, in some cases, being driven by political agendas. Others felt that conflict was more than simply differences of perspective; it is when these differences escalate that it becomes conflict. There were some that felt the extreme escalation of conflict, in the form of yelling and anger expression, were inappropriate in the workplace. Still others articulated conflict as a range of issues—philosophical, ideological, personal, professional—causing a spectrum of actions and reactions. Those who spoke of conflict from a personal perspective also articulated a span of responses: from normal and healthy—and to be expected in higher education—to something that, if possible, is avoided. Finally, a few noted that resolution begins with an understanding of the other participant’s concerns, including reading non-verbal cues.

Upon gaining the participants’ perspective on conflict in general, I explained to them that my study is focused on conflict between peers. In particular, as I describe in my review of relevant literature, I am interested in examining conflict in which there is no positional power differential between the participants. This set the stage to discuss specific conflict scenarios that my participants had experienced in the workplace.

**Conflict Scenarios**

After summarizing the focus for my study, my next prompter was: *Given this background, please tell me about a conflict situation in which you were involved in your professional capacity. Please think of one that did not involve you or your superior as a mediator.* Each participant described for me a conflict scenario, which I followed up
with questions designed to gain additional details regarding the conflict, including
questions related to actions they took, the conflict resolution style they exhibited, and the
work culture or atmosphere in which the conflicts took place. I concluded each scenario
discussion by asking the participants if they would describe the situation as a conflict that
was resolved or unresolved, asking them to what they would attribute the resolved or
unresolved outcome (see Appendix H).

In cases where the participant provided the relevant information in her original
summary of the conflict, I did not necessarily ask the specific follow-up question. For
example, I did not ask Katie to what she attributed the resolved outcome in her second
scenario in which her department was being investigated for gender and racial
discrimination because in her original account, Katie described how hard she worked to
prevent the situation from escalating. As she stated:

    Our chief diversity officer said, ‘Departments don’t survive these types of
    investigations.’ . . . Guess what, we did! My thing was, ‘Yeah we will.
    Everyone’s going to stay calm. We’re not going to do that.’ (Katie)

Consequently, I used this information to inform the attribution of resolution in that
conflict scenario, rather than asking the question separately.

Once each participant described to me a conflict scenario of their choosing, I
requested that they describe for me another conflict situation that was opposite in its
resolution. For example, Brenda’s first conflict scenario was resolved, so I asked her to
describe a conflict situation that was unresolved. This approach resulted in a full
spectrum of conflict—from those that my participants were eager to describe because
they were resolved well, to those that were challenging for them to resolve or were left
unresolved. If there was time to discuss a third scenario, I invited the participants to share with me a conflict situation of their choice, either resolved or unresolved.

I summarize all the scenarios described to me in the first round of interviews in a chart that I used as reference in the data analysis (see Appendix O). This summary provided a description of each conflict scenario, including: (a) the situation, (b) actions taken, (c) outcome, (d) conflict resolution style exhibited by the participant, (e) work atmosphere/culture in which the conflict took place, (f) whether the conflict was resolved or unresolved, and (g) to what the participant attributed the outcome. Where possible, I used direct quotes for this summary. These conflict scenarios provide the framework for this model, which I detail in Chapter 6. Below I provide basic observations of the scenarios in aggregate.

I begin this summary with a description of the challenges some participants had with focusing on peer-to-peer conflict. This challenge existed in part because of the nature of the academy, where some members of the faculty, for example, serve both as peers and as supervisors with their professional colleagues. It also existed in situations where an administrator did not have clear positional authority, thus the particular conflict situation was handled as if the participants were working with peers. Finally, the challenge of thinking about peer-to-peer conflict stemmed from the perception of conflict itself.
The gray areas of peer-to-peer conflict.

Tamera, Karla, Mary, and Katrice said they typically do not engage in conflict with peers in the workplace, but their perception of conflict entailed the most extreme form. As Katrice stated:

I haven’t had a lot of conflict. You know that heat-to-the-face, blood-rushing kind of conflict. I haven’t had one of those recently. I’ve had one that is sort of an ongoing conflict. It’s not to that level, it’s more of the constant thorn in the side type of conflict. (Katrice)

Consequently, before I could ask these participants to describe multiple conflict scenarios, I had to have a more general discussion with them regarding my focus for conflict. I explained that I wanted to examine a continuum of conflict experiences—from basic, day-to-day challenges to extreme, problematic situations.

In addition to the perception of conflict making it difficult for my participants to describe peer-to-peer conflict, management situations appeared to be the primary source of conflict for many of these women leaders. As such, several study participants first thought of and began to describe to me conflicts they experienced with staff members who reported to them. I had to stop them and reiterate my desire to discuss peer-to-peer conflicts and redirect their thoughts. Nonetheless, some of the conflict scenarios fit into the gray area where the participant was not clearly in a management role. For example, Mary described a conflict “with an employee” when she was director of a program, but when I asked for supervisory clarification, she was vague in her answer. As she continued her description, it was clear that, at least in her second conflict scenario, there was no overt supervisory power involved, so I did not redirect her to provide another example. Also, Tamera described in her second conflict scenario a situation in which she
and other cabinet members differed in opinion with the President and, through their persistence, prevented him from making a decision they felt would be damaging to him and the institution. While this President often would wield his power, in this situation he treated the members of his cabinet as peers, so I included this conflict in my study.

Many participants described situations in which they played dual roles—colleague and supervisory—with other faculty and/or staff members. Katie, for example, served as department chair in her second conflict scenario, but she considered the conflict to be with other faculty members, not subordinates. As she said:

The chair is still in the faculty rank even though it’s supervisory, and [this example] really goes into how we resolve things as people. (Katie)

Unlike Katie, who had the flexibility in her role to decide to treat conflict situations as if they were peer-to-peer, Miriam’s supervisor left her in a nebulous role when he announced her interim appointment as Assistant Dean. That is, he did not explicitly state that Miriam had supervisory responsibilities over her colleagues. As such, in her first and second scenarios, Miriam did not perceive herself to have the authority to simply set direction and expect her colleagues to follow. Instead, she felt she needed to navigate the challenges as if she was resolving conflict with her peers. Finally, Irene worked at a small institution, requiring her and others to play multiple roles. As Academic Dean, she also served as a member of the faculty. As she summarized:

I have to work with the faculty most of the time and it’s more of a peer structure. (Irene)

In certain situations, where the lines between supervisor and subordinate were blurred and my participants perceived the conflict as peer-to-peer conflict, I included their examples in my research. I was, however, selective in that none of these scenarios
were ones in which the participants in the study used their positional power to resolve the conflict.

**Conflict Styles**

For each scenario that my participants outlined, I asked: *Can you describe for me the conflict style you exhibited in this situation?* The styles differed according to the situations. For example, Alma described her style in her first conflict scenario as follows:

I was really more laid back about it. Letting people who were opposed to my recommendation do all the talking. (Alma)

However, Alma described her style in her second scenario as “defensive” and in her third scenario as “professional.” Further, later in the interview, she described her overall style as follows:

I always try to communicate as much as possible. Trying to express myself or listening to the others to get facts on the situation . . . I bend, trying to see what’s for the greater good for the institution. Talking to them and building relationships with them to get over the conflict. (Alma)

So, in three scenarios and one overarching question, there were four style descriptions for Alma: (a) laid back, (b) defensive, (c) professional, and (d) communicative.

While each participant used a variety of terms to describe styles used, I observed patterns when I reviewed their styles in aggregate. Through data analysis, I combined them into the following categories: (a) attentive, (b) avoidance, (c) collaborative, (d) communicative, (e) confrontational, (f) defensive, (g) persistent, and (h) facilitator. In order to avoid duplication of data in two sections of this dissertation and to bring clarity to my analysis of conflict styles, I include supporting data associated with my categories of styles in the data analysis section of Chapter 5.
Work culture/atmosphere

After participants discussed their conflict resolution style for each scenario, I asked them: *Can you describe for me the work culture or atmosphere in which this conflict took place?* In Appendix P, I provide a sample of my work culture/atmosphere summary that the participants described for each conflict scenario.

Similar to conflict styles, the environment in which the conflict took place varied. In Brenda’s first scenario, she describes the institutional culture as follows:

Student-centered. Very student centered and teaching centered. (Brenda)

Yet, in that same scenario, here’s how Brenda described the atmosphere in which the conflict took place:

It’s a culture where there are lots of passionate people, and people that are very territorial, and there’s a lot of fear. It’s a fear-based culture. (Brenda)

In Brenda’s third scenario, which took place in a different department but at the same institution, she described the atmosphere as follows:

Verbal violence and professional violence to subjugate the faculty that work under them. It is not a collegial environment. (Brenda)

Like Brenda, some participants chose to describe the atmosphere in which the conflict took place, which I code as “immediate,” and others chose to describe the institutional or departmental culture, which I code as “institution” or “department.” As with conflict styles, I provide the detail associated with work culture/atmosphere in Chapter 5 in order to avoid duplication of data. There I also analyze any impact these various atmospheres or cultures had on the conflict types, resolution styles, and outcomes.
Outcomes and Attribution of Outcome

Initially, I asked my participants to describe a conflict scenario, but I did not specify what the outcome should be. I then asked two follow-up questions: Would you describe the situation above as a conflict that was resolved or unresolved? And To what would you attribute this outcome? Subsequently, I requested that they share with me a scenario that was opposite in its resolution. In cases where we had time or the participant was interested, we discussed a third scenario. Brenda, Karla, Katrice, Mary, and Monica shared only two scenarios, while the remaining 10 participants discussed a third conflict with me. Of the 41 scenarios described, 24 were considered resolved. In this section, I discuss those outcomes and the attributions of those outcomes.

Resolved outcomes.

Participants attributed the resolved outcomes to: (a) education, (b) patience, (c) the ability to compromise, (d) discussions surrounding the conflict, (e) the ability to remain calm, (f) the involvement of allies, (g) departure from the institution, (h) persistence, (i) commitment to working together, (j) threatening the other participant, and, simply, (k) time. While my stipulation in the study overview was that no third party mediators were involved, in some cases, final resolution did not come until a superior was involved. This was the case in Norma’s second scenario in which the provost decided to change the nature of the project to avoid the conflict, and in Mary’s first case in which her provost and chancellor ultimately made a decision. In other cases, resolution involved the aid of allies and experts, such as in Alma’s first scenario in which an expert was engaged to build credibility for her proposal for structuring a new
computer system, and Michelle’s second scenario in which she engaged legal services and vendor experts to help her make her case.

**Unresolved outcomes.**

The attributions of unresolved outcomes differ from resolved outcomes dramatically. Participants attributed lack of resolution to: (a) others not being held accountable, (b) the lack of role clarity, and (c) differing work styles. In some cases, however, the unresolved outcome was simply because there was still work to be done. Michelle said, in reference to her third scenario:

> It needs time for people to investigate and do research. That’s why it’s not resolved yet. (Michelle)

Katrice noted that, for her first scenario, resolution will come when the project is complete. She commented that at that point, she will no longer have reason to be in conflict with the other party. Additionally, in discussing her first scenario, Katie commented that the summer break prevented resolution. She anticipated being fully embroiled with the issue in the fall when faculty return.

A significant factor contributing to the unresolved state of conflicts involved leadership and political issues. Participants cited the lack of leadership, not following acceptable practices, and underlying issues as preventing resolution. For example, Alma stated that in both her second and third scenarios, the political battles between two Vice Presidents caused a significant number of conflicts between those who reported to them. Brenda simply said that the source of her conflict in her second scenario and the reason it continued more than a year later was because:
I did not do what I was told . . . I was disloyal to their culture and their way of doing things, because I chose to engage with a group of people outside of [my home department]. (Brenda)

While some discussed the unresolved state in neutral tones, others expressed frustration.

In Karla’s first scenario, the lack of resolution was due to the poor job performance of the other party. After several attempts to resolve multiple situations, Karla began to avoid working with her colleague. As she stated:

   Usually you expect somebody in a higher-level position in an organization, they’re not only held accountable, but they hold themselves accountable. (Karla)

Karla was exacerbated that the other party caused significant problems, lied about her work, and often did not follow through with commitments, yet she remained in a top leadership position.

   After exploring various aspects of the specific scenarios in my first interview, I turned the conversation to broader topics, including the participants’ typical conflict resolution style, both personally and professionally, and issues related to gender and conflict. Next, I elaborate on my participants’ responses to these broader topics.

**Overall Conflict Resolution Styles**

   After discussing two to three conflict scenarios with my study participants, I inquired about their professional and personal styles overall. While I asked them about a specific style used within each conflict scenario, this section of our conversation was designed to have participants reflect on themselves as individuals who navigate conflict daily. I thought that their perception of themselves regarding how they typically handle conflict might differ from the examples they provided in our discussions. I concluded this portion of the discussion by asking them to compare their professional and personal
styles. If the styles were different, I asked them to reflect on the reasons for the differences and describe any benefits that could be achieved from infusing one style into the other environment.

As I note above, in the data analysis section I determined categories of styles based on the individual scenario style descriptions. In those categories, I also incorporate their comments from these discussions of overall conflict resolution style discussions. I detail my participants’ responses to the overall style question separately, however, because I also asked them to compare their overall professional style to their personal style.

**Professional styles.**

I began the broader discussion of conflict by asking the following question: *Overall, how would you describe your conflict resolution style in your professional capacity?* I have summarized their responses Appendix Q, in which I have included both quotes and key words they used in their quotes.

Alma, Linda, Mary, and Monica mentioned communication, including listening, as a key element in their conflict resolution styles. Karla spoke of the importance of paying attention to the other party’s reactions so that she can respond accordingly. As she stated:

I’m all there. I’m tending to what’s going on at the moment, really pay[ing] attention to how my contributions are being received by the other party. (Karla) Similarly, Katie noted that she works to engage the other and to remain calm in the encounter.
Consensus and compromise was another dominant theme with many of my study participants. Cheryl and Chris specifically mentioned the need to be willing to give in order to get something they want, while Katrice noted her willingness to give up her argument if the other party can persuade her of the merits of their viewpoint. Irene simply stated that she works to imagine and understand the reasons behind the other’s perspective in order to get to an agreement.

A few participants expressed their personal positions regarding conflict as they described their overall style. Cheryl articulated that she does not back down and is good at resolving conflict, so long as she’s not embroiled in a conflict with someone who prefers to be in conflict. Michelle, too, said she is direct and willing to make hard decisions, ultimately being comfortable if she and the other party “agree to disagree.” Conversely, Chris and Miriam noted they prefer to avoid conflict, but they acknowledge that as leaders they must address conflicts in order to be productive. As such, Miriam said she has learned to be direct, and Chris commented that she prides herself on seeking creative solutions and being persistent.

A final theme that surfaced during my interviews related to the “greater good” or the “end goal” concept. Alma felt flexibility was required if one were to remain focused on what’s good for the institution, and Tamera noted that her responsibility as a leader is to be focused on the greater good. Katrice, in her overall description, and Katie, consistently through her scenario discussions, both stated that their focus at all times is on determining where they wanted to go and how they are going to get there, based on what is best for the organization.
Alma, Irene, Linda, and Miriam talked about having changed as they progressed through their careers. Irene previously thought that conflict, if not aggravated, would simply go away, but she said she now understands that conflict will persist unless it is addressed. Miriam noted that she has lost her tendency to be overly patient, particularly since she could see that tolerating others can have a detrimental effect on her ability to accomplish her work. Finally, Alma and Linda spoke of being more reactive in their younger years. As Alma said:

The older I get, I realize things aren’t as serious . . . [and I] don’t take things so personally. (Alma)

While there were common elements among many participants, a few had unique perspectives on their overall style. Mary was the only one who discussed the importance of being consistent in her messaging, and Brenda noted that she works to remove personal feelings from the conflict, instead focusing on other parties in the conflict. As she stated:

I must cultivate courage, curiosity, patience, and the umbrella over all of that is to recognize . . . the strengths that everybody brings . . . and letting go of ownership, letting go of control. (Brenda)

While some of Brenda’s ideas are conceptually present in “listening” and “compromising,” her intention is also to create an atmosphere that encourages engagement between conflicting parties.

**Personal styles.**

After discussing their overall professional style, I asked: *How would you describe your conflict resolution style outside of your professional capacity?* Nine of the 15 study participants—Brenda, Chris, Cheryl, Karla, Katie, Linda, Mary, Norma, and Tamera—
viewed themselves as acting the same whether they are in a professional environment or personal one. I summarized these comparisons in a chart, a sample of which can be viewed in Appendix R. While they typically do not act differently at home and at work, Karla and Katie put caveats on their responses: Karla said she’s probably not quite as attentive in personal situations as she is in professional ones, in part because she has little energy left by the time she comes home. After a brief pause to contemplate my question, Katie said:

Sometimes I let my guard down [at home] and act like a baby! . . . I’m ‘AHHHHHH!’ It’s something I would never do professionally. (Katie)

The remainder of the participants—Alma, Irene, Michelle, Katrice, Monica, and Miriam—responded that they were different in their personal and professional modes of handling conflict, with varying degrees of differences. Alma and Irene spoke of “going with the flow” in their personal lives much more easily. Miriam described herself as more passive with friends and family; she assumes things will eventually blow over. Conversely, Monica saw herself as more direct in her personal life, more ready to “get it out” so she can move on. Michelle described herself as “louder, more in your face,” and Katrice said that she’s “messier” in her personal life. As Katrice described it:

It’s all there. That’s who I am. It’s me. I tend to get angrier quicker, I get frustrated quicker, I can get my feelings hurt quicker, I’m a lot more prickly, and I cry at the drop of a hat. You wouldn’t believe it. People who know me in both arenas, it’s like, ’Oh my gah. You’re like Jekyll and Hyde!’ (Katrice)

Thus, my participants act differently for different reasons. I review their reflections on those differences next.
Attribution of style differences.

For those who described differences, I asked: *To what would you attribute the difference in style?* Alma and Karla said they are different at home because they expend a tremendous amount of energy resolving conflicts in their workplace. In Alma’s case, she said she is exhausted from dealing with issues at work, so she allows issues to go by in her personal life, noting that her family may get the “raw end of the deal” as a result. Karla stated that it requires exceptional focus at work to be attentive to others and noted that it is challenging to be so attentive at home because she is tired. As she said:

Sometimes I’m like, 'Oh my god, I can’t listen to another word!' (Karla)

Michelle and Katrice both attributed the differences to a level of comfort they feel in their personal lives “to let it all hang out,” as Katrice articulated it, whereas Monica described the differences in terms of values and expectations. As she said:

I’ve always rationalized in my head that I have a lot more to lose at home than I do at work, so I get a lot more intense about it at home than I do at work. (Monica)

Monica added that she has higher expectations of her husband than she does of her coworkers.

Both Miriam and Irene attributed their differences to their work-related expectations. Being passive at work does not allow them to be as productive in their job, something they both noted changed as their responsibilities increased. In preparing my interview protocol, I was interested to see if there were differences in personal and professional styles and why. I also wanted to know if my participants felt that one area of their lives would benefit in any way by being able to use the other style. I elaborate on their responses in the next section.
Style transference.

My follow-up question—*If [your personal and professional styles] are different, do you think that your work style would benefit by having some of your personal style infused into it, or vice versa?*—was intended to elicit from my participants insight regarding the influence of the masculine paradigm on their conflict styles. In three cases, the participants felt that their personal styles would benefit from having an infusion of their professional styles. As noted above, Karla acknowledged that her professional style of attentiveness would be beneficial in personal conflicts, but she said she lacks the stamina to be a good listener after listening all day at work. Similarly, Monica commented that her personal relationships would benefit from applying her professional style, which is calm and focused on listening, to personal conflicts. However, she, too, felt she “spends” her energy at work. Miriam and Chris noted that their extreme passiveness in personal relationships may not be ideal. As Chris summarized:

I think one thing that I could learn from the world of work to bring to my personal environment is dealing with conflicts in a more timely way. (Chris)

Conversely, Alma, Katie and Katrice felt that their work environment would benefit from allowing their personal style to have more prevalence there. Indeed, Alma was serving in a new position in which she was working to be less reactionary, more laid back, like she is at home. Katie noted that she more readily forgives her family members, whereas she may avoid interacting with colleagues if she is in conflict with them. However, she also acknowledged that there are some relationships at work that cannot be fixed, whereas:

with a family, you’ve got to figure out how you’re going to fix them. (Katie)
Finally, Katrice reflected on the idea of work styles benefiting from home styles more generally, noting that as she allows herself to be less reserved at work, she is able to develop deeper connections between herself and her staff. She commented that building rapport served to strengthen their ability to work better together, including managing conflicts more easily.

One participant discussed being very intentional in differentiating her personal and professional styles. Below is the exchange between Michelle and me regarding the concept of altering one style or another:

MS: Would your professional style benefit from aspects of your personal style or vice versa?
Michelle: Yes, I’m more reserved and easy going. I’m a people pleaser at work, whereas at home I’m not as nice.
MS: What’s preventing you from acting differently?
Michelle: I need to work with these people every day and I need their support. So I won’t . . . I won’t give away my power.
MS: So is that a struggle?
Michelle: Sometimes. I don’t want people to take advantage of me, to use and abuse my friendship.

In this exchange, Michelle acknowledged that her personal relationships could benefit from having her act more “reserved and easy going.” However, she added that her strategy at work is intentional—that she retains her power by not letting down her guard. She further articulated her perception that developing deeper friendships at work would put her at risk.

While these responses did not demonstrate that the masculine work environment disproportionately influenced my participants’ conflict styles, this exchange with my participants exposed a concept of connection with other, and, in Michelle’s case, the idea that revealing her true self in the workplace would put her at risk. In Chapter 6, I return
to this concept of risk and connection. First, however, I review the concluding elements of my interviews as they relate specifically to gender and any other aspect of conflict that my participants revealed during our initial interview.

**Gender and Conflict in Higher Education**

Feminist epistemology serves as a foundational theory for my research. However, my intention throughout these interviews was to avoid biasing my participants’ perspectives, particularly as it related to gender. As such, I asked a question specific to gender only after discussing conflict, conflict situations, and conflict resolution styles in general. In this section, I provide a summary of my participants’ answer to my inquiry regarding gender: *Do you think gender has any impact on either these conflicts you’ve described, or in conflict in general in your workplace?*

As it relates specifically to conflict and gender, my participants’ responses included their personal perspectives and observations, as well as specific experiences. In order to provide a foundation for this discussion, I calculated the numbers of conflicts involving members of the same or different gender (see Appendix S). I found that, in situations in which the conflict concerned only one other party, roughly 50% were conflicts with females and 50% were with females. Further, roughly half of the conflicts that were resolved involved female colleagues and half involved male colleagues. Thus, I did not observe any pattern that would suggest my female participants had more conflict with males or females or were less or more likely to resolve conflict with males or females.
Some of my participants made overarching observations about their experiences as women working in the higher education work environment, while others gave examples relating specifically to conflict situations. Some participants even noted cases in which they had biases about being in conflict with female colleagues, while two commented that their work atmospheres were egalitarian. As with conflict types and conflict styles, I defer the details of my participants’ responses to my analysis chapter in order to avoid duplication.

Other Aspects of Workplace Conflict

In the concluding portion of my interviews, I asked my participants the following question: *Are there other aspects of conflict that you face in your professional capacity that we have not reviewed yet and that you would like to share with me?* In this section I summarize responses to this question. I also discuss here any other element of conflict that my participants addressed throughout the interviews that has not been addressed in sections above.

Most participants responded “no” to my initial concluding question. They felt we had addressed most conflict issues comprehensively. A few commented further on gender or conflict more generally. Monica noted that I had not discussed any of the physical responses to conflict, which she felt were significant to conflict in the workplace. As she stated:

The physical reaction to conflict is that I feel the blood rushing and warm, and my heart might be beating a little stronger. It’s definitely noticeable when I feel stress and anxiety because I’m in a conflict. . . . It’s not all cognitive. . . . I’m lower in the mood scale when I’m in conflict. My thinking isn’t as clear. I’m not coming from a neutral state. (Monica)
Monica’s comments were significant enough to me that, in keeping with grounded theory, I added a question to my interview protocol, which stated: *One participant noted the physical responses she has to conflict . . . do you have anything to say about that?*

Monica was my sixth interviewee, so 10 of my participants responded to this question.

Although Katrice, who I interviewed second, was not asked my final question about the physical responses to conflict, she described that “pit in the stomach” feeling she gets in anticipation of conflict and described one conflict as a “heat to the face, blood rushing” type of conflict. Similarly, Chris, who was one of the last to be interviewed, expressed getting a “lump in her throat” causing her to want to avoid the conflict—although she is able to pursue the conflict when necessary despite these feelings. She added, however, that unlike other scenarios in which one has a physical response, such as public speaking, the reaction to conflict never goes away. As she said in reference to a role-play she had done in my HERS session on fundraising the previous day:

> The moments before we started, I was just a “SSSS,” but once we got started, I was fine. I can even ham it up if I need to. There’s that beginning moment until the engine kind of gets geared up. But with conflict, I never reach that point—that stress, that tightness in the chest, is always still there. (Chris)

While Cheryl, too, described the physical desire to avoid conflict, she prefers to find a compromise. As she said:

> But the reality is you intellectually understand, ‘I need to deal with this,’ and so you find a compromise, you use humor, [even though] the physical reaction is, ‘Run!’ (Cheryl)

Other than Monica, Norma was the most explicit about physical reactions to conflict, discussing her experiences at length. She said when she anticipates that conflict will be contentious, she takes a prescription medication because:
I don’t want my voice to quiver and I don’t want to become shrill. . . . Voice modulation is difficult; I get too high pitched. And, in the extreme circumstances, I’ll get shakes or a headache. . . . I had to learn a way to mediate the physical in order to be effective in my work. (Norma)

Miriam noted that the stress associated with conflict got to be so intense that, for the first time in her life, she sought work counseling. She said that the stress began to impact her personal life. She added that her age contributed to her stress in part because she was the same age as those she was appointed to lead, which resulted in negative reactions from those who were formerly her colleagues.

Finally, Linda was reflective about the physical reactions of conflict, noting that it is important for one to avoid confrontation when one is experiencing a strong reaction. She said:

I communicate my feelings very openly and I can’t control that. (Linda)

Consequently, she is careful to pause, give herself time to collect herself and think through a resolution strategy before addressing the problem.

Other than the physical responses to conflict, my concluding question did not reveal any new input on conflict and conflict resolution. However, most of my participants noted that they enjoyed the discussion because it allowed them to reflect on their processes for resolving conflict in their workplace. They all asked to receive a copy of my dissertation so that they could learn from other women about their experiences and perception of conflict in higher education leadership.

Conclusion

In this chapter on findings, I summarize my data using my interview protocol as an organizational tool. I use my protocol in this way for two reasons. One is that the tool
itself moves from general to specific, including an initial question regarding my participants’ view of conflict, before I focused their attention on peer-to-peer conflict, which is my area of interest in this study. Additionally, I requested my participants to discuss two to three conflict scenarios, and in this chapter I used the aggregate data from these scenarios to describe their resolution styles, the work culture or atmosphere in which the conflict took place, and the outcomes. Moving again to broader topics, I invited my participants to share with me their perception of their professional styles overall, their personal styles, and to articulate and reflect on any differences between the two. I also intentionally waited to inquire about gender and conflict in order to not influence their thoughts about conflict throughout my interview. I concluded my discussion by asking my participants if they felt there were aspects of conflict that we had not covered in our conversation, with the physical response to conflict surfacing as the primary point of conversation in this opened ended question.

I also elected to use the interview protocol as an organizational tool to demonstrate the influence of grounded theory on my study. In grounded theory, a researcher allows the input of the participants to influence the direction of the research, and so I demonstrated through this discussion the point at which the input of the participants altered or changed the protocol itself. That is, my sixth participant, when asked if we had left anything out of our discussion, noted that I had not discussed the physical responses to conflict, and so I added it to my next to last question on the protocol.

Through my interviews, I discovered that my participants’ perception of conflict ranged widely, from believing conflict is a natural occurrence in the workplace to
wishing all conflict could be avoided. I also learned that my participants’ conflict styles varied according to their experiences, not according to the work culture—a concept that differed from my expectations. Also different from my expectations was the influence a masculine paradigm would have on my participants. Although some participants observed gender discrimination by male colleagues or bosses, some of these women leaders perpetuated gender biases as themselves. Additionally, the comparison of personal and professional resolution styles did not reveal oppression of a feminine style as a result of a masculine work atmosphere. Instead, this aspect of the conversation revealed to me a concept that eventually becomes central to my theory: that of the importance of connection with other in conflict situations.

Having provided a broad overview of my findings, I move next into detailed data analysis. As noted, the first step in the dimensional analysis process is the designation phase, or data coding, which I summarize in the Research Design chapter in order to confine the description of my actions to one location. In the next two chapters, I process the data itself through the differentiation and integration/reintegration phases as a method of developing theory that surfaced from the data I summarize here.
Chapter Five: Dimensional Analysis

As described in detail in Chapter 3, the dimensional analysis process includes three primary phases: designation, differentiation, and integration/reintegration (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). The designation phase allows the researcher to label data elements, creating dimensions or codes from the text. Also, in the designation phase, memoing allows the researcher to informally document observations and reflections of the data.

In the differentiation phase of dimensional analysis, the researcher begins to create dimensions, or family codes, from the data, and test the various dimensions to determine which concept best explains the data (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). Once a central dimension is determined, it is labeled as the perspective. In this phase, the researcher also evaluates the remaining dimensions to determine their significance to the perspective, with all but irrelevant dimensions identified as contexts, conditions, processes, or consequences. The final step in the differentiation phase is to test, clarify, and solidify concepts about the connections between the relevant dimensions and the perspective through theoretical sampling. The last phase, integration/reintegration, involves the incorporation of concepts into a theory, which then is communicated via written text (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991).

In the Method section of Chapter 3, I detail my coding process, or the designation phase of dimensional analysis, as well as articulate the creation process for my family
codes, which is the first step of the differentiation phase. I also identify the codes I
determined to be relevant to the central dimension, which is the relationships dimension,
and those that I determined to be irrelevant. In Chapter 4, I describe the substance of my
interviews with 15 participants as a means of summarizing the data in a broad sense.

In this chapter, I focus my analysis on the relevant family codes, comparing the
data to existing research to explore for unique aspects as they relate to women’s
experiences in resolving conflict in higher education. I then describe my process of using
the theoretical basis for my study, multicultural feminist epistemology, to audit the family
codes to determine each code’s centrality to the data, determining that the relationships
dimension is the perspective for this study. I conclude the chapter by identifying the
nature of connection between the relationships dimension and the relevant dimensions.

**Differentiation**

Kools et al. (1996) compare the process of data analysis to *choreographing* the
data, noting that there are many dimensions in any data set, each of which provide a
different “configuration of the data and results in a different interpretation of meaning”
(p. 318). The central dimension is the “the dimension that provides the greatest
explanation for the relationship among dimensions” (p. 318). As I describe in Chapter 3,
from the data I determined that there are 31 family codes, with the relationships
dimension serving as the central dimension, or the perspective. I also identified the
following codes as relevant to the perspective: all the type and style codes except for the
overarching ones, gender, emotions, pause, work culture/atmosphere, higher education,
allies, and problem people. In this section, I describe the relevant family codes in more detail, citing literature germane to my findings.

**Conflict types dimensions.**

Based on my analysis of the participants’ descriptions of their conflict scenarios, I created the following family codes for conflict types, each of which has the precursor of “type” in the code name: (a) decision making, (b) procedural, (c) programmatic, (d) resource, (e) human resources, and (f) work activity conflicts (see Appendix T). After summarizing each conflict type below, I compare the conflict type dimensions to existing literature in conflict resolution.

**Type: decision making conflicts dimension.**

The situations I categorized as decision-making conflicts varied from issues related to students, to the selection of faculty for courses, to the appointment of a senior staff position. They also involved a range of employee ranks—presidents, vice presidents provosts, deans, faculty, and program directors. Some, such as Chris’s second scenario and Irene’s second scenario, were relatively easy to resolve and involved little emotional responses; while others, such as Norma’s second scenario and Alma’s third scenario, were very difficult conflicts involving difficult people. As Norma stated:

> He is probably the most narcissistic—he’s, I think, the king of narcissism. Unbelievable guy. (Norma)

Because this person, as Norma described him, preferred to be in a state of conflict, the resolution of any conflict with him was never swift.

Two-thirds of my participants—Alma, Chris, Irene, Karla, Katie, Linda, Miriam, Monica, Norma, and Tamera—described conflicts in which the decisions being made
caused the conflict. For example, in Chris’s second scenario conflict arose because of decisions made by the office of student housing that prevented Chris’s honor program students from getting priority housing, which Chris advertised as a benefit to honors students. Chris was able to resolve the issue in a single meeting with her colleagues in student housing. Karla’s second scenario involved a management approach for an employee that formerly reported to Karla but had moved under the supervision of the other party in her conflict. The two differed in their opinion regarding how to best manage this highly talented young professional, as Karla described him, and Karla attempted to enlighten the new manager to a technique that allowed the employee to flourish. At the time of the interview, she felt that the conflict was close to resolution, but it had been a long process. As she stated:

I think I told you: this is the beginning, this is the end? I think we’re here (gesturing). I think it’s going toward resolution, but I wouldn’t say it’s completely resolved.  

Karla used hand gestures to indicate that they were about two-thirds of the way toward resolution, with the other party gradually deciding to alter her management style and experiencing increased productivity from the employee.

My participants, then, described decision-making conflicts as relatively easy to resolve or involving long, arduous processes to convince the other party that the decision s/he was making adversely impacted my participants. The mind-set of the other party was significant as well, according to my participants. Cordial, respectful relationships reduced the potential for emotions to exacerbate the exchange. This can be best understood by comparing Karla’s and Norma’s respective second scenarios. While Karla struggled with the other party at times and resolution was not quick, they each respected
the other and both made efforts to resolve their conflict privately. Conversely, Norma historically struggled with the other party’s lack of respect for her and many others on campus. Resolution was not quick, emotions were high, and eventually the other party made the conflict highly visible in the community, requiring Norma to take a defensive stance.

**Type: procedural conflicts dimension.**

Alma, Cheryl, and Tamera experienced conflicts related to differences of opinion regarding appropriate procedures to be followed. Cheryl, in her second conflict scenario, was able to resolve the conflict with her colleagues quickly via email. Tamera, however, in her third scenario was unable to convince the VP of human resources that they needed to dismiss a highly incompetent employee immediately. Instead, Tamera had to follow the VP’s guidance. As Tamera explained during our discussion:

I really sought her direction, because she was not going to cave, so I figured, well, I better play by her rules! (Tamera)

Tamera was patient only to a point, however. When the situation began to significantly impact the rest of her staff, she pushed her colleague to move the process along more expeditiously.

Alma, in her first scenario, needed to drastically change procedures in her area, but it was creating turmoil in various schools and colleges across campus. She felt that her best approach as a relative outsider—she had been in her position only a few months at the time of our interview—was to be very methodical in gathering information from multiple perspectives: historical, cultural, political, and situational. Involving outside
experts to help her build her case, Alma patiently laid the foundation for changes she needed to implement. This foundation was key to future conflict as well, as she noted:

There’s more to come. When I said I see this situation resolved, [it is] as I specifically talked to you about working on the software . . . But still there’s some more layers to be implemented with this. (Alma)

Based on these conversations, changes to procedures or pushing the envelope of existing procedures can be resolved relatively simply if it involves just two individuals. Conversely, such changes can be very complicated if it involves many departments or institutionally accepted procedures.

**Type: program conflicts dimension.**

Brenda, Katie, Katrice, Michelle, Miriam, and Tamera described what I categorize as program conflicts: conflicts that arise out of differences in opinion of how programs should be implemented. Similar to procedural conflicts, program conflicts can involve just two individuals or they can be complex issues that span several departments on campus.

In Brenda’s first conflict scenario, she attempted to facilitate the establishment of a new academic program and found resistance among her faculty peers. Similarly, Michelle’s third scenario involved a major change to a program. However, she expected resistance and sought creative ways to address the primary area of concern: finances. As Michelle noted:

And I did have a conversation with athletics to see how much they wanted to contribute in terms of dollars . . . trying to think, well, how could we be cost effective? So looking [for] other stakeholders that we needed to talk to, and then looking at the directive of Title III to see if there are any sort of funding possibilities there. (Michelle)
By anticipating the conflict and seeking creative solutions, Michelle navigated the conflict confidently.

Katrice also found resistance in her first two conflicts that related to programs. In her first scenario, the individual who previously oversaw the project that Katrice was put in charge of seemed to resist Katrice’s suggestions for changes. In Katrice’s second scenario, another member of a committee resisted Katrice’s expert advice, despite the fact that she was put on the committee to provide the expertise.

In her first scenario, Katie’s challenge involved advisory board members who did not want to take the lead in resolving a conflict they were having with the department chair. As the former chair, the board wanted Katie to lead the resolution process. However, the conflict involved the disciplinary focus of the college, a debate that spanned more than 20 years. Katie felt that full resolution would require the involvement of all of the department’s stakeholders. According to Katie, much was at stake and, thus, she felt many perspectives needed to be represented.

Conversely, while Tamera’s first scenario involved differing perspectives between those who had been at the institution for many years and those who were relative newcomers, little was at stake. The conflict related to the implementation of a solicitation program that, should it not succeed, could be easily eliminated in the future.

Resistance, then, was a common thread among program-related conflicts. However, they varied in complexity, intensity and longevity, with longer-term program conflicts and resolution that would have a lasting impact requiring more strategic
thought. Whereas those conflicts that involved less risk could be resolved quickly and with the spirit of, “no harm, no foul.”

**Type: resources conflicts dimension.**

While a number of the conflict scenarios had financial elements to them, as with Michelle’s third scenario described above, only Chris, Irene, Linda and Mary described conflicts in which financial resources were the central concern. In some cases, the budgetary impact was minimal. Chris, for example, acknowledged that in her first scenario she may have spent too much time on a conflict about who was responsible for replacing a defective computer, but she was persistent because she felt the other party should have taken responsibility for their inaction in the months prior. Irene’s conflict in her third scenario involved relatively little as well, compared to the overall budget. A colleague confronted Irene regarding her phone expenses. Irene simply stated her case and proposed a resolution that would allow her to continue to function as she needed.

Linda and Mary, in contrast, had significant resources at stake. While in Linda’s first scenario the total in question was only $27,000, she knew that if she did not sufficiently resolve the situation, there was potential for her budget to be hit with hundreds of thousands of dollars in similar expenses in the future. She successfully convinced the controller that expenses related to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) should be viewed as an institutional expense, even if the budget resided within the student services area. Mary, in her first scenario, was informed during her first week as Dean that a proposal was being floated to close her school. Not only did she actively
pursue options for expanding research and other sources of resources in order to save her unit, she also needed to successful argue her case in order to preserve her deanship.

Those who shared resources conflicts with me took budget issues very seriously. As Linda noted:

I don’t over-roll my accounts and I don’t let anyone on my staff. There are emergencies and things that we account for, but I usually have that done way before June 30 so that we can take whatever monies that are available and pay for it. (Linda)

As such, resources-related conflict, according to my participants, did not always involve large expenditures or items that significantly impact current programmatic budgets. My participants also viewed resources conflicts as issues that could significantly impact their reputations as leaders, or, because of the connection between budgets and policy, could impact their areas in future budgetary exchanges if appropriate resolution was not achieved in the current conflict.

**Type: human resources conflicts dimension.**

Brenda, Katie and Cheryl discussed human resources (HR) conflicts, which I identified as situations that involved the more formal HR procedures on campus. One example was Katie’s second scenario in which an ethnic minority faculty member charged discrimination. Additionally, Brenda’s second conflict scenario involved department chairs who were verbally and physically abusive to her, although she was both a member of their faculty and an administrative colleague. In both Katie’s and Brenda’s situations, the HR office was involved, although Katie’s role was to keep the peace within the department and to prevent her male colleagues from “protecting” her and adversely affecting the final outcome. Conversely, Brenda sought the assistance of
the HR department as a form of protection, eventually filing a formal grievance against her colleagues. Similarly, Cheryl felt she needed to involve the faculty affairs committee when the other participant in her third scenario elevated the conflict to the faculty advisory committee.

I do not find any common elements to these scenarios, other than all three study participants discussed their attempt to resolve the conflicts by remaining calm and addressing them as openly and honestly as they could. This approach worked well for Katie, but Brenda and Cheryl struggled because of the extreme response by their colleagues. They communicated to me that they had no other recourse but to seek formal avenues of resolution. As Brenda articulated:

I also knew that there was nothing I could do to resolve the conflict. What I wanted in that situation was for her behavior to stop. (Brenda)

In order for the behavior to stop, it required formal documentation and conversations with governing bodies responsible for HR conflicts, as was the case with Cheryl.

*Type: work activity conflicts dimension.*

Work activity conflicts involved challenges these women faced regarding their own work performance or questions between the participants and the other parties in the conflict regarding roles and responsibilities. They differ, however, from human resources conflicts in that it the conflicts had not escalated to involve the institution’s HR office.

Alma, Cheryl, Irene, Mary, Michelle, and Norma described conflicts with their peers in which someone questioned their job performance. Alma, for example, was singled out as the person responsible for the movement of a process in her second scenario, even though she was simply a member of a group of people that each had a
piece of the process. Based on an accusatory email from a VP that was copied to the President’s cabinet, Alma had to engage her own VP to defend herself. Similarly, Cheryl’s first and third scenarios involved the same individual who demonstrated aggression toward Cheryl beginning more than a decade earlier when Cheryl was a new member of the faculty. In her first scenario, Cheryl simply dismissed with humor the question regarding her posting of grade changes. As she noted:

> But [humor] keeps me from being controlled by her sense of wanting to create a conflict. And whether she appreciates my stale humor or not, for me and at that point, I’m more interested in controlling my reaction than her, so the humor at least allows me to do that. (Cheryl)

Rather than deal with the question of her performance, Cheryl chose to ignore the conflict by using humor.

Irene, Mary, Michelle, and Norma were surprised by the accusations of the other participant in their conflict situations. Irene and Norma were able to address the conflict openly in their respective first scenarios, but Mary could not in her second scenario. Rather than expressing her concern directly to Mary, the other participant spoke to their dean, who informed Mary but requested that it be kept confidential. Finally Michelle, in her first scenario, was “blind-sided” in a conference call in which she was questioned about her actions in an HR situation. She decided to avoid the conflict. It was a time of institutional turmoil and she did not trust the other participant in the conflict, who was new to the university but was a recent Presidential appointment. Michelle felt that with time—and prayer—her performance would demonstrate that she had not done anything wrong.
Karla, Linda, Monica and Norma questioned the performance of the other party in their conflict situations. Karla, in her first scenario, eventually determined that she could not trust the other party and began to find ways to work around her. Monica knew she could not trust the other party, but she could not figure out how to work around her in her second scenario, although she attempted to do so. After Linda unsuccessfully discussed the issues with the other party in her third scenario, she asked her supervisor for assistance. He “wouldn’t touch it.” Eventually, after years attempting to deal with the conflicts herself, Linda forced a resolution for the sake of the organization. As she said:

I worked for the woman for a long time, and it was not something that I would have wanted to see happen, but she brought it upon herself. (Linda)

Norma, too, had to force a resolution by threatening a formal grievance process against the other party in her third conflict scenario.

Thus, work activity conflicts involved questions that my participants had about others’ performance as well as challenges they faced regarding their own performance. They addressed these conflicts in a variety of ways, ranging from avoidance to direct confrontation. The types of conflicts I observed in my interviews were similar to those that conflict scholars describe in their studies, which I summarize next.

Conflict types scholarship.

Barsky (2002) conducts a qualitative study to explore the sources of conflict in higher education, finding eight themes that emerged from the data: (a) structural issues, (b) miscommunication, (c) harmful behaviors, (d) interpersonal differences, (e) personal characteristics, (f) negative history, (g) difficult issues, and (h) emotions. Barsky (2002) notes that structural issues, or those stemming from the physical or social organization of
the institutions, were cited most frequently. Nonetheless, he calls for a review of conflict resolution and institutional support systems to address the diversity in conflict sources.

Yang and Mossholder (2004) contrast two types of conflicts in intra-group conflict situations: task and relationship conflicts, noting that in group situations, these are generally two that surface. Task conflicts are cognitive in nature and relate to a difference of opinion regarding how a task should be performed, whereas relationship conflicts are emotional and involve interpersonal differences. DeDrue and Gelfand (2008) summarize conflict resolution scholarship and levels of analysis found in conflict resolution research. They identify three sources or types of workplace conflict that span the various levels of analysis: (a) resources conflicts, or conflicts of interest and outcomes; (b) ideological and value conflicts, or relationship and affective conflicts; and (c) socio-cognitive conflict of understanding, or cognitive and task-related conflicts.

Barsky (2002), Yang and Mossholder (2004), and DeDrue and Gelfand (2008) highlight the perspective that, in existing conflict scholarship, relationship conflicts or interpersonal differences differ from resources, task, or structural conflicts, for example. Conversely, my participants did not discuss relationship conflicts as a type of conflict they experienced, but rather they discussed the nature of relationships impacting the resolution process. Perhaps values and ideological perspectives, which DeDrue and Gelfand (2008) couple with relationship or affective conflicts, impacted the nature of my participants’ conflicts, such as in Michelle’s first scenario. Her colleague disrespected her by not informing her of the nature of the conference call, but Michelle perceived the conflict as criticism of her job performance. The disrespect and lack of trust she felt from
her colleague dictated her decision to avoid the conflict; she did not trust him enough to engage in a conflict resolution process. However, the conflict itself was not about the relationship at its core.

I revisit the significance of relationships to my participants in my discussion on the relationships dimension. However, in the next section, I elaborate on conflict styles. This discussion considers conflict styles used in the specific scenarios, as well as the overall conflict styles that my participants described.

**Conflict resolution styles dimensions.**

As I note in Chapter 4: Findings, the styles my participants described using in their conflict scenarios ranged from avoidance to forceful. In Appendix U, I provide a sample page of my summary of the various styles my study participants described and the related codes I assigned to them. These codes include: (a) attentive, (b) avoidance, (c) collaborative, (d) communicative, (e) confrontational, (f) defensive, (g) facilitator, and (h) persistent, although they each have the word “style” as a precursor to the code.

**Style: attentive dimension.**

I use the descriptor of attentive for the behavior my participants displayed toward the other party in their conflict scenarios. Mary tried to be “attentive and reassuring” in her second scenario, and Norma described her actions as those of a “big sister” in her first scenario. Linda described her actions as in first scenario as follows:

I tried to use an approach that was reasonable. Taking the developmental path, where educating him was really important. (Linda)

In addition, in Linda’s third scenario, she felt that taking an educational approach would resolve the conflicts, but she eventually had to force a resolution in her third conflict.
While I note that the scenarios described in these situations related either to work activity or resources conflicts, I do not know if the attentive style would apply exclusively to these conflict situations or if it was simply coincidental. For example, I labeled Katie’s conflict style “communicative” in her first scenario, which was a program-related conflict. However, her style was also to engage others and listen, which has elements of being attentive to other. As such, I conclude that the attentive style is not exclusively applicable to the two types of conflict situations I found in my data.

**Style: avoidance dimension.**

Cheryl, Chris, Michelle, Miriam, Katrice, Monica and Karla discussed using avoidance, although Miriam and Monica did not initially avoid the conflict. Avoidance was used for a variety of conflict types, and each participant used avoidance for different reasons. In Katrice’s first scenario, the other staff member was, as she described her, “important” to her. She said:

I’m finding myself needing to walk away a lot. In part because this is a professional relationship that is important to me both personally and professionally, and one that I really have a lot of investment in preserving. (Katrice)

Conversely, Michelle and Cheryl in their respective first scenarios, and Chris in her third scenario, avoided engaging in conflict because they were uncomfortable with the other party in the conflict. Chris had seen the other party react strongly in situations and stated that she had no desire to engage in conflict with him. As I describe above, the other party in Michelle’s conflict was newly appointed, and she simply did not trust him enough to engage in conflict. As she said:

I didn’t trust him enough to share [how I felt] with him. I felt that it might be used against me. (Michelle)
Because she did not trust him, she simply avoided confronting him about the handling of the meeting and hoped that the conflict would not escalate. Finally, Cheryl felt that it was the other person’s desire to draw her into a conflict, as she had experienced with that person in the past. She elected to avoid the encounter, instead making a joke of it.

Miriam and Karla, in their third and first scenarios respectively, initially attempted to be open in their communication to resolve the conflict, but when they did not succeed, they avoided the conflict. Miriam was unable to move forward with her project because of the other’s resistance, so she began to avoid him, instead finding other ways to move forward with efforts to raise money. Karla said that her initial strategy was to address the issue in a straightforward fashion, but after being unsuccessful, she eventually avoided the other party in a dismissive fashion. As she stated:

> If she’s not able to complete things and carry them out, then I really don’t have much use for her because she impedes my ability to get things done and my style and my commitments. And so I just don’t care to deal with her. I’ve found other ways to get it done. (Karla)

Finally, Monica attempted to confront the conflict situation in her second scenario, but quickly realized that she would be unsuccessful. She then avoided direct conflict with the other party and instead used a passive aggressive approach to the problem—expressing her aggression with colleagues and being passive with the other party.

Avoidance, then, was used out of a desire to preserve a relationship with other, out of discomfort with other, and out of indifference to other. As such, avoidance as a conflict resolution style carries with it respect, discomfort, and disrespect, depending upon the situation. In Chapter 5, I return to the idea that participants used avoidance for
very different reason and in differing circumstances. The avoidance style was not used exclusively in any particular conflict type.

**Style: collaborative dimension.**

Several participants spoke of their style as collaborative, consensus-building, accommodating, or compromising. I combine these various descriptions into one category labeled collaborative. However, collaborative work did not mean the conflict resolution process was always easy. In Chris’s second scenario, for example, resolution required little effort. It took just one brief meeting. In Katrice’s second scenario, however, several meetings, multiple discussions, and finally a suggestion by a committee member were necessary in order to reach consensus. Miriam, in her second scenario, was concerned about maintaining good relations with the other party, so she worked hard to collaborate regularly on decisions and to accommodate the other party’s needs on a consistent basis. According to Miriam, it took some effort on her part to create a collaborative environment for the two of them.

Three other scenarios—Karla’s second, Tamera’s third, and Cheryl’s second—required a collaborative approach and varying degrees of effort on the participants’ parts. Karla, however, described herself a “reluctant collaborator” and Tamera noted that her preference would have been to deal with the dismissal much faster. Nonetheless, Karla acknowledged that she had to be patient with the other party in order to communicate her position, and Tamera had no choice but to defer to the other party because “she was not going to cave.” Finally, Cheryl initially reacted with frustration, but having thought
about it overnight, decided a compromise would be a more productive approach. I note that collaboration was not used exclusively in a particular type of conflict situation.

**Style: communicative dimension.**

Many participants attempted open communication as their first approach to resolving conflict, using descriptors like “discussion,” “listening,” and “asking questions.” Further, a majority of the self-descriptors fell into the communication style, which includes listening, being honest, and communicating openly and directly. This approach spanned all conflict types. Irene embraced this type of conflict resolution style exclusively, describing it in all three of her scenarios. As she said to her colleague member in her first scenario:

I announced the schedule a long, long time ago. If you don’t want [to team teach], you should just talk to me in person. I could arrange differently. You don’t have to really be confrontational . . . our institute is so small, so let’s not waste our energy over this. (Irene)

Similarly, Tamera described her approach in every conflict situation as embracing the “Rule of Augustine,” which she articulated as:

If you have an issue with somebody, deal with that person first. And if it can’t be resolved there, then take it somewhere else. (Tamera)

Listening is a key element in the communication process for these participants. Katie, in all three of her scenarios, discussed the importance of listening and then engaging the other party in a dialogue about “where we want to go.” She acknowledged, however, there are times when others cannot focus on a goal, as in her third scenario:

The question of where do you want to go? Well, there was no answer to that. She just wanted to go ballistic! (Katie)
Norma, too, in her third scenario attempted to listen and be a model for appropriate professional behavior. However, the conflict ended with her having to threaten to file a personnel grievance before the other participant would do the work she needed him to do.

Not all of those who used the communicative approach met with open receptive partners in the conflict. Miriam, for example, spoke openly and directly to the other party in her first scenario. The other party, as Miriam described, was immediately defensive and it took numerous discussions and the input of other colleagues to convince Miriam’s interlocutor that the special events she created caused problems in the office. And while the other party in Monica’s second scenario was receptive to a discussion, according to Monica she never took responsibility for her actions that caused the conflict. In the end, however, Monica stated she was satisfied that the other party acknowledged Monica’s leadership in the project, which is what truly mattered to Monica.

**Style: confrontational dimension.**

Linda and Norma described conflicts that were confrontational. Linda initially attempted to communicate in a “civil and developmental” manner with the other party in her third conflict scenario. That is, she indicated that she initially attempted to be attentive in her style. However, after numerous attempts and no assistance from her superiors, Linda indicated that force was the only way to resolve the situation. Also, in Linda’s second scenario, she said she was immediately angry upon learning that a failing project had been “dumped” on her. As she stated:

I felt disrespected and abused when they told me that I had to take this program. (Linda)
Linda also felt racial and/or gender discrimination was associated with how she was given the project. Accordingly, she immediately began to document the situation out of fear that there would be problems in the future.

In Norma’s second scenario, the other party was aggressive toward her and the retention project she was proposing. Norma said she was initially confrontational, but when she realized she was becoming a distraction from the larger issue, she “withdrew” from the conversation. Ultimately, the Provost, who had asked Norma to chair the retention committee, opted to try a different approach to resolve the retention issue rather than continue fighting with the other party in Norma’s conflict.

In all three situations in which confrontation was used, my participants indicated that the other parties in the conflict were difficult individuals with whom to work. Additionally, they noted that there was little political downside to their being confrontational with the other party. I note that the confrontational style was used in both work activity and decision-making conflicts.

**Style: defensive dimension.**

In Alma’s second and third scenarios, she described difficult conflict situations that required her to defend herself professionally. In both cases, a VP to whom she did not directly report initiated the conflicts. When asked what style she felt she exhibited, Alma responded:

Aggressive or defensive. Probably more defensive . . . because I felt like I was being attacked the whole time. I had to justify every email, every communication, and every lack of action or action taken. (Alma)

Alma was cleared in both cases, but eventually the treatment led Alma to take a professional appointment at another institution.
Brenda indicated that she initially attempted to communicate with the other party in her second scenario. However, while her description of her style in this situation was “retreated” and “methodical,” the methodical element refers to her needing to methodically defend herself in a formal grievance process.

Again, I observed no pattern between defensive approaches and conflict types. However, in both situations that I labeled defensive, Alma and Brenda felt they were being treated unfairly. Further, while Brenda continued to serve as a member of the faculty in the department chaired by her antagonist, neither Brenda nor Alma formally reported to the other party. Brenda’s direct supervisor at the time of the conflict was the Provost of the institution. The other party, however, had institutional influence, so power issues were at play in both scenarios.

**Style: facilitator dimension.**

One style description, Brenda’s characterization of herself as a “facilitator” in her first scenario, was not articulated by any other participants. Tamera, in her first scenario, described herself as a “mediator” but described her style as communicative. Even though Brenda’s first scenario was technically a conflict between peers, Brenda felt it would be advantageous to the resolution to play the role of a third-party mediator or facilitator role in the process. As she described how she saw her role:

> I had a lot of avenues that I wanted to explore to see how I could best facilitate success for everybody. I try to avoid a win-lose kind of situations and try to step to facilitate the success. (Brenda)

Brenda felt that the conflict needed someone to be somewhat neutral in order to allow the group to move toward resolution.
**Style: persistence dimension.**

Three participants used the word “persistent” in describing their resolution styles. In each case, Michelle, Alma, and Chris felt that persistence was critical. Michelle added that she was determined and methodical in her second scenario. Alma was “laid back”—different, as she noted, than how she used to react to similar situations—but persistent in her first conflict scenario. And Chris said she was simply “persistent” in her first scenario. Chris added:

I tend to throw out a rope, and I think I did in this case. “I understand your issue here, but that is not resolving the problem that we have to resolve.” So I always try to understand the other person’s point of view. (Chris)

Chris also reflected that in this situation, the other party was not taking responsibility for his actions and she needed to be persistent to achieve a successful outcome on behalf of her office. The three scenarios described were conflicts of differing types: program, procedural and resources.

**Conflict styles scholarship.**

The literature on conflict styles closely mirrors what my participants described. Blake and Moulton (1970) present a dual concerns theory containing five conflict resolution styles: (a) problem-solving, (b) smoothing, (c) forcing, (d) withdrawing, and (e) compromising. Rahim and Bonoma (1979) present a similar dual concerns model, establishing these five styles: (a) integrating, (b) obliging, (c) dominating, (d) avoiding, and (e) compromising. Olekalns, Putnam, Weingart and Matcalf (2008) note that conflict resolution research has typically focused on five styles: (a) integrating, (b) smoothing, (c) forcing, (d) avoiding, and (e) compromising. Finally, as noted in Chapter 2, Figure 3,
Holt and Devore (2005) found similarities among several styles in their meta-analysis, summarizing them into a single model.

The style I coded as *communicative* is comparable to integrating (Olekalns et al., 2008; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979) and problem-solving (Blake & Mouton, 1970). *Attentive* is similar to obliging (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979) and smoothing (Blake & Mouton, 1970; Olekalns et al., 2008). *Avoidance* is analogous to withdrawing (Blake & Mouton, 1970) and is the same as avoiding (Olekalns et al., 2008; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). Finally *collaborative* is akin to compromising (Blake & Mouton, 1970; Olekalns et al., 2008; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). Although more aggressive than the other styles, neither of the two I coded as *confrontational* or *defensive* is as aggressive as the concepts presented as forcing (Blake & Mouton, 1970; Olekalns et al., 2008) or dominating (Rahim & Bonoma, 1979). While I have listed Linda’s third scenario as confrontational, she used the term “forceful” in describing her final actions, a step she took only after many years of attempting to resolve the conflict using the attentive style. The others I coded as confrontational, however, could not be compared to dominating or forcing. Finally, neither *facilitator* nor *persistent* is reflected in the styles as presented in existing literature.

Scholars who examine conflict at the individual level focus on the interaction between participants in conflict (Callanan et al., 2006; Olekalns et al., 2008; Randel & Jaussi, 2008; Roloff, Putnam, & Anastasiou, 2003; Thomas, Thomas, & Schaubhut, 2008; Wilson & Putnam, 1990; Wolf et al., 2009). Particularly related to styles is the concept of orientation, or conflict parties’ pre-disposition to a particular mode of
operation in conflict situations. Wilson and Putnam (1990), for example, argue that existing research views goals as pre-determined, global, and static, whereas the authors observe variance in interaction goals by type, including instrumental, relational, and identity objectives goals. They further note that within each type, the goals vary depending upon the length and relevance of the interaction. Callanan, Benzing and Perri (2006) focus on strategies, noting that existing research supports the theory that individuals have a primary orientation for handling conflict. However, Callanan et al. (2006) find that individuals base their strategies on situational factors, veering from their primary style depending upon contextual data regarding the conflict.

Putnam (1988) observes that researchers define conflict styles in a variety of ways, but they cluster in four basic categories:

- style as (a) stable trait, habit, or personality attribute—the way a person typically behaves;
- (b) an orientation, expectation, predisposition, or attitude toward conflict;
- (c) a choice, intention, or plan of action based on a person’s goals and his or her analysis of the situation; and
- (d) a set of strategies and tactics that individuals use in conflict situations. (p. 294)

As Putnam summarizes, the first two groups assume parties in a conflict have a consistent style, whereas the latter two view conflict styles as varying with the situation. As I observe throughout my style descriptions, my participants discussed their styles as differing according to the situation. However, while my participants described using a variety of styles to resolve the conflict scenarios they discussed, they did not hesitate to describe their style preference for handling conflicts. Their self-description included words such as: (a) communicate, (b) listen, (c) compromise, (d) consensus, (e) direct, (f) persistent, (g) focus on the greater good, and (h) focus on the end goal. Although two participants admitted their preference for avoidance where possible, they acknowledged
that in their professional roles, they needed to resolve conflicts on behalf of the organization. In such cases, these two also focused on being direct and resolving problems with creative solutions. These self-descriptions support Holt and Devore’s (2005) findings as they relate specifically to gender and culture. That is, in the scholars’ meta-analysis on the influence of culture, Holt and Devore find that women endorse the use of compromising in all cultural environments.

As I articulate in Chapter 2, gender and conflict has been investigated extensively (Golan, 2004; Gwartney-Gibbs & Lach, 1994; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Johnson & Arneson, 1991; Walters et al., 1998). In the next section I compare participants’ views of gender and conflict in the workplace to the existing literature on the topic.

**Gender dimension.**

With gender as both a central element in my study as well as the lens through which I sought to understand conflict, it is vital that I examine gender as an independent dimension. As noted in Chapter 3, I deferred any specific question relating to gender until late in my interview, with the intention of not biasing my participants’ responses, particularly during our conversations regarding conflict situations and experiences they had as professionals. As a result, these data are a combination of responses directly to my gender question as well as spontaneous responses that my participants made throughout our initial interviews.

Karla noted that in general, she is more comfortable engaging in conflicts with men than women. She stated that she’s often more cautious with her wording when resolving an issue with a female colleague, including the avoidance of humor, which she
uses frequently when in conflict with a male colleague. In contrast, Monica said specifically regarding her first conflict scenario:

I don’t know that I would have had the courage to resolve the conflict about the survey with the institutional research and planning director as quickly if she was a man. There was a definite comfort level that I felt like, okay, we’re equals here. We’re two women. Let’s get this done. (Monica)

When I asked her about her use of “equals” in this statement, she acknowledged that in her profession, her colleagues are typically female and the leadership is typically male. Consequently, her reference to being “equals” also related to her perception of men traditionally holding the power positions.

In response to my question regarding the influence of gender in workplace conflicts, Norma described the sexist comments her male supervisor had made over the years, concluding her response by stating:

I’ve seen my boss completely accept bad acting or aggressive behavior—and I don’t think aggressive and bad are the same thing—on the part of a male colleague and not even see it. But when I’m aggressive, I’m “shrill.” He’s used the word shrill! I’m hard to get along with, I’m tough to live with . . . what’s appropriate for a man and what’s appropriate for a woman are two different things, clearly. (Norma)

Others supported Norma’s notion that the standards for resolving conflict are different for men than for women. Miriam, for example, worked in a predominantly female office headed by men, and she felt pressure to handle things cautiously out of concern that her boss would simply dismiss conflicts as a women issue. As she stated:

Where I did always think about [gender and conflict] was if I handle the situation badly or if it gets out of hand and my boss sees that playing out, he’s just going to view us as a bunch of women fighting. . . . I did consciously think about that and I was really worried that he would just say, ‘Oh, they need somebody to come in and straighten them out.’ (Miriam)
That “someone,” based on Miriam’s perception of her boss, would be a man to fix the problem.

According to Linda and Cheryl, gender became evident in the way male colleagues responded to them in conflict situations. Cheryl felt that her faculty colleague in her second scenario reacted to her complaint in a patronizing fashion, stating that he would not have responded to a male colleague in the same way. Linda, in her second scenario, believed a failing project was given to her in part because she was a woman. She stated:

And I think there was male-female stuff going on. There were three men—if I could go so far as to say three white men—and they’re like, “We’ll give it to her!” I felt that there were some gender issues that even made me more angry. . . . they probably wouldn’t have done this to another man. (Linda)

While race also appears to be an issue in this case, here I focus on the comments Linda makes relating to gender. She believed that her boss and his male colleague would not have “dumped” the project on her if she was a man.

In contrast to all other participants, Irene felt that gender was not a factor. Nonetheless, she acknowledged that her mentor cautioned her not to defer to men, a common practice in her culture. With the exception of Irene, my participants perceive that gender has an impact on conflict situations—whether it causes the problem or it influences the outcome. Some of the influences are subtle and covert, such as Miriam’s observation that her boss would have responded negatively to unresolved conflict and Linda’s belief that a failing project was given to her because she’s a woman. Some of the influences are overt, such as Norma’s boss’s description of her aggression as “shrill.” Further, some of the gender biases appeared to be perpetuated by women themselves,
such as the violence in Brenda’s home department perpetrated by two female leaders, and the preference that Karla and Monica had for engaging in conflict or not engaging in conflict depending upon the gender of the other party.

In addition to responding to my specific question on gender and conflict, my participants recounted general experiences with sexism in the workplace, including bosses or colleagues who made sexist comments; overt gender discrimination, perpetuated by both men and women; gender issues in the sciences and nursing, specifically; and, in a few cases, the perception that some of my participants had that they work in egalitarian campus environments. For example, in the past Alma worked at numerous institutions with varying degrees of sexist attitudes and discriminatory practices. In one case, she stated that it was common for her boss to put forth her idea to the leadership but never credit her. As she said:

I didn’t exist in this world. I was nothing. Just go away and be quiet, type of thing (Alma).

In welcomed contrast, at the time of our interviews she worked at an institution that valued individuals’ contributions regardless of gender. Chris, too, described her institution as a culture in which everyone is offered the same respect and opportunities.

Katie and Mary, conversely, regularly experienced gender discrimination in their science and engineering work environments, and Brenda observed gender discrimination by female colleagues and leaders in a field dominated by women. In response to my request to describe the culture, Brenda stated:

It’s an exploitive culture. It’s a discriminatory culture. It perpetuates female subjugation. There’s a lot of horizontal violence in that department. They have treated other women the same. So it’s a culture of intimidation and cruelty. (Brenda)
Gender biased cultures continue to exist in higher education, according to my participants. While a few of them work in egalitarian cultures, many sense discrimination on a regular basis and many reflected discriminatory responses—both through their actions and the actions of others in their institutions—in conflict situations.

**Gender and conflict scholarship.**

In Chapter 2, I review gender and conflict scholarship in detail. Here I compare the gender negotiation scholarship to my data as a means of connecting my findings to the scholarship. In this process, I also sought to explore any gaps in the gender and conflict literature.

As detailed previously, the trait approach seeks to determine if gender—as defined as biological sex—differences exist in conflict situations (Babcock & Laschever, 1993; Domagalski & Steelman, 2007; Greig, 2008; Nadler & Nadler, 1987; Portello & Long, 1994; Walters et al., 1998). While my questions did not address trait differences between men and women specifically, a few of my participants discuss differences they had observed. Karla, for example, commented that she’s more comfortable in conflict situations with men than with women. She noted that when in disputes with a man: humor works better, she needs to be less cautious with her words, and she reacts less to men. Karla said:

> I would probably give a lot more thought as to how I’m going to phrase things when I’m talking with a female. With a guy, you can be straightforward and blunt with them. (Karla)

Monica, conversely, noted she is more comfortable in conflict situations with other women because she sees herself as an “equal.” Brenda did not state a preference for working with one gender or another, but she has noticed that when she is working out a
conflict with female colleagues, there are no issues of control or ownership. With wom
women, Brenda observed, there is more willingness to work the conflict out together.
Yet, when she is working with men, the focus typically is on who is going to gain control.

Karla’s, Monica’s, and Brenda’s observations support Niederle and Vesterlund’s (2008) findings. The scholars observe that women are uncomfortable with negotiation. Further, Rancer and Baukus’s (1987) conclude that women are more reluctant to argue in the workplace because they view it as a control mechanism.

Linda summarized her perception of the difference between men and women in conflict situations as follows:

If you are a healthy, typical individual, normally a woman will have probably a lot more patience, a lot more of an even temper, less egotistic. I think gender does make a huge difference on how you resolve conflict, because if you let your ego get in the way, which men tend to do a lot more, there’s no winning because it’s about winning. It’s a competition rather than a resolution. (Linda)

Linda concludes her observations by noting that one might succeed in the short-term by being authoritative, but one will not be successful overall. Linda’s perception of the difference between men and women in conflict coincides with Holt and DeVore’s (2005) meta-analysis. The authors focus on the influence of organizational culture on conflict, observing that regardless of the cultural environment, females endorse compromise more frequently than men; and in individualistic cultures, men are more likely to use force than women.

The interpretive approach differs from the trait approach in its focuses on gender as a social construction, or the expectations of society for how individuals should act based on their biological sex. Gender expectations are known as gender schemas (Valian, 1999) and gender triggers (Bowles et al., 2007). Several scholars who focus on
the interpretive approach note that women face social risks for not meeting gender expectations in conflict (Bowles et al., 2007; Bowles et al., 2005; Niederle & Vesterlund, 2008; Randel & Jaussi, 2008; Wade, 2001).

Two participants noted situations in which their superiors had differing expectations for women resolving conflict in the workplace. Cheryl spoke of her boss calling her voice “shrill” when she is engaged in conflict, but she said he seems not to notice when a male colleague conducts himself in the same manner. Similarly, Miriam was cautious about how she spoke of conflict in her unit, which was comprised primarily of women, out of concern that her male bosses would use it to affirm their perception of women’s inability to get along with each other.

Mary and Katie’s experiences are similar to Miriam’s, except they are in science and engineering disciplines, which are dominated by men throughout professional levels, not just at the highest ranks. Mary commented that while gender expectations are changing, there are many men who continue to perceive their discipline as an inappropriate place for women. Both participants noted the “conservative” nature of many of their colleagues, suggesting strong connection with traditional gender expectations. This observation relates to Randel and Jaussi’s (2008) research is on perception of relationship conflict increasing between two members of differing genders who have strong gender identities.

Mary’s defense is to actively engage in conversation and, where necessary, to note her credentials. As Mary summarized:

I’m pretty adamant about stepping up and being part of the conversation and expressing my opinions and trying to be logical. (Mary)
Mary also noted that at times she finds it helpful to build credibility through citing her credentials. She received graduate degree from a top-ranked institution in science and engineering, which she indicated helps her in overcoming gender stereotypes she might face.

More generally, Alma observed meetings in which a male colleague is acknowledged for his contributions and a female colleague is not. As she stated:

More people pay attention to a man speaking than a woman speaking. . . . A man’s comment will be played out a little bit more, talked about a bit more, where a woman’s dismissed. (Alma)

Valian (1999) observes that both men and women have perceptions of appropriate behavior for men and women. She cites numerous studies that have observed the very phenomenon that Alma articulates.

Gender oppression is also perpetuated through subtle actions, as exemplified by Cheryl’s experience in her second scenario. The other participant was a male and “patronizing,” as Cheryl described him. She stated that she felt he would not have reacted to her in the same way had she been a male colleague engaged in the same conflict. Katie made a similar observation when she stated:

I don’t think that they would initiate the same conflict with men, the same challenges. There would be more respect. “Oh, that’s how they do it. Oh, it’s okay if it’s different.” (Katie)

Conversely, as Katie stated, men do not hesitate to challenge a woman’s position. She concluded, however, that they are unaware, or chose to be unaware, of this different treatment. As she said:

And I don’t even think they’re in touch with it. In any type of glimmer of trying to acknowledge that, they’ll shove that down as quick as they can. (Katie)
Katie’s experience corresponds to Niederle and Vesterlund’s (2008) conclusion that men receive a “psychic benefit” by being more competitive in the workplace, but they seem not to be aware of this benefit.

My participants’ experiences reflect existing research. While my sample is limited, in my participants’ perceptions, gender differences exist in conflict situations. Further, my participants have experienced gender triggers and gender schemas that have impacted their abilities to navigate conflict in the workplace.

Despite the centrality of gender to my research, and my goal of exploring the uniqueness of my participants’ experiences with conflict, an examination of gender directly did not reveal any new findings that have not been articulated in existing scholarship. Nonetheless, my framework’s focus on gender as a lens throughout the research process allows me to continue to explore for unique experiences that are not presently captured in the conflict resolution theories.

**Emotions dimension.**

I include data elements in the emotions dimension that captured participants’ feelings in the conflict scenarios, their observations of others’ emotional expression, their responses to emotions, their opinions regarding expressing emotions in the workplace, and the outcomes from expressing emotions.

Every participant discussed some aspect of the role of emotions in conflict and conflict resolution in the workplace, although their perception of the value of expressing emotions varied. Cheryl’s opinion was that the extreme expression of emotions,
particularly yelling, has no place in academia. Conversely, expressing oneself, whether negative or positive, is a preference for Mary. As Mary stated:

   actually I prefer people be honest vs. non-confrontational and sneaky. (Mary)

Mary was comfortable even in conflict situations where emotions were high, so long as the exchange was open and genuine. Similarly, Linda’s perception was that emotions are inevitable. As she said:

   Most times, when you have conflict, you’re dealing with emotional issues, you’re not dealing with anything that’s intellectual. You did something to you or they did something to trigger something in you, disturbing your process, your thinking. It’s emotional, it’s very emotional. (Linda)

   In general, my participants noted their negative emotional responses, such as “felt abused,” “feelings of inadequacy,” and “felt helpless.” As Alma stated in reference to her third conflict scenario:

   It was heartbreaking to me professionally because everything I was doing was to help the students, yet this article that was written about me made me look like this jackass. (Alma)

As Alma shared with me, the experience with that particular conflict took such an emotional toll on her that eventually she left the institution.

   Anger was a common description my participants used regarding emotions, although there was a spectrum of anger responses. For example, Linda articulated feeling disrespected and abused, which made her angry, a term she used several times during her description of second scenario. On the other hand, Karla, too, discussed feeling anger, but those feelings would dissipate relatively quickly. As she said:

   Sometimes during the course of the conversation, I would get angry, and when I’d get angry, I’d shut down because I couldn’t source my anger to a legitimate reason. I think I’d get upset with her style, I’d get upset with what I perceive to
be her old fashioned stance on these things. And so I would shut down from time-to-time. (Karla)

Despite these feelings, Karla would try to work out the problem with the other participant again another day.

Monica described herself as “confrontive” initially in her first conflict scenario, but she was quick to clarify she was not extreme in her expression. She also noted that she gave herself time to calm down before addressing the conflict again. Similarly, Cheryl noted that she expressed her emotions “loudly” at first, but then calmed down before resolving the conflict. As she described it:

Unfortunately, I allowed my emotions to speak a little bit louder initially, and when I got push back, I became aware that that emotional response wasn’t productive. And I allowed myself maybe overnight to not react immediately again in another emotional manner, and I thought, “Well, getting pissed off isn’t getting me anything, so how about I step back, give it some space.” And in the morning, I thought about it some more and thought, “Well, how about if we just compromise on this?” (Cheryl)

Some participants described themselves as not expressing anger or emotions in the workplace, preferring instead to remain calm. Katie said that she rarely experienced anything that would surprise her enough to get angry; Irene noted that she focused on the rational aspect of the conflict, keeping emotions out completely; and Chris said she is simply an even-tempered person. Chris also noted that she avoids conflict out of concern that it could cause an emotional response. As she stated:

I also don’t like to upset people, particularly my friends. I avoid the conflict sometimes so as not to hurt them, or I’m perceiving they may be hurt if I articulate something too directly. (Chris)

In addition to describing their own emotional responses, or lack thereof, my participants discussed the emotions the other parties in their conflicts expressed. Alma
used descriptions like “gets her back up” and “lashes out” in her second and third scenarios, respectively, and Norma said the other participant in her first conflict scenario was “red.” Brenda said that some parties in her first scenario cursed in a meeting and doors were slammed in her second conflict. Norma, too, described intense exchanges that included “shouting matches” in her second scenario. As Norma stated:

> There were vice presidents shouting, faculty shouting, the Provost. The Provost went to academic council and said, “We aren’t going to have any more bullying. We’re not going to be calling each other names anymore.” (Norma)

While anger led to shouting and other extreme responses in these scenarios, Katie noted that anger on the part of her department’s advisory board led to a resolution:

> Yeah, and they were pretty angry, to the point that they wrote a resolution stating how angry they were. (Katie)

Despite their strong feelings, however, this group attempted to get Katie to pursue the conflict on their behalf, which she refused to do. She felt it required their involvement in order for true resolution to be attained.

On the other end of the spectrum from overt emotional expression, Linda indicated that in her second conflict, people were simply “nervous.” As she said:

> Obviously, when you start asking those questions, a lot of people get nervous. So I had a lot of people who were not upset, but uncomfortable. (Linda)

Linda could visibly see that these individuals were not pleased with the situation.

However, in Mary’s second conflict scenario, she never knew there was a problem. As she described it:

> [the other party] got very upset and she actually talked to the dean . . . And he talked to me . . . she had talked to him in confidence, so I couldn’t really address what she had said to him . . . [But her] demeanor with me never changed. I would never have known. (Mary)
So emotions in the workplace are expressed overtly and subtly or not expressed at all. In each situation, however, negative emotions significantly impacted all participants involved.

In the family code of emotions, in addition to including emotions expressed by the other parties in the conflicts my participants described, I also gathered codes that reflected the participants’ *responses* to the emotions expressed and the impact emotions had on them as professionals. For example, Katrice “walked away” before she or the other party had the opportunity to make a comment that would have had an irreparable impact on the relationship in her first conflict scenario, while Alma felt the need to document and justify everything she did in her second scenario. Michelle, on the other hand, simply continued to work as she had before—and prayed. As she stated in reference to her first scenario:

*I was rattled. And I started saying my prayers. But over time, these suits never happened. That’s why I say time just intervened.* (Michelle)

Brenda, too, relied on her spirituality to sustain her in her second conflict scenario, which caused her much emotional pain. However, there was much less at stake for Karla and Katie in their respective second conflict scenarios, so they each continued to address the problem with the other parties until a resolution was reached—even if it was to agree to disagree, as in Katie’s situation. And Monica articulated her ability to be flexible in response to many situations. As she described:

*I’m a pretty high emotional intelligence . . . so I can flex a lot at work because I know there’s boundaries . . . I’ve been praised for being able to do this . . . I let it roll off my back.* (Monica)
Miriam’s preference is not to engage in conflict, but she recognized the need to resolve the situation in her first conflict scenario despite her colleague’s defensiveness. Miriam found that a group setting provided a “less pointed” interaction between the two. She also was cognizant of the emotional toll conflict was having on the other party. As she stated:

I think it was I was just trying to . . . be fair to her feelings. I felt like she was just being so beaten down by everybody, that I was just going to add to it by everything I said. (Miriam)

Miriam described multiple problems this other party was experiencing in her life as well, so she chose to back off of the conflict for a while. However, she also said she recognized she needed to be sensitive to the impact the situation was having on other members of the team, so as a leader she found avenues for seeking resolution that may have been less direct, but effective nonetheless. By approaching the conflict in this way, she felt she was being sensitive to the other party while also providing the leadership her team needed.

Some participants discussed the impact emotions can have in the workplace. Linda cautioned against allowing emotions to “take over,” stating:

You don’t let the emotion take over. I learned really it’s very important that when you’re totally, totally hot under the collar, you don’t attempt to do any of it. That you step back and you give it a day . . . the house is not on fire and no one is dead. It doesn’t have to be resolved today. (Linda)

Cheryl, Norma, Irene and Monica noted they cannot think clearly when they are emotional. As Irene described her reaction in her first conflict scenario when the other party became aggressive:
My problem is the clarity didn’t come up right away . . . I don’t really have very good defensive mechanism developed. So I received the situation as it is, instead of defending right away. (Irene)

Like Irene and Linda, many participants spoke of allowing themselves time to regroup so that they can engage in the conflict productively.

Miriam found that the conflicts were impacting her personally, so she elected to visit with a work counselor. As she stated:

It all just got to be too much on me emotionally. I was taking it with me outside of work. It was affecting my personal, social life because I was just so worried about everything that was work related. And so I did talk to the counselor at work about the first scenario that I had told you about, and also just some of my personal relationships through the transition both with my age and with the interim responsibilities. (Miriam)

According to Linda, who has studied psychology, when a professional has not dealt with his/her own issues, it impacts his/her ability to work through conflict in the workplace.

She stated:

I tell you, when it gets bunched up is when you haven’t resolved your own issues. That’s when you tend to come out attacking . . . If you haven’t cleaned up your act, you can’t clean up somebody or deal with somebody else’s. (Linda)

In summary, my participants discussed the emotional toll that conflict has on them and others in the workplace. They described both their emotional responses to conflict, as well as those of their colleagues. They noted the detrimental effects of negative emotions, and commented on strategies they use to both protect themselves as well as calm themselves down. Next, I compare my participants’ insight on emotional expression in conflict to scholarship focused on emotions.
Emotions and conflict scholarship.

van Kleef et al. (2006) note that the focus on emotions in negotiation have traditionally been on the impact of emotions on the negotiator’s performance. For example, Allred et al. (1997) demonstrate that individuals who are experiencing positive emotions during a negotiation tend to be more cooperative, whereas those who are experiencing negative emotions tend to be more competitive. As they summarize, “Positive mood had a significant beneficial influence on people’s expectations, strategies, and outcomes in both interpersonal and intergroup bargaining encounters” (p. 574). van Kleef et al. (2006), however, argue that this scholarship fails to examine the interactive nature of emotions, which is the focus in recent research. They find that negotiators who perceive their opponent to be angry tended to make larger concessions in anticipation of avoiding an impasse. Conversely, those who perceived their opponent as happy made fewer concessions because they did not anticipate reaching an impasse.

Olekalns et al. (2008) examines emotions from a communications standpoint, noting that while messages signal strategies and tactics to the other party in a conflict, they also contain discernable emotional components. Olekaln et al. discusses “Sociofunctional theories of emotion,” (p. 82) is similar to the van Kleef et al. (2006) findings and suggest that the other party’s emotional expression can negatively or positively affect the outcome.

Some scholars have focused on anger expression. Rancer and Baukus (1987) observe that women are reluctant to argue in the workplace because they view it as a hostile encounter and a means of controlling another, while Domagalski and Steelman’s
(2007) note that “anger expression by higher status members is a means of asserting and reinforcing one’s location within the organizational hierarchy” (p. 301).

My participants’ descriptions of emotions in conflict align with the van Kleef et al. (2006) and Olekalns et al. (2008) findings. The women I interviewed noted the impact that emotions had on the nature of their interactions, and they articulated their awareness of the effects of negative emotions on their ability to successfully navigate conflict. They also reflected Rancer and Baukus’s (1987) observations regarding anger specifically. Many of my participants noted the precautions they took, such as waiting for a period of time, so that they would not publicly display their anger.

While some scholarship examines emotions in conflict directly, other research considers the role of emotions in workplace conflict more broadly. Bartunek (1992), in her scholarship on “behind the scenes” conflict in the workplace, notes that the expression of emotions in private workplace conflicts enable public conflict interactions to appear more rational than they are. Her research demonstrates that this element of private conflicts helps to foster organizational resolution. As Bartunek (1992) states, private conflicts allow participants to “collect more ‘data’ about disputes than they could in public and formal settings where ‘rational’ behavior is required” (p. 219). This collection of data enhances successful negotiation processes in the public realm.

While my participants did not discuss the benefits of their interactions to the organizations’ public realms, their description of their experiences with emotions support Bartunek’s (1992) notion of data collection in the form of reading the other party’s emotional state. My participants demonstrated an awareness of the emotional condition
of the other and an ability to alter their strategy because of that data. For example, in Miriam’s first scenario, she adjusted her approach based on information she gathered regarding the emotional frailty of the other party. She decided not to push the other party for fear the pressure would be more than she could handle emotionally, and instead sought alternative strategies for resolution. Norma, too, removed herself from the debate in her second scenario, believing that the anger being expressed by the other party was directed at her. She felt that the more important debate—issues related to retention—would be better served if she was not part of the discussion.

My interviews did not reveal any new or unique aspects of emotions in conflict that have not been explored in the literature. However, this dimension underscores the emphasis that my participants placed on the nature of the connection with the other party and on preserving those relationships where possible. Again, I will readdress this element of connection in my discussion of the relationships dimension.

**Pause dimension.**

The pause dimension captured a concept that a number of participants discussed during our initial discussions. This dimension encapsulates ideas associated with providing oneself a break in the conflict in order to get a better understanding of the scope of the problem and to strategize on a resolution, or to control one’s emotions—either to prevent them from escalating or to calm them.

Aspects of this dimension were implied in my discussion of the emotions dimension, but the pause dimension is broader than my participants taking a break from the conflict when they were feeling overly emotional. For example, Linda, Irene, Katrice
and Brenda spoke of stepping back from a situation in order to gain a broader perspective. This time away from the direct conflict allows for contemplation, clearer thinking, and learning. As Irene described in her first conflict scenario:

I think I said in the meeting . . . I didn’t make a final conclusion . . . Let’s think about it. Actually, I didn’t yield. [I] somewhat pause[d]. (Irene)

The time to pause allowed Brenda to “cultivate curiosity.” As she stated:

I usually will pull back a little bit to gain a broader perspective, and then observe the situation with all the factors that I know with a great deal of curiosity. One of my favorite things I cultivate is curiosity. I cultivate curiosity. Whenever there’s a conflict situation, the first thing that comes up for me is curiosity. “Oh, I wonder why this is happening? I wonder what the factors are?” Then I start pondering how I can gain enough information to help people work through whatever conflicts they have. (Brenda)

Similarly, Alma took the time to gather information, particularly from an historical perspective. She was new to her position and recognized that attempting to learn more of the culture and the background of any situation put her at an advantage.

Irene noted that this step in the process provides a focus on the rational rather than the emotional aspects of conflict. In her first conflict scenario, Irene used it as a means to encourage the other party not to make a rash decision. Katrice, too, commented on the value of:

giving myself distance and time to think. That’s the most important thing I can find, of course, is time to think so I don’t react immediately. (Katrice)

Similarly, Linda commented that stepping back helps to prevent poor decisions. As she stated:

it is when you are in a rush and when you’re being pressured, when everything is happening at the same time, that you could make some very serious mistakes. (Linda)
As discussed above in the emotions dimension section, my participants felt that emotional responses can cause or escalate problems. As such, they would pause in order to give themselves an opportunity to calm their emotional responses. Monica acknowledged that she needed time to “calm down” for a brief time in her first scenario, and Cheryl, who initially responded emotionally in her second scenario took the time overnight to rethink her response. As she stated:

I allowed myself maybe overnight to not react immediately again in another emotional manner. (Cheryl)

Monica, however, noted that she is the type of person who is not comfortable allowing a conflict to go on too long. She is compelled to address it, although at times she recognizes:

Sometimes you just need to let things be for a while and you circle back and you hit them up again. (Monica)

Chris, on the other hand, who would prefer to avoid conflict, acknowledges that not addressing a problem can cause other problems. As she noted:

I realize that sometimes it’s necessary and there are tensions that need to be resolved, but . . . sometimes I wait too long to confront a situation. (Chris)

I have been unable to find existing research that addresses a strategic move in personal conflict situations regarding the concept I capture in the Pause dimension. However, it is significant to my Feminist Conflict Process Model, as I elaborate upon in Chapter 6.

**Work culture/atmosphere dimension.**

The question I posed to my participants regarding the culture or atmosphere in which the conflict situation took place was designed to determine the influence that a
departmental or institutional culture has on conflict scenarios. In Appendix V, I provide a sample of a document I created to gain a general overview of all scenario elements, with the last column summarizing the culture/atmosphere. When I resorted the data by conflict type, conflict resolution style, and outcome, I found no discernable pattern regarding the influence that work culture had on these conflicts. According to my participants’ descriptions, all conflict types, resolution styles, and outcomes had both positive and negative work environments.

In general, I note that the institutional cultures range from “underground” to “student-centered.” Katie, Katrice, Brenda and Tamera described their cultures as one of change, particularly impacted by changes in leadership. Linda, Karla, and Monica discussed issues of territorialism at the institutional level, with Miriam observing a “silod” effect within her school. Linda described resources as being a critical factor in territorialism. As she said:

It’s a very stressful environment. . . . I had been in some meetings prior to that where I have observed the level of tension and the level of friction because of the resources, because everybody wants to get what they can to run their programs . . . . (Linda)

Finally, Chris and Brenda said their institutions are known for being friendly and focused on the students.

Those who described the immediate atmosphere associated with the conflicts also described a variety of influences on those conflicts. Alma’s experience has been that conflicts are impacted significantly by the leadership’s actions or attitudes. Similarly, Chris articulated the influence of historical conflicts between divisions on all interactions between professionals. Brenda, Cheryl, Katie and Norma noted that fear set the stage for
conflicts they described. Conversely, Miriam described her divisional culture as “entrepreneurial,” and Monica said her division has an open, supportive climate.

My question regarding style transfer was also designed to get at the influence of a masculine paradigm on my participants. However, my participants did not respond to this question in a way that I anticipated. That is, none overtly expressed that their personal styles were being hampered by a masculine paradigm. Indeed, more than half felt there was no difference between their personal and professional styles, with an additional three stating that their personal conflicts may be better resolved if they responded as they would at work. Only three noted that their professional styles would in anyway benefit from having more of their personal styles enacted at work, and in those three cases, there was not any indication that such an infusion would result in dramatic changes. Katie simply noted a degree of forgiveness that would be beneficial, Alma spoke of increased calm, and Katie noted that her willingness to develop stronger ties between her colleagues might be valuable.

*Work culture scholarship.*

Gelfand, Leslie, and Keller (2008) find that organizations have distinct “conflict cultures” that minimize individual variation in responses to conflict. They discuss two dimensions that serve as catalysts for the organizational conflict culture. As Gelfand et al. (2008) describe them:

The first dimension reflects the notion that organizations develop norms for whether conflict is managed in an agreeable or cooperative manner versus a disagreeable or competitive manner. . . . The second dimension reflects the notion that organizations develop norms for whether conflict is managed actively or passively. (pp. 141-142)
Similarly, Bartunek (1992) observes that in authoritative and bureaucratic work environments, employees utilize "nonrational and informal means [of conflict resolution] such as vengeance, avoidance, and accommodation . . . [because] the press to get on with one’s work provides incentives to keep up the appearances that things are running smoothly” (pp. 220-221). Bartunek also notes that in work environments in which independent boundaries exist, the lack of connection endorses the use of passive resistance, ignoring, conflict avoidance.

Holt and Devore (2005), too, examine organizational culture in their meta-analysis. In addition to examining organizational culture (individualistic vs. collectivistic), they examine the variables of gender and organizational role (superior, subordinate, and peer). Like Gelfand et al. (2008), Holt and Devore observe a correlation between culture and conflict styles. However, Holt and Devore (2005) also find that, regardless of culture, women employees are more likely to use and endorse compromise.

Stanley and Algert (2007) conducted a qualitative study of conflict management styles, interviewing 20 department heads at a public research university. In contrast to other studies I have cited, Stanley and Algert’s findings did not reveal organizational culture as a factor in conflict situations until the conflict becomes overwhelming.

Dubinskas (1992) examines more detailed nuances of culture, looking not just at the organizational stories, rituals and values, but also professionally-related activities as “the means through which significant beliefs are made real and the context in which these beliefs become important enough to argue over” (p. 205). Noting that particularly where the work is highly specialized, professionals’ daily activities serve as the lens through
which they make meaning, which could be dramatically different from colleagues in another professional arena. Such differing perspectives cause conflict, according to Dubinskas (1992).

Chris observed that there was a cultural clash between academic affairs, in which her program was housed, and business affairs. The culture between the two divisions was one of “ongoing tension,” as Chris described it, which influenced all interactions between the two staffs. She cited this tension as a factor in preventing a quick resolution in her first conflict scenario, whereas the “open” culture between academic affairs and student affairs served as a platform for a quick resolution in her second scenario, in which the other party was a member of the student affairs staff. This example supports Dubinskas’s (1992) observation that culture as viewed from a professional-level perspective is more relevant to the discussion of conflict and culture.

Despite Chris’s example, the perspective that culture impacts an individual’s conflict style differs from many of my participants’ experiences. For example, all three scenarios for Linda and Norma took place in the same institution. Linda described her institutional culture as territorial and guarded, and Norma described hers as bifurcated between those who are focused on what is best for the institution and those who desire control. However, in her first, second, and third scenarios, Linda described her conflict styles respectively as: (a) attentive, (b) confrontational, and (c) confrontational (after attempting to be attentive). Norma described her respective styles for her three scenarios as attentive, confrontational, and communicative. Instead of the culture driving the style,
my participants responded to the situation to determine the style they used, which more closely resembles Stanley and Algert’s (2007) findings.

Multicultural organization theories served as a foundation for structuring this research study. As I detail in Chapter 2: Review of Relevant Literature, the basic assumption within these theories is that the cultural environment impacts the work environment on a multitude of levels (Clark, 2004; Grubbs, 2000; Martin, 1992, 2002; Tierney, 1988; Trice & Beyer, 1993), including conflict and conflict resolution (Bartunek, 1992; Dubinskas, 1992; Gelfand et al., 2008; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Olekalns et al., 2008). While only one question was designed to elicit a response regarding culture, various aspects of my participants’ responses create an in-depth understanding of the environment in which they worked at the time of the interviews. Consequently, in order to provide a more robust perspective, in this section I also discuss the specific environment in which my participants worked: higher education.

Higher education dimension.

The dimension labeled “higher education” covers a broad perspective. No specific question in my interview protocol addressed higher education specifically. However, participants spoke of the variation of culture among academic units in decentralized institutions; the influence of tenure on junior faculty and its impact on their willingness—or reticence—to engage in conflict with senior faculty; and differing perspectives within the various academic and administrative departments depending upon their mission. These types of conflicts are so common that, when I asked Brenda to describe the culture in which the conflict took place, she simply replied:
Hmmm. I don’t know, academia? (Brenda)

For example, in response to my request for Katie to describe her view of conflict, she replied:

How do I view conflict in the workplace? I think in the academic workplace, it’s just sort of an inherent part of what the academy is. In part due to tenure and the fact that there’s a bit more freedom from faculty to behave the way they wouldn’t in an industrial or private setting, therefore the conflict can maybe blow up. (Katie)

Further, when I inquired about the culture for Chris’s first scenario, she noted the “pre-existing tension” between her department and another, saying:

Part of the preexisting tension is that those of us in academic affairs and student affairs feel like the business affairs folks don’t really think about students. They think about systems and the organization, but they don’t really think about the “customers.” (Chris)

Higher education conflict scholarship.

Like many of my participants, scholars have found conflict to be inherent in higher education (Barsky, 2002; Findlen, 2000; Holton, 1995, 1998; Stanley & Algert, 2007; West, 2006), finding issues similar to those noted by my participants. These scholars note that debate and dissent are expected in higher education, and difference in values at the department level and unique organizational structures create an environment that, inevitably, is conflict-ridden.

As noted above, I anticipated that culture would be at the center of my findings. In particular, my review of organizational theories, using my theoretical framework as a lens to evaluate them, suggested that culture would be at the center of my exploration. However, based on my analysis, neither the “Culture/atmosphere” nor “Higher education” dimensions reveal significant or unique findings.
Allies and problem people dimensions.

The allies and problem people dimensions relate closely to the relationships dimension. That is, these two dimensions capture the nature of relationships that my participants had with the other parties in the conflict or other members of their community. Given the close connection to the relationships dimension, I defer the allies and problem people dimensions’ comparison to existing research to the discussion within the relationships dimension. However, I elect to keep allies and problem people as distinct dimensions because of the uniqueness of the perspectives presented within each and, as I describe in Chapter 6, the significance of these dimensions to my theory.

Allies dimension.

Several participants discussed the concept of involving a third party. While my study involved conflict between peers without the oversight of a third party who has the authority to resolve the conflict, the concepts I captured with the dimension “allies” reflect situations in which my participants sought guidance, input, and support from others. For example, in her first scenario, Tamera spoke of her peers strategically aligning themselves in order to address an issue more effectively. Katrice, in her second scenario, discussed her efforts to convince a peer that diversity did not need to be defined in order to hold summit meetings on diversity. When she could not convince the other party, she began to engage other committee members, which resulted in a collaborative effort to resolve the conflict. As she described:

I can’t take full responsibility for resolving [it] . . . I do feel that I was the person who was leading the opposition against her all along, until others gradually started seeing what I was saying, agreeing with me either directly or indirectly. And then
this [other] person came along with what ended up being a solution, whether she intended it to be or not. (Katrice)

In response to my follow-up question regarding the attribution of the conflict resolution, Katrice responded:

I think allies. The fact that other people on the committee were like, “Actually, that’s a good point.” . . . So that was really huge. Having allies, having people who were able to dislodge the situation and put it on a different track in some way. I think that was really key. (Katrice)

Similar to enlisting allies, Norma and Monica spoke of “coalition building” in their respective second conflict scenarios. As Norma said:

I did a lot of coalition building, or explaining or talking to the other people on the committee about the situation. (Norma)

However, not all participants perceived the idea of coalition building as positive. In a follow-up question with Miriam regarding her first conflict scenario, I asked if she considered her efforts to discuss an issue with her peers as “information gathering” or “coalition building.” She responded by saying:

I hope it didn’t appear to be coalition building because we all get along really well for the most part. We’re very collegial, and I didn’t want to make it become about this one person. I also know that if I did that it would make me look like a very cold and callous manager. (Miriam)

In this situation, since the managers have equal say on the team, it would have been viewed as calculating to build coalitions “against” one person. However, discussing the situation with colleagues as a form of information gathering to resolve the conflict was an acceptable practice in Miriam’s office.

While she did not specifically refer to allies or coalition building, Chris involved an existing council to assist her in resolving her third conflict scenario. In that case, the other party was a department chair who consistently failed to inform her of changes in
faculty he selected to teach honors course. Chris chose to avoid direct conflict with him because of her perception that he would be aggressive. Instead, she and her council of advisors worked on an “end run” strategy. As Chris described the efforts:

My honors council, which is an advisory group of professors, is developing a honors faculty status criteria so that in order to teach an honors class, one is going to have to make application, just as one needs to make application to be a graduate faculty member. (Chris)

By involving others who had a vested interest in the honors program, she would be able to resolve the problem not only with this individual but also with other department chairs who did not always think strategically about faculty placement.

Finally, the concept of allies encompasses the involvement of experts to help convince the other party of one’s positions. Alma, for example, stated in response to my question about attribution of the conflict resolution:

When it came down to me versus one other person, who was adamant that she was not going to go along with my plan . . . I brought in the consultant from the software system . . . I let the woman who was opposed to me address her concerns to the consultant. I didn’t prep the consultant or anything like that. When she asked her questions, the consultant alleviated her worries, and then that’s when she said, “Okay, I’ll concede and we’ll just go with what Alma wants to go with.” (Alma)

In addition to Alma, others who enlisted the assistance of experts in resolving their conflicts included Brenda, Michelle, and Norma.

*Problem people dimension.*

Almost all participants, with the exception of Miriam and Michelle, spoke of conflicts with individuals who were commonly at the center of conflict on campus. I capture this concept with this dimension, a version of Katrice’s term “problem person.” My participants used a variety terms and descriptions: Tamera used the word

Issues related to problem people impacted multiple situations. For example, Norma began her description of all her conflict scenarios by telling me about one member of the faculty who “preferred” to be in conflict. As she stated in reference to her second conflict scenario:

It goes back to that preferred state of conflict of being. This guy prefers—I have no question in my mind that he prefers to be in conflict. (Norma)

She went on to describe his impact in multiple situations:

[The strategic planning committee] would meet every week . . . and what we’d end up talking about is: How do we marginalize his behavior? (Norma)

The strategies for dealing with problem people varied. Karla, after attempting to work with this person in multiple situations, eventually avoided the other party. She simply found other ways to conduct business rather than engaging with the other party. Alma was philosophical about it. As she stated:

And some people just will always want to fight, so I try to recognize that and move on. (Alma)

Brenda has learned to set ground rules, particularly in meetings. She said she states expectations for behavior, and then actively reminds parties if they fail to adhere to the ground rules. As she described a meeting in her first conflict:

The folks from DEPARTMENT1, two of them, kept interrupting everybody, and I had to go [gesturing the time-out signal], “Whoa!” And do the timeout sign. You know, “Time out, NAME1. I think NAME3 is speaking right now and we need to let her finish her thought.” And the whole time I’m doing that, I’m thinking, “This doesn’t sound like a bunch of college professors. It sounds like first graders to me.” (Brenda)
The allies and problem people dimensions are on opposite ends of the spectrum of relationships my participants had with other parties in the conflicts they described. Consequently, as I note above, I defer my comparison of these two dimension to the existing scholarship until after my discussion of the relationships dimension.

**Relationships dimension.**

During interviews with my study participants, they discussed various aspects of their connection with other conflict parties, which I capture in this final dimension: relationships. They spoke of the importance of resolving conflicts amicably when relationships were professionally important. They noted relationships that were valuable to them personally as well, an element that was essential to consider in conflict resolution. They also commented on relationships that were not important to them, professionally or personally, and they discussed the nature of relationships with people who were problems to deal with or were their allies. My participants talked about the significance of relationship building as well. Finally, they reflected on relationships that had changed as a result of conflict—both positively and negatively.

As my participants articulated, I also capture in this dimension issues of trust, which directly impacted the nature of the relationship. Specifically, I note instances in which my participants discussed their connection with the other parties based on their ability or inability to trust them.

**Relationship needed, valued & trusted.**

Relationships that my participants spoke of needing included key members of the campus community, such as in Linda’s first scenario. While she felt strongly about her
perspective on the budget situation, she also recognized that the controller was someone with whom she needed to maintain a good working relationship. As Linda articulated:

I know that there’s certain people on campus that you need to function, and the controller is one of them. He has control over the money! (Linda)

Consequently, Linda was careful in her approach with him, using a “reasonable” approach, educating him, and giving him time to process the information. Similarly, in her third scenario, Tamera was very aware of the importance of her relationship with a colleague who was responsible for human resources. Tamera had a problem staff member whom she needed to remove, but Tamera’s colleague insisted upon going through the proper procedures. As Tamera said:

I really sought her direction because I knew she was not going to cave, so I figured well I better play by her rules or else this is not going to happen. (Tamera)

Tamera invested the time and effort to do as her colleague recommended, but when it became critical to make a change, Tamera became more insistent because of the negative impact it was having on Tamera’s staff. The two parties had built sufficient trust between them—and Tamera had sufficient documentation—that they were able to move forward quickly when it was necessary.

For my participants, needing a relationship differed from valuing a relationship. In addition to needing someone from a professional standpoint, my participants discussed valuing a personal connection with the other party in a conflict. In Katrice’s first scenario, she valued the relationship to the point where she refused to engage in conflict, choosing instead to remove herself from the situation. She noted that in other conflict
situations, she had no problem bluntly confronting the other party, but she was careful not to do so in this scenario. As Katrice summarized:

   And I just wanted to say, hey, listen, a, b, c, deal with it or don’t talk to me again. Okay, I can be that way. . . . But with her, I do want to preserve the relationship, so I don’t want to give her the option of walking away. (Katrice)

For similar reasons, Miriam elected not to directly address the conflict in her second scenario, although she conceded that if the meeting she and other party were planning together had gone “egregiously wrong” she would have had to deal openly with the conflict. But, things were progressing adequately for the meeting, and since the other party was a highly valued employee in the office, rather than discussing frustrations directly with her, Miriam simply found ways to work around the challenges.

   Norma, too, valued the relationship with the other party in her first conflict scenario, and because of her long-standing professional relationship with him, she also trusted him. When he came to her office to express his deep frustration with her, she immediately addressed the conflict. Indeed, she attributed the quick resolution to the fact that they had a positive relationship built on mutual trust.

   Relationship not valued or trusted.

   Unlike in her first scenario, Katrice did not “particularly like” the other party in her second conflict scenario. As she noted:

   It’s someone I could live without, but still we’re working professionals here. We’re going to have to work together in the future, so this is more about maintaining a collegial relationship. (Katrice)

In this situation, however, Katrice did not hesitate to confront the conflict. The conflict was resolved mutually, but mostly due to a suggestion made by another member of the committee rather than Katrice’s efforts to achieve mutual resolution. Katrice felt she was
right and she had little at risk, so she worked to gain momentum for her perspective among her colleagues on the committee. While a compromise was reached, Katrice did not initiate or pursue it.

In other situations where trust did not exist and the relationship was not valued, my participants dealt with the other parties with caution. For example, Michelle noted that, in her first conflict scenario, she had no history with the other party. This—coupled with his handling of the meeting in which she was “blindsided” by a group conference call rather than a phone call as she had expected—prompted her to deal with the other party very carefully after that incident. As she said:

I didn’t trust him after that. I didn’t trust him enough to share that information with him. I felt that it might be used against me. (Michelle)

“That information” she referred to was her frustration over the meeting. Typically, Michelle is open and direct in her communication. With this party, she felt her honesty would be used to discredit her professionally, so she simply pretended nothing was wrong.

Karla, too, found the other party in her first conflict scenario to be untrustworthy. The other party lied on numerous occasions. As Karla commented:

So I think just in general this is someone I have to deal with now, and I don’t trust her. (Karla)

She initially attempted to work through conflicts with the other party, but after several failed attempts, she began to work around the other party. The trust level was so low that Karla felt it was not worth her time to engage in a resolution process with the other party that would only result in more lies and no productivity. She focused instead on
accomplishing what she needed to succeed in her own job, which often meant avoiding
the other party.

**Building relationships.**

A few participants commented on the importance of building relationships with
one’s colleagues. Katrice and Linda noted their efforts to connect with their staff, for
example. And Alma’s strategy overall in her new position was to team-build with staff
and colleagues alike, with a focus on building trust. Brenda provided the most detailed
comments regarding the importance of relationship building. As she summarized:

> If you’re doing a lot of conflict resolution, it is very, very important to cultivate
genuine, supportive, honest, straightforward relationships with your
constituencies, people that you’re dealing with, and particularly people in
positions of knowledge or power that can help you understand the dynamics... (Brenda)

Brenda spoke of cultivating relationships with colleagues in general, as well as during the
process of conflict resolution. She also noted the importance of cultivating others who
are in positions to understand the dynamics of people and the organization. As such,
Brenda spoke of being proactive in relationship building.

Miriam presented a different perspective on issues related to relationship building
and trust. In her third conflict scenario, she initially focused on building trust, but found
that, despite her efforts, the other party in the conflict could not fully trust her. He
worried that she would not follow through on her commitments, which had been his
experience with other people in Miriam’s position in the past. At the time of our
interview, she was questioning the value of investing the time and energy into building
trust, particularly since she was being held accountable by the dean to raise money—
something the other party was hindering. She was faced with the dilemma of continuing
to build trust, or moving forward with fundraising and, in the process, possibly destroying the trust she had built up to that point.

*Changing relationships.*

Also captured in the relationships dimension is the impact that the conflict itself had on the relationships between the participants and other parties to the conflict. Miriam noted that her relationship with the other party in her first conflict changed after she addressed the conflict. They used to be friends socially, going out for after-work drinks and discussing professional and personal issues. After the conflict, if they did anything social, the conversation topics remained work-focused. Conversely, Tamera noted a strengthening of relationships in both her first and third conflict scenarios. The successful resolution of the conflict helped to build trust between her and the other parties. Chris, too, felt that her relationship with the other party in her second conflict improved after their effort to resolve the conflict mutually.

For Linda and Brenda in their respective second scenarios, the other party’s handling of the conflict changed their perception of the value of the relationship. They each had long-standing relationships with their colleagues involved in the conflicts, so they were surprised at the disrespect the other party showed them. Linda felt “dumped on” when her boss and two others struck a deal to move a failing project into her area. This move, which sent clear signals that her boss did not value their relationship, changed Linda’s opinion of him as well. As she said:

> Three people who I really respected, I saw that, wow, they don’t deserve the respect that I’m giving them. So it changed relationships. It really did. (Linda)
Linda noted that this experience taught her she could not trust these parties in the future.

In Brenda’s situation, she perceived her relationship with her boss to also be a strong friendship. When her boss/friend reacted very negatively to the conflict, Brenda felt that she lost a close personal friend as well as a valued colleague. This experience caused Brenda intense personal anguish; she relied on spiritual practices to get her through resulting emotional pain.

**Relationship and workplace conflict scholarship.**

While the conflict resolution practitioner scholarship observes the significance of the relationship between the other party in conflict situations, little empirical research in conflict resolution focuses on the connection, or relationship between parties in workplace conflict. One reason is that a number of workplace conflict studies have been conducted in the laboratory, with conflicting parties established randomly (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; Eckel et al., 2008; Molm, 1985; Putnam, 1988; Wolf et al., 2009). In lab situations, it is highly unlikely that the participants have past relationships with each other, nor do they have the potential for a future relationship. For example, Insko et al. (1993) explore inter-individual and intergroup conflicts, or discontinuity, by examining teams using the prisoners dilemma game theory (PDG) research tool. The tool evaluates cooperation between participants; however, the teams were established for the purpose of the laboratory experiment. As Insko et al. state, “On arrival, six subjects were asked to draw slips of paper to determine randomly with whom they would interact” (Insko et al., 1993, p. 119). With no prior history with the other party in the study, it is not possible to examine the effect of relationships on conflict resolution.
Studies that examine relationships in workplace conflict often focus on interpersonal conflicts, rather than the role of relationships in conflicts (Donohue & Kolt, 1992; Frone, 2000; Gayle & Preiss, 2002; Gayle et al., 2002; Knapp, Putnam, & Davis, 1988; Morrill, 1992; Putnam, 1988; Schieman & Reid, 2008). A few studies, however, investigate the impact relationships can have on the outcome. Knapp et al. (1988) explore the issue of relationship in conflict to some degree, noting the complexity of testing models that have various dimensions of conflict, such as flexibility, reciprocity, cohesion and flexibility. However, they note the difficulty in testing such dimensions. As Knapp et al. (1988) state, “For example, a goal to maintain the relationship may shape the intent to be flexible (rather than simply cooperative), which is manifested through tactics that fluctuate between and among different conflict strategies (rather than a choice to be either collaborating or accommodating)” (p. 419). The authors recommend that research instruments attempting to explore these dimensions should factor in organizational norms, organizational context, interpersonal relationships, personal style preference, actual (vs. reported) communication styles, and nonverbal communication.

A few researchers discuss aspects of connections between conflict parties (Pruitt & Kim, 2004; Wilson & Putnam, 1990). Pruitt and Kim (2004), for example, explore social bonds, which they define as “positive attitude, respect, trust, friendship, kinship, perceived similarity, common group membership, common ethnic and cultural identity, and future dependence” (Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p. 134). They note that social bonds create stability and reduce the likelihood that conflicts will escalate. Pruitt and Kim (2004) also state that social bonds encourage yielding and problem solving and reduce the use of
contentious tactics. However, they cite a small number of studies to support their conclusion, including studies that have little relevance to workplace conflict, such as studies examining incidences of violence, international case studies, a qualitative study on community conflict, and a lab-based experiment on group interaction. Further, Pruitt and Kim’s (2004) research does not examine neutral or negative personal relationships, leaving out a significant portion of the spectrum of social bonds that employees may have with each other.

Wilson and Putnam (1990) examine the role of negotiators’ goals on the interaction, with relationship considered one of three goals for interactions. They articulate three types of interaction goals: instrumental, relationship, and identity. Within each type, they observe three levels of abstraction: global, regional, and local. In terms of relational goals, the authors acknowledge the importance of establishing or maintaining relationships between parties. They observe that the relationship goal can function concomitantly with other goals or as a means for achieving one of the other goals. Wilson and Putnam (1990) also discuss the significance of power and trust in the relationship goal. Power changes dependency between parties and is evident in strategies and tactics. As they state, trust “grows as negotiators discover common associations, similar dislikes, and similar language” (p. 386).

Finally, in the introductory chapter of their text focused on behind the scene disputes in the workplace, Kolb and Putnam (1992a) summarize past research on factors that influence procedures used in employees disputes: (a) the relationship between the parties, (b) the kind of issues in the disputes, and (c) the organizational culture. As they
state, “In other words, the issues and problems in disputes have no meaning apart from the context in which they are enacted” (p. 13). These observations are the based upon their exploration of hidden conflicts—that is, individual or group conflicts in organizations that are not part of formal dispute resolution channels. However, relationships, as in the other studies I summarize here, are not a central element that the scholars explored.

I did not find empirical research in the conflict resolution field that focuses solely on the role of relationships in workplace conflict situations. Thus, I expanded my search to include research focused on organizational teams, which I explore in the next section.

**Conflict and organizational teams scholarship**

As organizations have expanded their use of decision-making teams, conflict scholars have increasingly examined processes for dispute resolution in the context of teams (Beersma, Conlon, & Hollenbeck, 2008; De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008; De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; Desivilya & Eizen, 2005; Kellermanns, Floyd, Pearson, & Spencer, 2008; Kimsey et al., 2006; Mohammed & Angell, 2004; Randel & Jaussi, 2008). Teams have been examined from a variety of perspectives, including social motivations in conflict, issues related to personal conflict, group identification and norms, and the impact of team member diversity. For example, Randel and Jaussi (2008) and Mohammed and Angell (2004) explore issues related to team diversity and relationships conflicts, with Mohammed and Agnell focusing on gender specifically, and Randel and Jaussi focusing on both surface level diversity, which includes gender and ethnicity, and deep-level diversity, which includes time urgency and extraversion.
One study that is highly relevant to the relationships dimension is the exploration by Beersma et al. (2008) of the social motivations of group members in decision-making. The authors describe social motivations as “preferences for distribution of outcomes between oneself and one’s team members” (pp. 118-119). They determine that individuals are guided by either prosocial or proself motivations. Prosocial members prioritize cooperation, are focused on harmony between members, and “define [decision-making] situations as a choice between morally appropriate and inappropriate alternatives” (Beersma et al., 2008, p. 118). Antecedents to prosocial teams include members’ focus on future consequences and a tendency to trust, and situations in which there is a high level of agreement between members. Antecedents can also be situational, including organizations in which peer support is expected and team reward structures are in place, team members whose dispositions tend to be positive and happy, and teams that have a history and an expectation of continued relationship among members.

In contrast, proself individuals are competitive and focused on power, independence, and personal success. According to Beersma et al. (2008), proself members “tend to see cooperative behavior as weak, and independent and competitive thinking as strong and smart” (p. 118). The individual-level antecedent to proself teams is members who have a tendency and willingness to deceive and manipulate for personal gain. Situational antecedents include organizations that focus on individual rewards and perpetuate a competitive environment, organizational members who are negative and angry, and environments in which there is little or no social connection with others and no anticipation of working with or seeing other parties in the future.
While Beersma et al. (2008) note that team members’ relationship and history with each other can affect social motivations:

Much research on social motives in teams has largely ignored the fact that, in real life, team members often have an ongoing relationship with a history and future together. Although this history and future may affect whether team members adopt primarily prosocial or proself positions, most often, team conflict and decision making are studied either in the lab, with ad hoc teams lacking a shared history or future, or cross-sectionally in the field, which also excludes the possibility of investigating the effects of team history and future. (p. 122)

Thus, even though Beersma et al. (2008) acknowledge that relationships play a role in social motivating factors for behavior in decision-making teams, they note that the role of prior and future connection with other team members has been relatively unexamined.

Finally, Wolf et al. (2009) observe the challenges associated with laboratory-based studies, noting that often intergroup and inter-individual discontinuity research results in recommendations for interventions that prove to be impractical and ineffective in the organizational setting. Wolf et al. seeks to develop more useful solutions by exploring the “efficacy of considering future consequences as a simple conflict-reduction procedure” (p. 831). The Wolf et al. (2009) research study was also conducted in the laboratory setting and used an iteration of the PDG tool, but they conducted experiments twice with the same teams in order to examine participants’ responses the second time based on their experiences in the first interaction. While Wolf et al. do not specifically examine the role of relationships in conflict, their investigation acknowledges the importance of an historical understanding of the other party in a conflict situation.

Empirical research on the role of relationships in conflicts is limited. Thus, I do not attempt to directly relate my participants’ descriptions of relationships with the literature I describe here as I have done in other sections.
In the next step of the dimensional analysis process, I audit each dimension to determine the one that is central to my study. In doing so, I find that the relationship dimension is the central dimension, which then gets relabeled as the perspective.

**Determining the Central Dimension**

Above I describe in detail the various family codes, or dimensions, citing scholarship that supports or contradicts my findings. Here I audit each of the dimensions to explore its centrality to the data. I do this in aggregate, rather than within each dimension section above, in order to make comparisons or discuss the connections among the various dimensions.

**Auditing dimensions.**

The dimensions of conflict types and styles, while certainly reflecting the experience and perspectives of my participants, do not reflect unique elements in the study of conflict and conflict resolution. That is, while these perspectives are highly relevant to this study and serve as important elements of my participants’ experiences, these two dimensions do not highlight any new knowledge in the conflict discipline. Thus, these dimensions are not the central dimension in this study.

The workplace culture/atmosphere dimension had less centrality to my data than I anticipated. In my participants’ experiences organizational culture has little influence on the conflict. I expected to observe a strong influence for cases of conflict in highly masculine cultures. However, my participants varied their styles not based on culture, but based on the situation. Further, the gender dimension, while highly relevant to my
study, does not reveal any new knowledge of how women leaders in higher education navigate conflict in the workplace, nor does the emotions dimension.

The pause dimension is unique. I was unable to find existing literature that focuses on the role of pause in conflict resolution in the workplace. As such, it demonstrates potential for serving as the central dimension. However, like allies and problem people, the pause dimension is too specific in nature. It describes actions taken or roles played in the process of resolution for my participants, but it is not conceptually big enough to serve as the central dimension.

The relationships dimension, however, is conceptually large enough to serve as central to the other dimensions. It is, as I note in many of the dimension descriptions, connected to many of the other dimensions. For example, the relationship dimension has a role in the conflict styles selected and it describes the nature of the connection to allies and problem people. Additionally, the relationship dimension encompasses dimensions such as the pause dimension because pause encompasses not only a strategic resolution process for my participants, but also the concept that my participants stepped back from the situation emotionally in order to preserve relationships.

In addition to serving as an overarching concept for many of the dimensions, there is limited empirical research regarding the role of relationships in conflict. However, my participants have demonstrated the significance of relationships to their navigation of conflict in the workplace. While practitioner scholarship observes the significance of connections between conflicting parties (Donohue & Kolt, 1992; Folger et al., 2001; Greenhalgh, 1987; Heitler, 1990; Moore, 2003), this gap in the empirical scholarship
underscores the importance of studying relationships in conflict more fully. Thus, I have
selected the relationships dimension as the central dimension for this study. As such,
from this point forward, the relationships dimension is labeled as the perspective.

The dimensional analysis process includes an evaluation of the dimensions as
they are connected to the perspective (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). This step
includes determining relevant and irrelevant dimensions and then categorizing the non-
central dimensions as they relate to the perspective, which I do in the final section of this
chapter.

Evaluating remaining dimensions

Upon determining the perspective in dimensional analysis, the researcher
evaluates the connection of each dimension to the perspective (Kools et al., 1996;
Schatzman, 1991). The first step in this evaluation process is to label the dimensions as:
(a) salient, (b) relevant, (c) marginal, or (d) irrelevant. Then, the researcher categorizes
the all but the irrelevant dimensions into four categories: (a) context, (b) conditions, (c)
processes, and (d) consequences (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991), which I elaborate
on below.

As I articulate in Chapter 3, I determined that the following dimensions were
irrelevant to the central dimension: (a) positive, (b) negative, (c) negative behavior, (d)
spectrum of conflict, (e) race/ethnic culture, (f) leadership, (g) war language, (h) type,
and (i) style, with the latter two representing the overarching dimensions that
encompassed all the types and styles (see Appendices K and L). The relevant dimensions
are: (a) all the conflict types, (b) gender, (c) allies, (d) problem people, (e) emotions, and
(f) pause. I determined their relevancy based on the centrality of relationships for determining resolution styles; the importance of developing allies in the process of building relationships, the challenges in relationships associated with problem people; and the importance my participants placed on pausing and containing one’s emotions in the resolution process, in part for relationship preservation. I determined that the workplace culture/atmosphere, higher education, and style: facilitator dimensions were marginal to the relationships dimension. I found them marginal because they each are a factor in my findings, but they are not central to how the relationships dimension functions in connection to the other dimensions. Finally, I determined the remaining styles dimensions to be salient to the preference. That is, the selection of styles is directly related to the nature of my participants’ relationship with the other parties in the conflicts.

The final step in the dimension evaluation process is to sort all but the irrelevant dimensions into four categories, depending upon their connection to the perspective: (a) context, or dimensions that are peripheral to the perspective, create boundaries for inquiry, or describe the situation or environment for the perspective; (b) conditions, or dimensions that facilitate, block, or shape actions or interactions; (c) processes, or dimensions that are intended or unintended actions because of their conditions; and (d) consequences, or dimensions that are outcomes based on specific actions (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). I found that the workplace culture/ atmosphere, higher education, gender, and conflict types create the boundaries for the perspective. These are the elements that indirectly influence the functioning of the relationships dimension and serve as context. I determined the dimensions that influence the perspective either by
facilitating, blocking or shaping actions or interactions are the allies dimension and the problem people dimension. Thus, these two dimensions are the *conditions*. The emotions and pause dimensions are intended or unintended actions, and thus serve as the *processes* for the relationships dimension. Finally, the conflict resolution styles are the *consequences* of the actions associated with the relationships dimension.

As I evaluated each dimension, it became clear to me that there was a logical sequence to how each of the relevant dimensions connects to the relationships dimension. Consequently, I developed a model that visually depicts these associations. I used this model as a discussion point in my follow-up interviews with my 15 participants to test this model. In Chapter 6, I explain this model and elaborate on my efforts to triangulate my data through the follow-up interviews and additional comparison of my observations to existing research.

**Conclusion**

The dimensional analysis form of grounded theory is a highly structured means of analyzing qualitative data. In Chapter 3, I describe the initial phase of the process, designation, because this step was action-oriented, so I articulated this part of the process within my Method section. This format also allowed me to describe the actions I took to determine the irrelevant dimensions of my data, enabling me to focus this chapter on the dimensions most relevant to my study.

The dimensions that held most relevancy included: (a) the types, (b) styles, (c) gender, (d) emotions, (e) pause, (f) work culture/atmosphere, (g) higher education, (h) allies, (i) problem people, and (j) relationships dimensions. Here I summarize each
dimension, providing relevant quotes and examples from the data as well as comparing these dimensions to existing conflict resolution scholarship. I then, according to the structured format of dimensional analysis, audited each dimension for its centrality to my data, determining that the relationships dimension related to the various relevant dimensions and broad enough to serve as the perspective. I concluded the chapter by identifying the nature of the connection of each of the relevant dimensions to the relationships perspective.

This work leads to a deeper understanding of the data and has enabled me to visualize a model that explains the centrality of the relationships perspective and the various relevant dimensions. I detail this model and conclude the dimensional analysis process in the next chapter.
Chapter Six: A Feminist Conflict Process Theory and Flow Chart

In Chapter 5, I analyze my data by completing the first phase of dimensional analysis, designation, and most of the second phase, differentiation. Through this process, I determined that the central dimension, or perspective, for my study is “relationships.” I also determined that 21 of my 31 dimensions are relevant to the perspective. Finally, I identified the nature of the connections between the perspective and the relevant dimensions, labeling them as: (a) context, (b) conditions, (c) processes, or (d) consequences.

Based on my observations of these connections, I initially created a model that visually depicts the association in my data between “relationships” and the relevant dimensions. In this chapter, I describe my initial model and then articulate my process in the last step of the differentiation phase for testing, clarifying and solidifying the conceptual linkages in my data. I tested this model in three ways: (a) against the scenarios participants described, (b) through follow-up interviews with participants, and (c) by comparing the model to existing literature. For those participants who did not resonate with the model, I note possible alternative models. I conclude this chapter by describing the final phase in my process: integration/reintegration. That is, I describe my Feminist Process Conflict Flow Chart and Theory in detail.
Testing, Clarifying and Solidifying Conceptual Linkages

In the last step of the dimensional analysis differentiation phase, the researcher uses theoretical sampling to test, clarify, and solidify the perspective’s conceptual linkages (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). I found that a majority of my participants initially had what I call a “relationship filter” for deciding how to approach a conflict. Subsequently, they decided how to proceed with the resolution process by evaluating risk to the relationship, institution, or self. In testing this model in the member-checking phase of my research study, 11 of the 15 participants acknowledged that this model reflected their experience and perspectives regarding conflict in the academy. Of those 11, some fully embraced its applicability to their conflict resolution approaches, and others felt aspects of the model did not reflect their experiences. Nonetheless, those in the latter group acknowledged that this model was comprehensive in its scope and thus not all aspects are expected to describe everyone’s experiences. Of the four who did not embrace the model at all, I had anticipated such a response from three of them as a result of my initial interviews and my process of testing the model by comparing it to their conflict scenarios. The fourth person simply felt “uncomfortable” with the way the model reflected negative experiences and, as such, could not connect her experiences to the model in any way.

Creating a model.

In this study, I sought to understand how women leaders navigate conflict in higher education. Throughout my data analysis process, in keeping with the dimensional analysis form of grounded theory, I continued reviewing research in conflict resolution
and comparing what I observed in the data to existing literature (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). Some aspects of my participants’ experiences are reflected in the existing conflict resolution research, as I describe in Chapter 5. However, many of my participants spoke of something that is not discussed extensively in the literature: their relationship-based decision-making process in peer-to-peer conflict situations.

Throughout data analysis, I documented my observations of this relationship-based decision-making in my journal and via the memoing function in Atlas.ti. For example, I made the following notation on September 9, 2009, several weeks prior to developing my first Feminist Conflict Process Model:

This weekend it occurred to me what seems to be “missing.” Relationships in the organizational conflict literature is spoken of as one cause of conflict, whereas the women I spoke to either overtly or by inference spoke of relationships as a central decision-making element for determining a conflict approach. (Maureen Silva, journal entry)

Based on this and subsequent observations, I drafted a model that visually depicts my interpretation of the role of relationships in conflict initially. Specifically, I note that many of my participants used what I refer to as a “relationship filter” for determining their approach to a particular conflict situation. Subsequently, I summarize the process that women in this study used for weighing the risks associated with particular resolution effort and their modes of navigating the conflict based on those risks (see Figure 5).
Figure 5. Feminist Conflict Process Model, Version A
This initial draft of this model contains many of the consequence and process dimensions, including three resolution styles (e.g., avoidance, confrontation, and defensive), as well as emotions and pause. The collaborative style was not present in my initial draft. I also note that while certain styles are represented, this model focuses on the nuances of the various styles. For example, as I describe in Chapter 4, avoidance as a style was used for differing reasons, depending upon the connection of my participants to the other parties in the conflict. In my first draft of the model, this idea was beginning to take shape, with two reasons for avoidance articulated: because the relationship was important, and because the relationship was not worth the effort.

This initial draft was refined numerous times as I continued with my data analysis and literature review. When I reached a point of data saturation (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Emerson, 2001; Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991), I moved to the member-checking step, which allowed me to test this model with my study participants.

**Testing the model.**

The model continued to take shape via the dimensional analysis process in which I tested conflict scenario against the model to determine the model’s ability to accurately describe the process my participants used. I also conducted member-checking interviews on a refined Feminist Conflict Process Model (see Figure 6). In this section, I describe my testing process in detail, including my interpretations of the scenarios as they relate to this model; my discussions with my participants, which included a discussion on my interpretations; and my comparison of the model against existing literature.
Figure 6. Feminist Conflict Process Model, Version B

- **A** Relationship * Important or Needed **
  - If relationship preservation top priority
    - Avoid (out of respect for relationship)
      - Tolerate, Walk away, Work around or Use Humor to diffuse (to keep the peace)
      - If resolution becomes important Move to Address
  - If resolution top priority
    - Address
      - Pause to gather self (if emotions too high)
      - Strategize, Research (if needed; can involve coalition building & experts)
      - Communicate***: to share point of view & listen to understand
        - Seek mutual resolution
          - May involve several iterations
        - If unresolved Move to Avoid
    - Confront
      - If resolution becomes important Move to Address
      - Communicate***: position & seek solution (may include expressing anger, frustration)
        - Use force
        - Work around (not worth effort)
        - If unresolved
          - Bring in higher ups (to resolve)
          - Work around (focus on greater good)

- **B** Relationship * Important or Needed **
  - If no concern for significant ramifications
    - Avoid (dismissive of other)
      - Work around or Use Humor to diffuse (not worth effort)
      - If resolution becomes important Move to Address
  - If resolution top priority
    - Confront
      - Strategize, Research (if needed; can involve informing higher ups, coalition building)
      - Communicate***: position & seek solution (may include expressing anger, frustration, bringing in experts)
        - May involve several iterations
        - If unresolved
          - Bring in higher ups (to resolve)
          - Work around (focus on greater good)

- **C** Relationship * Unimportant, Neutral, or Difficult **
  - If no concern for significant ramifications
    - Avoid
      - Tolerate, Walk away, Work around or Use Humor to diffuse
      - If resolution becomes important Move to Address
  - If resolution top priority
    - Address
      - Pause to gather self (if emotions too high)
      - Strategize, Research (if needed; can involve coalition building & experts)
      - Communicate***: to share point of view & listen to understand
        - Seek mutual resolution
          - May involve several iterations
        - If unresolved Move to Avoid
    - Confront
      - If resolution becomes important Move to Address
      - Communicate***: position & seek solution (may include expressing anger, frustration)
        - Use force
        - Work around (not worth effort)
        - If unresolved
          - Bring in higher ups (to resolve)
          - Work around (focus on greater good)

- **D** Relationship * Important or Needed **
  - If concern for others/ greater good
    - Confront
      - Strategize, Research (can involve informing higher ups, coalition building)
      - Communicate***: position & seek solution (may include expressing anger, frustration, bringing in experts)
        - May involve several iterations
        - If unresolved
          - Bring in higher ups (to resolve)
          - Work around (focus on greater good)
  - If concern for self (feel threatened)
    - Avoid
      - Move to Defend
    - Defend self
      - Document, Call in higher ups to help, Use experts
      - If unresolved, Move to formal third party mediation
  - If concern for others/ greater good
    - Confront
      - Avoid (hope issue resolves itself)
    - If unresolved, Move to Defend
  - If concern for others/ greater good
    - Confront
      - Avoid (hope issue resolves itself)
    - If unresolved, Move to Defend
  - If concern for self (feel threatened)
    - Avoid
      - Hope issue resolves itself
    - If unresolved, Move to Defend

**NOTES**
- Relationship definitions:
  - Important: personally valued and trusted
  - Needed: professionally beneficial and trusted
  - Unimportant or Neutral: not valued personally or professionally
  - Difficult: not trusted personally or professionally
- ** If nature of relationship changes, approach will change (e.g., important relationship turns difficult, move to difficult relationship track)
- *** Communication may include in-person, email, or phone, depending on personal style and/or situation
Comparing against the scenarios.

My initial method for testing this model included summarizing each scenario, determining the participants’ statements that articulated their relationships with the other parties in the conflict, evaluating the nature of the relationship based on those quotes, and determining which aspect of the model, if any, fit with the process the participants used.

I will use Alma’s first scenario as an example of this method of testing. Note that in Figure 6, I have labeled the relationship filter component as columns I and II, with the Column I referring to the filter in which the relationship is important or needed, and Column II referring to the filter in which the relationship is neutral, difficult, or unimportant. I have further labeled subsequent paths that a participant may follow within these columns as Paths A through D, with path subsets under paths C and D. I do this to bring clarity to the discussion here.

Alma was a new member of the staff; thus, she had not developed a level of trust with her colleagues on campus. She needed to make significant changes regarding how transcripts were handled, but she was facing resistance from heads of units that had historically handled transcripts. As such, I labeled the relationship as “difficult,” putting Alma into Column II of Feminist Conflict Process Model (see Figure 6). Because of the nature of the conflict, there were significant ramifications; thus, Alma followed Path D. Specifically, Alma was concerned for the institution and her department if the necessary changes were not made, which meant she next followed Path D.1, which is the forthright approach. Alma then strategized her approach, including informing her superior of the situation out of concern for the political ramifications for him. Alma also engaged
experts in the form of consultants who were assisting in the computer conversion process. The model accurately reflected Alma’s experiences in her first scenario.

I sampled each of my participants’ scenarios, successfully applying this model to all the experiences they described. Some of my participants followed a straight path, while others changed course because of a change in relationship during the conflict. For example, some participants began in Column II, Path C, or the confrontational approach, and remained there, whereas another began in Column II, Path C, and then moved to Column I, Path B, the forthright approach.

While I was able to apply this model to every scenario, I noticed in my analysis that three participants—Tamera, Katie and Irene—did not depart from Column I, Path B. Further, none of these three participants made highly descriptive statements regarding the nature of their relationships. For example, Tamera noted that she needed the other party professionally in the first scenario, but she did not elaborate on the nature of their relationship, her level of trust, or her general disposition toward him.

Similarly in her second scenario, Katie’s tone remained neutral as she described the individuals who accused her and her colleagues of gender discrimination against foreign-born males. As she said:

I’m not sure I felt good about [the resolution], though. I felt good that there was no finding of bias. But I felt bad that you had a department where you had people coming to work that felt like that. (Katie)

Katie did not express how she felt about their attitude toward women nor did she describe any encounters with them. She remained objective in recounting the experience, as did Irene.
Irene noted that relationships change constantly, but she did not emphasize the nature of her relationships at work. In her third scenario in which the other party accused her of spending excessively on phone calls, she noted that she thought the other party might have had psychological issues. As Irene commented:

She was all the time doubting and questioning . . . trust is really the issues. All the time questioning and checking in if that person lies. (Irene)

However, Irene did not mention how she felt about having been accused of misappropriating finances. She simply described how she found a solution to the problem and moved on.

Consequently, with the exception of my being uncertain about these three individuals, my scenario comparisons suggested that this model was a good representation of how my participants navigated the conflicts they described to me during their interviews. As another means of triangulating the data, I tested the model in my follow-up interviews with each participant. I asked general questions about the Feminist Conflict Process Model, which I emailed to them in advance. Additionally, I described for my participants my interpretations of their scenarios to gain their feedback on the applicability of the model to them as professionals.

**Gaining input from participants.**

The follow-up interviews, all of which I conducted over the phone, began on October 28, 2009, with the last one taking place on November 29, 2009. I interviewed all 15 participants for roughly 45 minutes, with some participants’ interviews lasting 30 minutes and others going 1 hour and 10 minutes. The interview was semi-structured, as
was the original round of interviews. However, because I focused the questions on my draft Feminist Conflict Process Model, I felt it important to script my opening comments.

To schedule the conversations, I contacted my participants by email and, if they did not respond, I reached out to them via phone. The initial email requested a follow-up interview, and I attached two documents to the email: a copy of the transcription of my first interview and my draft Feminist Conflict Process Model, explaining that we would discuss both in the follow-up interview. Some participants responded to my email immediately, others were delayed due to busy work schedules. The process of scheduling and completing the follow-up interviews took roughly one and a half months.

As I did in summarizing my initial data in Chapter 4, here I use the follow-up interview protocol to structure this portion of my discussion. Such a structure enables me to articulate the impact of the grounded theory process on my follow-up interviews and to highlight relevant aspects of the member-checking process.

My initial question during the follow-up interview focused on the first interview transcriptions: *First, do you have any questions regarding the transcription that I sent to you?* Most participants said they had no questions, although some noted typographical errors or wrong word selections. One participant, who I choose not to disclose even by pseudonym so that I can maximize confidentiality, expressed concern with the nature of the conflict she described. She feared that even though I removed the names of the conflict parties and the institution in the transcription, the details of the conflict were enough to expose her. However, I informed her that my transcriptions would remain confidential between her and me; they would not be published in my dissertation.
After discussing the participants’ transcriptions, I read two paragraphs to all my participants to ensure consistency in the follow-up interviews. I reminded them of the purpose of the study and informed them of my process for analyzing the data from our initial interviews, which resulted in a model that applies to “many—but not all” of my participants. My wording was selected to ensure that no participants would feel uncomfortable during our conversations should they not resonate with the Feminist Conflict Process Model. I concluded this opening question by asking if they had a chance to review the model, and if not, I allowed them time to pull the model up on their computers and review it.

My next question launched the discussion for the model specifically: *Does this model, as it stands, seem like an accurate representation for how you decide to approach a conflict?* This closed question (Kvale, 1996) led me to differing sets of inquiry, depending upon the response. If the respondent said, “Yes,” I then asked: *Specifically, in what ways is your approach to conflict reflected in this model?* This allowed the respondents to elaborate on the aspects of their approaches that were reflected in the model. After discussing those aspects that resonated with them, I asked: *Are there aspects of this model that do not reflect your approach?*

If the respondent said, “No” to the initial closed question about the model, I then asked: *Specifically, in what ways is your approach to conflict not reflected in this model?* After discussing those aspects that did not resonate with them, I asked: *Are there aspects of this model that do reflect your approach?* Below I summarize the responses of those
who felt the model reflected their approach separate from those who did not feel the model reflected their approach.

I analyzed the model using the feedback from these two groups of individuals. In the case of those who resonated with the model, I altered and changed the model to more accurately reflect the participants’ perspectives on how they decide to proceed with conflict resolution strategies. In the case of those who did not resonate with the model, I first summarized how they differ from the model and then use their insights to draft models that may more accurately reflect how they approach conflict, which I discuss in the Alternative Feminist Conflict Process Model section below.

In grounded theory, researchers develop theory in concert with study participants (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1997). As such, the Feminist Conflict Process Model changed 11 times throughout the course of the follow-up interviews, based on the input of those participants who felt this model reflected their approach to conflict resolution (see Figure 7).

The model was also updated based on my continued analysis since concluding the follow-up interviews, including processing my follow-up interviews and reflecting on the model as it relates to existing conflict literature, which I detail in the Comparing to Existing Research section below.
Figure 7. Feminist Conflict Process Model, Version C

NOTES:
(1) Box size related to text size only
(2) Relationship definitions:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Important or Neede</th>
<th>Neutral, Difficult or Unimportant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High Level of Trust</td>
<td>exists between study participants &amp; “other” [party in conflict], who is personally valued and trusted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needed: “other” is professionally beneficial now or perceived to be in the future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Level of Trust: relationship may be difficult (see below), but “other” is trusted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unimportant or Neutral: no personal or professional connection exists w/“other”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“other” is not trusted nor perceived as being needed now or in future</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficult: “other” is not trusted personally or professionally</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
(3) Study participants perceive the COLLABORATE process (highlighted in blue) as most desirable & as their predominant mode of operation |
(4) If nature of relationship changes, approach will change (e.g., important relationship turns difficult, participant moves to right side of model) |
(5) Movement from one column to next related column does not result in being caught in a continual loop, but may result in an unresolved conflict |
(6) Strategize/Research: can include coalition building, engaging allies, or informing superiors; can be time consuming; where no sig. ramifications, this step may be perceived as unimportant |
(7) COLLABORATE: goal is mutual resolution. No aggression expressed |
| CONFRONT: goal is to achieve what is perceived to be the only right solution. May involve expressions of anger or frustration |
| FORTHRIGHT APPROACH: goal is to present position, win openness to other’s position but a perception of a right way to resolve problem. Some aggression may be expressed |
(8) May be in-person, email, or phone communication
The Notes at the side of the model clarify key elements of this model, including relationship definitions. It is important to note that Column I, Path B, the collaborative approach, is highlighted in blue to reflect the participants’ preferred mode of processing conflict in their professional capacity. That is, when asked to describe their conflict styles overall, the participants used language that suggested a preference for functioning in the area highlighted in blue. Several participants noted this point in the follow-up interviews as well, with Brenda suggesting that I allow the model to reveal that preference. As such, I altered the Feminist Conflict Process Model to reflect this inclination, adding a comment in the Notes section as well. I checked this change with the seven participants whose interview followed Brenda’s. None of them disagreed with the alteration of the model. They commented that it more accurately reflected how they prefer to navigate conflict in higher education. I also checked this change against the scenarios and found that of the 40 scenarios described to me, 19 started with this collaborative approach, with 17 following Column I, Path B in its entirety.

In the next several sections, I provide supporting data for the Feminist Conflict Process Model based on input received from the participants who felt this model reflected their approach. I also provide supporting data for changes I made to the model from its initial draft. I begin with the most basic element of the model: the relationship filter.

_Relationship filter._

Several participants felt that the model, with its relationship filter, reflected the decision-making process that they used when engaging in conflict. Eleven of the 15 participants—Chris, Monica, Miriam, Norma, Katrice, Michelle, Alma, Cheryl, Mary,
Karla, and Linda—embraced the idea that the approach to conflict changes depending upon the nature of the relationship. Monica called the model “dead on” and Katrice responded, “This is it.” Norma underscored her perspective that relationships play a role in conflicts when she shared with me a recent experience in which a colleague did not take their relationship into account when resolving conflict. As Norma stated:

What made me mad [was] not the situation, but the person I’m having the conflict with should have been more—I felt like he owed me something. I felt it should have been more about me and our relationship. (Norma)

Norma was so surprised about the lack of respect for their relationship that she began exploring professional opportunities elsewhere.

Of all the participants, Linda provided the most detailed response to my initial question when she stated:

I’m looking at the relationship-based conflict where you want to preserve the relationship, you think and try to find ways, making sure you talk about the issue in conflict but in a manner that preserves the relationship. And looking at the right side in terms of the importance of it, where it doesn’t matter, you don’t have a relationship, you have to weigh what the outcome is going to be. Depending on how close or how important the issue or relationship is, you either seek ways, either bringing in a third party. At some point you have to decide if it’s worth risking the issue. (Linda)

As Linda summarized, the model itself has two sides, which I label in Figure 7 as Column I and Column II. Column I reflects the process my participants used to address conflict with others who were important to them, who they trusted, or who they needed professionally. Column II reflects the process used when the relationship is difficult or perceived as being neutral or unimportant professionally. Linda also noted the significance of risk in Column II; the majority of my participants discussed determining what was at risk in order to decide how to proceed.
The key located below the model defines the various relationships, an idea that is captured in the relationships dimension I detail in Chapter 4. Specifically, a relationship that is “Important” is one in which a strong connection exists between the participant and the other party; the other party is valued and trusted. A relationship that is “Needed” reflects those that are professionally beneficial or expected to be in the future. A relationship described as having a “High Level of Trust” is one that, though it may be a difficult relationship at times, there is sufficient history between the parties that the trust between them serves as the primary driving force for the interaction. A relationship that is “Unimportant or Neutral” is one in which no connection exists between the parties, the parties are not perceived to be needed now or in the future, and there has been no established level of trust to frame the relationship. Finally, a “Difficult” relationship is one in which the other has demonstrated they cannot be trusted.

In the member-checking phase of my research, the participants reiterated that trust is a critical component of describing the nature of relationships. As Chris affirmed:

> It has to do on one level with trust and how well I know the person and if I can trust them. Then, that’s going to make a difference in whether I am going to address the situation head on. (Chris)

Trust is built over time, based on past experience, as Karla noted:

> If it’s somebody you trust and have had successful interactions with in the past and it’s a relationship you want to preserve, you’re probably going to be a lot more considerate in your approach. (Karla)

As a result of these follow-up discussions regarding the importance of trust in the relationships, I expanded the model slightly. For example, in the initial drafts of the model (see Figures 5 and 6), I did not include in Column I that a difficult relationship would be handled with the collaborative approach if there were a high level of trust (see
Figure 7). Next, I describe the remaining columns of the model, including supporting data from my member-checking interviews.

Relationship important, needed or trusted.

My participants articulated two basic approaches when the relationship was important, needed, or there was a high level of trust, differing based on whether the relationship was a priority over the conflict or the conflict was critical to resolve. Katrice and Chris were the two participants who noted in their first round of interviews that they were careful to avoid conflict when the relationship with the other party was highly important to them, represented in Figure 7 as Column I, Path A. Katrice said that she chose to walk away from conflict with the other party in her first conflict scenario:

because this is a professional relationship that is important to me both personally and professionally. And one that I really have a lot of investment in preserving. (Katrice)

In the follow-up interviews, Miriam and Norma agreed with the idea that they would avoid conflict where the relationship was important.

Not everyone, however, embraced the idea of avoidance, even when the relationship was important. As Alma stated:

I do approach [conflicts] differently, depending on the relationship. My only hesitation with that is I don’t think that if I feel that a relationship is a top priority that I would really follow through on those next three boxes. (Alma)

When stating “those next three boxes,” Alma was referring to Path B. She would not avoid out of respect by working around the other party, nor would she wait until the resolution became more important to address the conflict. Karla, too, stated she would not avoid conflict in deference to the relationship.
Column I, Path B, which is highlighted in blue, reflects the approach to conflict that my participants indicated they prefer to follow. They said they prefer to be in relationships with their colleagues that include a level of trust, allowing them to resolve conflicts mutually. This is also the column and path that those who did not resonate with the relationship filter could agree with. That is, those who do not perceive themselves as using a relationship filter stated that they prefer to handle their conflicts by following Path B, regardless of their connection with the other party in the conflict.

Because of the significance of Column I, Path B in the Feminist Conflict Process Model, next I use one of Chris’s scenarios to more fully articulate that process, placing in parenthesis the terms used in the model. In Chris’s second scenario, she learned that students in her honors program did not seem to be getting priority housing in a dorm, which she had been advertising as a benefit to the program. She had always worked well with the housing office in the past and considered it an important relationship to her (i.e., Column I, Relationship needed, important). Chris’s priority in this situation was to resolve the conflict, so she followed Path B.

Chris began the resolution process by emailing her colleague, summarizing her concern and requesting a meeting, which was eagerly scheduled within a week. She and one of her staff members used the interim time (i.e., Path B, Pause) to gather supporting data for the conversation (i.e., Path B, Strategize, research), which she later learned her colleague had been doing as well. At the meeting, they discussed each perspective on the issue in an open, collegial manner (i.e., Path B, Address), with both willing to learn about the other’s concerns (i.e., Path B, Share point of view, listen to understand). They were
able to quickly move on to exploring a solution that met both departments’ needs (i.e., Path B, Seek mutual resolution). They collaboratively selected another dorm to offer priority housing. While it was not as well placed as the previous dorm, it offered Chris space to hold honors seminars in the evenings and weekends, enabling additional community building between the honors students. It also gave the housing office confidence that, even if the honors program was unable to fill all the rooms held, they could easily fill the rooms with other students at the last minute. Chris made the following observation about the outcome:

We both realized the importance and I thought we came to a nice solution. (Chris)

Along with Chris, 10 other study participants—Brenda, Cheryl, Irene, Katie, Linda, Miriam, Michelle, Tamera, Norma and Monica—shared at least one scenario they resolved using the process represented in Column I, Path B. As indicated previously, this was the preferred mode of operation for my participants as well. Alma, for example, did not provide a scenario that fell into this decision-making path. However, her description of her preferred mode of conflict resolution uses many of the terms stated or implied in this process:

I always try to communicate as much as possible, trying to express myself or listening to the others—to get facts on the situation . . . I bend, trying to see what’s for the greater good for the institution, talking to them and building relationships with them to get over the conflict. (Alma)

Similarly, Katrice used the word “compromise” in her overall description, while both Monica and Mary spoke of being good listeners.
Relationship neutral, difficult, or unimportant.

In Column II of the final Feminist Conflict Process Model (see Figure 7), I depict the process for navigating conflicts in situations where the participants had little or no trust in the other party. This process reflects a two-pronged approach. In addition to the relationship filter, my participants applied another filter in which they assessed the level of risk before deciding how to proceed. I have articulated this concept by noting “no concern for ramifications (less at risk)”—or Path C—and “concern for ramifications (more at risk)”—or Path D.

When faced with challenging conflict situations with parties who are difficult and there is little or no trust in the relationship, my participants were more likely to be assertive or even aggressive when there was less at risk. This confrontational approach is reflected in Column II, Path C.1. Note that this is the only location on the model in which words like “confront” or “force” are used.

Linda and Karla are the only two participants that discussed conflict in terms of confronting. Karla indicated that in her first and second scenarios, she used confrontation initially. However, in her first scenario, after getting no resolution, she ended up simply avoiding the other participant, or following Column II, Path C.1. The other party lied and failed to follow through with commitments, so ultimately Karla chose to work around her. As she summarized:

If she’s not able to complete things and carry them out, then I really don’t have much use for her because she impedes my ability to get things done . . . so I just don’t care to deal with her. (Karla)
Unlike situations where trust exists and the participants prefer to preserve the relationship by avoiding conflict—Column I, Path A—my participants’ choice to avoid conflict in Column II, Path C.1 was a form of dismissing the other party.

Linda, on the other hand, attempted to address the conflict mutually with the other party in her third conflict scenario because they had a long-term friendship. Linda expected that their history of working together—the other party was Linda’s former boss—would allow the conflict to be worked through mutually, so she anticipated working through Column I, Path B. However, the other party refused to listen to Linda’s perspective and continued overstepping her professional boundaries. When their mutual supervisor would not mediate, Linda felt she had to force a resolution for the good of the department. As she noted:

> It got to that level where it was impacting our communication with students. That’s when I finally decided, okay, we have to really take this one head on and resolve it, and it’s not going to be positive resolution, this is going to be more forceful. (Linda)

When the relationship turned difficult, Linda changed her strategy, eventually using strong language and expressing anger to get the other party to stop her inappropriate actions. That is, Linda moved from Column II, Path B—the collaborative approach—to Column II, Path C.2—the confrontational approach.

Participants handled conflict situations differently when trust did not exist and they were concerned about significant ramifications—whether for themselves or for others, including the organizational greater good. Katrice’s first two scenarios provide a good example of this differentiation. In her first scenario, she placed a high value on her relationship with the other party, whereas in second scenario, the other party was neither
someone with whom she had a history nor someone she felt she needed. As she described her relationship with the other party in her second conflict:

not because I particularly like her in this case, let me be honest. It’s someone I could live without. But still we’re working professionals here. We’re going to have to work together in the future, so this is more about maintaining a collegial relationship. (Katrice)

This was not a relationship she particularly valued nor a person with whom she had established a high level of trust. Katrice’s concern was focused on her future working relationship with the other party and for the greater good. As a consequence, her strategy for approaching the conflict was not as confrontational as in Linda’s or Karla’s cases described previously. Yet Katrice’s second scenario also did not have the same goal of seeking mutual resolution as in other examples where trust was high. Katrice indicated she was more willing to be forthright—to follow Column II, Path D.1. In this situation, she was more apt to build coalitions and more vocal in public settings about her position in the conflict. In addition to Katrice, Alma, Chris, Cheryl, Irene, Linda, Mary each described a conflict that they resolved following the forthright approach process.

Linda’s second conflict provides a good example of working through a process following Column II, Path D.1 in which a participant had a concern for the greater good. As I describe Linda’s scenario, in parenthesis I note the terms used in the model.

In this situation, Linda immediately sensed that the other parties had an alternative agenda. As she noted:

I felt disrespected and abused when they told me that I had to take this program. (Linda)

Linda also noted that she suspected there were gender issues and perhaps racial issues at work (i.e., Column II, Relationship difficult). However, Linda had a great deal of
concern that the program, which was failing, would fail completely (i.e., Path D, Concern for significant ramifications), which she indicated would be highly problematic for her institution (i.e., Path D.1, Concern for greater good). While she expressed her concern immediately to her supervisor, she calmed herself down before going to any other party in the conflict (i.e., Path D.1, Pause). She also gathered information on the project (i.e., Path D.1, Strategize, research). When she approached the other party, she was well prepared to communicate her concerns and position calmly. The other party, however, was not receptive to the conversations, so she documented the conversations via email, copying her boss (i.e., Path D.1, Informing superiors). While the conflict had not yet been resolved as of our first interview, the experience she described at that point provides a good example of this approach.

In addition to the participants who expressed concern for the greater good, Brenda, Cheryl, and Alma described situations in which they were concerned for themselves, (see Figure 7, Column II, Path D.2). For example, in Alma’s second and third scenarios, her boss, the VP of Finance, and his peer, the VP of Student Life, had a very poor relationship, which caused significant problems for Alma and her peers. In her third scenario the student newspaper, which was overseen by staff within Student Life, published articles about problems in Alma’s office. According to Alma, these articles were informed not by facts but by false information provided by the Student Life staff. Alma was forced to take a defensive stance (i.e., Path D.2.b, Defend self). Her first step was to discuss the articles with her boss (i.e., Path D.2.b, Involve those with influence) and to gather information to refute the articles’ claims (i.e., Path D.2.b, Document).
While her boss was able to submit a rebuttal article that Alma wrote, negative articles continued to be published (i.e., Path D.2.b, Document). Ultimately, this influenced Alma’s decision to seek a professional position with another institution (i.e., Path D.2.b, Exit institution).

The situations described by 11 study participants demonstrates how the Feminist Conflict Process Model depicts strategies they used to navigate conflict in their professional environments. At the center of this model is the idea that they differentiated their responses depending upon the nature of the relationships they had with the other parties in the conflicts.

While these 11 participants resonated with the model, they did so with varying degrees of agreement. For example, when I asked Karla if the relationship filter applies to her, she said:

Not 100%, but I think it’s certainly one of the top things you consider. I think probably the first issue for me is in trying to figure out an approach to conflict, regardless of the relationship, is what the ramifications for not resolving the conflict are. So if not resolving the conflict would lead to some horrible outcome, like bad for the organization or bad for the employee or bad for me, then I might use it as a filter, a step up from the relationship. (Karla)

That is, while Karla could see where a relationship filter exists, she has a filtering question that is “above” the relationship filter: What are the ramifications if this conflict is not resolved (see Figures 8 and 9)? After deciding to pursue or not pursue a conflict, she indicated that she then uses the relationship filter to help her decide how to proceed.
Figure 8. Feminist Conflict Process Model with Higher Level Filters, Stage One
Figure 9. Feminist Conflict Process Model with Higher Level Filters, Stage Two
Similarly, Monica noted a filtering question for her that supersedes the relationship filter: Is this conflict within my sphere of influence? Monica uses that question to determine whether or not to engage in the conflict itself, noting that engaging in a conflict in which there is no possibility for effecting change is simply a waste of time. As she stated:

If I don’t have power to influence, I tend to avoid or not confront. You know, let it roll off my back and move on or figure out another way to make the work happen. (Monica)

In Figures 8 and 9, I attempt to capture Karla’s and Monica’s higher level filter; however, I did not member-check this model. I summarize it here simply to demonstrate the varying degrees of agreement with the Feminist Conflict Process Model among the 11 participants who resonated with the concept of a feminist filter; nine strongly agreed with the model as I developed it, and two would place the relationship filter in a different location in the model.

In addition to Karla’s and Monica’s suggestions for altering the model, four participants, Tamera, Irene, Katie and Brenda, did not perceive themselves as using a relationship filter at all, although there were aspects of the model with which they resonated. I elaborate on their input regarding this model in the next section.

*Alternative feminist conflict process models*

Two participants found the relationship filter completely out of their realm, focusing instead of the needs of the organization (Tamera) or on principle (Irene). After fully examining and discussing the model with me in her member-checking interview, Tamera stated:

What’s my alternative other than going through a relationship filter? (Tamera)
Later in the interview Tamera explained that her personal history, which included being the daughter of a prison minister, formed a belief in her that every human being is of value and deserves to be treated equally. As such, she could not imagine differing her response to conflict situations based on her connection with the other participant. Instead, she is motivated by what is best for the organization. As she stated:

I think everybody had something to contribute, so that’s why I value everybody and that’s why I need relationships. It’s not necessarily personal. It could just be because I need that person to help accomplish the goals for the institution.

(Tamera)

Tamera acknowledged that she may be more cautious with her words in situations where the other person cannot be trusted, but she stated that she always addresses conflicts in a direct manner.

Similarly, Irene could not picture herself functioning as the model describes. After struggling to understand how the model works, she asked:

What are the other models which are contrasted with that? (Irene)

After explaining I had not developed any alternative models, Irene described that for her, while relationships are important, they are contextual. She said she remains focused on the principles involved, which in her mind should drive all decisions. Irene said that she functions within a “principle-focused” model.

Katie could imagine situations in which a relationship filter may apply, but she also felt her focus was on the resolution. Katie said she typically asked of herself and the other party in every conflict situation: Where do we want to go here? While not everyone is interested in focusing on the goals, Katie said she attempts to focus all difficult situations on the end goal.
Finally one participant, Brenda, found the model uncomfortable to even look at. She felt that it made a sad statement on the status of conflict resolution in the higher education environment. She indicated she was particularly disturbed to think that individuals differ their approach to conflict based on their relationships with the other party. As she said:

I look at relationship when I’m dealing with anybody on campus as how they relate to whatever thing we’re trying to accomplish together... I look at what we’re trying to accomplish rather than the specific relationship or whether I deem the person or the relationship important, unimportant, neutral or difficult. I look more at the task or the goal, rather than through a relationship filter. (Brenda)

Like Irene, Tamera, and Katie, Brenda felt that she functions in what is currently highlighted in blue in this model. After I informed Brenda that that is the column most participants see themselves functioning in on regular basis, with the remainder of the model reflecting the spectrum of the conflict processes, Brenda suggested that I find a way to reflect their preference in this model. As I indicate previously, I made that change to the final model.

In addition to these four, Cheryl, who resonated with the model, also reflected that the Feminist Conflict Process Model may be appropriate for middle managers, who need to consider relationships in part because they lack positional power. As leaders move up to higher positions, they can be more “results-driven.” Cheryl noted in reference to her recent promotion to department chair:

I feel like I have more leeway to be process- and results-driven rather than relationship-driven because I’m going from a position of strength as a leader and I have a certain amount of backup behind me. (Cheryl)

Cheryl also noted along with this positional power comes higher expectations, so a leader also does not have the luxury of focusing on relationships over the task at hand.
In Table 4, I summarize my participants’ responses to the Feminist Conflict Process Model. My second test confirmed that the model aptly describes experiences of a majority of my participants.

Table 4.

*Summary of Reflections on the Feminist Conflict Process Model*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Count</th>
<th>Reflection on Feminist Conflict Process Model</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Fully resonated with the Feminist Conflict Process Model as I depicted it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Indicated that they have a relationship filter, but they would place it in another location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Observed that this model reflected where she was professionally at the time of our first interview, but that she had moved out of that mode of operating due to a recent promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Was uncomfortable with the concept of professionals differentiating their actions based on relationships, and thus was unable to fully reflect on the model</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Did not identify with the model in any form</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After testing the model by conducting member-checking interviews, I also tested it by comparing the model to literature on the role of relationships in conflict resolution. In doing so, I broaden my research to include disciplines not previously explored in this dissertation. I summarize this scholarship in the next section.

*Comparing to existing research.*

In Chapter 5, as a means of analyzing the relationships dimension, I explore conflict resolution empirical scholarship for its focus on the role of relationships in studies conducted on workplace conflict, finding little applicable research. For example,
while Pruitt and Kim (2004) explore issues related to social bonds—or beneficial connections with colleagues—their supporting literature is weak. Further, they explore only positive social bonds, not the full spectrum of relationships with colleagues. Additionally, Wilson and Putnam (1990) examine interaction goals, but these authors discuss the complexities of one of three primary interactions. While relationships are one of the interactions, they do not focus on it exclusively. The relevancy to this study, nonetheless, is their observation that power and trust are significant in the relationship interaction goal.

The practitioner scholarship in conflict resolution, however, has observed the significance of connection to the other party in conflict situations (Donohue & Kolt, 1992; Folger et al., 2001; Greenhalgh, 1987; Heitler, 1990; Moore, 2003). For example, Donohue and Kolt (1992) discuss factors that contribute to decisions regarding how to handle conflict situations. They state,

For example, the importance of the relationship weighs heavily on the decision. Is the relationship worth saving or not? If it is important, then the person wants to see it grow and prosper. In general will confronting the conflict help or hinder relational growth? (p. 27)

In the context of mediation, Moore argues that there is value in nurturing an existing relationship or establishing a connection between the mediator and disputants or between the disputants themselves before initiating a mediation process. Finally, Folger et al. (2001) observe the ways in which a long-term relationship can influence a party’s expectations of the other. They note:

In relationships with a history, parties know the stands others have taken on various issues and the alternatives they supported during previous discussions or decisions. They come to expect some people to push for caution or conservative
choices and others to suggest or encourage major innovation. They know which people are allies and which are enemies. (p. 115)

This scholarship supports my observation. Nonetheless, little empirical research has focused on an in-depth examination of the role of relationships in the decision-making processes for resolving conflict.

As a means for augmenting my exploration of the literature focused on the role of relationships in conflict, I expand my search here to fields outside of conflict resolution, finding psychology and feminine leadership scholarship to be relevant to my Feminist Conflict Process Model. These fields of study have examined the role of social interaction. For example, in the context of family counseling, Olson, Sprenkle, and Russell (1979) discuss the role of connectedness in conflict management. They present a Family Cohesion Dimension matrix that summarizes various levels of cohesion, or connection to each other, noting that the extremes create difficulty in resolving issues. That is, members who are too closely connected create systems that are enmeshed; those who are too distant create systems that are disengaged.

Also in the psychological discipline is work I cite in the Feminist Epistemology section of Chapter 1. Specifically, Gilligan’s (1982, 1993, 1995) research is focused on the moral development of women and is rooted in the concepts that women seek to remain in connection with others. As she states:

In their portrayal of relationships, women replace the bias of men toward separation with a representation of interdependence of self and other, both in love and in work. By changing the lens of developmental observation from individual achievement to relationships of care, women depict ongoing attachment as the path that leads to maturity. Thus the parameters of development shift toward marking the progress of affiliative relationship. (Gilligan, 1993, p. 170)
Gilligan finds that women’s construction of social reality is based in their experiences of attachment or separation with others.

Miller (2008), a clinical psychiatrist, argues that exploring how people develop in relationship with others is critical to understanding the role of relationships among all humans. She notes that “women’s sense of self becomes very much organized around being able to make and then maintain affiliations and relationships” (p. 83). Similarly, the Belenky et al. (1997) findings in feminist epistemology confirms that relationships are central to women. As they said, “Once again we saw that sustaining connection with others prevail in the stories of women” (p. 86). Also in psychology research, Rusbult and Van Lange (2003) present a theory of interdependence that articulates interactions between two individuals, noting that two primary elements shape relationships: long-term goals for the relationship and the concern that a person has for the welfare of the other party.

In addition to this scholarship in the psychology field, limited research in the area of feminist leadership exists to support the importance of connection to others in the workplace. Regan and Brooks (1995) develop a feminist leadership model drawn from her scholarship on women leaders in education. The authors use a broken pyramid to depict their model, noting that above the fault line one finds traditional education leaders: men who endorse a hierarchical leadership style. However, as Regan and Brooks state:

Below the fault line is a whole different world, inhabited primarily by women, people of color, and low-status white males. Its organization is horizontal and collaborative; it is cyclical and repetitive . . . This is where caring, nurturing, relationship, and community building happen. (p. 15).
The authors note that the location of oppressed groups of people, serving below the fault line, may require them to function in a more relational way. However, according to Regan and Brooks (1995), women leaders whose careers are rooted in this arena take this philosophical perspective into top leadership positions. They note that women leaders are succeeding in increasing larger numbers, thus this perspective is more commonly found in executive educational leadership.

Finally, Helgesen (1995) studies women leaders using a diary studies method in which the researcher and the participants document their experiences via diary entry-type recording. Helgesen explores the experiences of four women in top leadership positions in a variety of industries, observing that they brought their “natural” leadership qualities into the workplace. These qualities include structuring their physical space, which allows for: (a) increased connection and interaction among employees; (b) listening to oneself and others, instead of setting the vision and expecting others to simply acquiesce; and (c) collaborating in negotiation in which the focus of negotiation is not about winning. Instead, Helgesen observes that these women leaders view negotiation as opportunities to build connections that enhance working relationships for the future.

This brief summary demonstrates that feminist psychological and leadership scholarship supports my findings regarding the centrality of relationships to women in general and women leaders specifically. Further, conflict resolution practitioner scholars have observed the significance of connection with the other party to attaining resolution. Nonetheless, little empirical research focuses on the nuances of relationships and how positive and negative interactions play out in the workplace. Psychology, feminist
leadership, and conflict resolution scholars endorse additional research to better understand the complexities of social connections to women.

**Integration/Reintegration**

The final step in the dimensional analysis process is integration/reintegration in which the researcher develops a theory based on the conceptual linkages uncovered through the grounded theory research and analysis process (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). In this section, I conclude my analysis by describing my Feminist Conflict Process Theory for processing conflict in the higher education workplace.

As described in Chapters 5 and 6, through the dimensional analysis process I determine that the relationships dimension is the central explanatory dimension for my data. Based on this perspective, I developed a Feminist Conflict Process Model to explain the concept I observed: that many of my participants initially differentiated their approach to resolving conflict based on their relationship with the other party, and subsequently determined how to proceed by evaluating the level of risk to the relationship, institution, or self. I tested this concept in three ways: by evaluating it against to the scenarios they described for me, by member-checking the model in follow-up interviews with my participants, and by comparing the model to existing literature.

Here, I describe the Feminist Conflict Process Theory, which is a theory co-constructed by me and the study participants. As I have noted, feminist research methods acknowledge that knowledge production is not value-free. In order to improve women’s lives—the primary goal of feminist research—the researcher examines the perspective of the oppressed without the distortion of established theories. The researcher does so by
embracing the views, emotions, subjectivity, and experience of the study participants. Also, the researcher incorporates feminist methods throughout the research process, including the write up of the findings. By communicating this theory, I culminate my effort to explore a feminist epistemological perspective for resolving conflict in the higher education workplace.

While in previous versions I use a hierarchical model to summarize my observations, in this final integration phase I convert the model to a flow chart to more accurately demonstrates the dynamic nature of my theory (see Figures 10 and 11). Given that this flow chart is a reflection of women’s ways of navigating conflict, I use female pronouns throughout my description in this section.

The central tenant of this theory is that while resolving conflict with peers in the higher education workplace, a majority of my participants first had a relationship filter for determining how to proceed with the conflict. Additionally, this theory demonstrates the dynamic process that study participants used for determining how to navigate the conflict, with decisions being made based on participants’ evaluation of risk in one of three areas: relationship, institution, or self.
Figure 10. Feminist Conflict Process Flow Chart.
The Feminist Conflict Process Theory suggests that women leaders first determine which relationship cluster the other party falls into: 1) relationships that are important, needed, or there exists a high level of trust in other parties, or 2) relationships that are neutral, difficult or unimportant. For those relationships in the first cluster, important relationships are those that are personally meaningful to her. Those that are needed include relationships that she perceives to be valuable professionally, now or in the future. In addition, those relationships in which she has a high level of trust include those with whom she has a long history of knowing and trusting the other party.

For those relationships in the second cluster, neutral relationships are those in which she has no history or experience, therefore she has not established trust in them. Those that are difficult include relationships in which the other party is challenging to deal with and she has not developed trust in the other party, or history has demonstrated that she cannot trust the other party. Finally, those relationships that are considered
unimportant are those in which she has no trust in the other party and she does not perceived the other party to be needed professionally now or in the future.

In situations involving the first relationship cluster—relationships are important, needed or there is a high level of trust with the other party—the next decision-making filter includes determining which is more important: relationship preservation or resolution to the conflict. If the relationship is more important, then she will avoid the conflict out of respect for the other party by working around, tolerating the situation, walking away, or using humor to diffuse the conflict. If the resolution eventually becomes important or the resolution is more important than the relationship preservation, then she will seek to resolve the conflict in a collegial manner. This process includes pausing to allow emotions to diffuse, strategizing and/or researching for information that could contribute to a resolution, and addressing the situation with the other party, with a focus on sharing her point of view and listening to understand the other’s point of view. The goal for this interaction is mutual resolution, which may take several interactions. In some cases, where resolution cannot be reached, she may move forward without resolution, avoiding the conflict in deference to preserving the relationship.

In situations in which the relationship is neutral, difficult or unimportant, the secondary filter includes an evaluation of the potential ramifications for pursing the conflict, not pursuing the conflict, or the way in which the conflict is pursued. That is, she anticipates the long-term impact of engaging in the conflict, which alters the way she decides to handle the conflict. In situations in which there is less at risk, she may determine that the conflict does not need immediate resolution, thus she will avoid the
conflict in a manner that is dismissive of other party. In these cases, she determines that
the effort to resolve the conflict is not worth it, so she works around the other party or
uses humor to diffuse her emotions. If the conflict becomes important to resolve, or if it
is a top priority to begin with, then she is willing to confront. Before confronting, she
may pause and/or strategize, but this step can be considered irrelevant because there is
little at risk. In confrontational situations, the goal is to communicate her position and
get to a resolution that meets her needs. Little effort is made to understand the other’s
position. If conflict continues to be unresolved, then she may decide to document her
efforts and move forward by avoiding the other party because it is not worth continued
effort. In rare cases, she may decide the resolution is paramount and therefore she’s
willing to force a resolution.

In situations involving the second relationship cluster—in which the relationship
is neutral, difficult or unimportant—and the secondary filter determines that there is a
concern for significant ramifications, or there is more at risk, then there is one more
decision-making filter regarding the type of concern: a concern for the greater good or a
concern for self. In situations in which there is a concern is for the greater good, she
pauses to gather herself and then strategizes and/or conducts research before using a
forthright approach to resolve the conflict. This approach includes communicating her
position and seeking a solution, but she is not willing to be confrontational or forceful
because of her concerns for ramifications. However, she is not necessarily seeking
mutual resolution, for she is more focused on the right resolution for the greater good. If
a resolution is not reached, then she is willing to either document and avoid the other party or, if resolution is paramount, she involves in a third party mediator.

Finally, in situations where she is concerned for herself, she either decides to avoid the conflict in hopes that that conflict simply resolves itself. If the conflict does not resolve itself, or if she believes it will not resolve itself, she defends herself by documenting the situation and requesting the assistance of allies or others in positions of influence. If a resolution is not met and she does not risk her professional reputation, she moves to a formal third party mediation process. In situations where she may risk her career by pursuing the conflict, she may decide to leave the institution.

The Feminist Conflict Process Theory—in which the nature of relationships and the level of risk serve as guides for determining how to proceed with the conflict resolution process—is significant within conflict resolution scholarship. First, while conflict resolution practitioners have observed the importance of connection to the other party in conflict situations (Donohue & Kolt, 1992; Folger et al., 2001; Greenhalgh, 1987; Heitler, 1990; Moore, 2003), limited empirical research has explored their observations. This study supports practitioners’ observations by highlighting the importance of connection with the other party. Secondly, this flow chart articulates the nuances associated with navigating conflict in the workplace. For example, established conflict scholarship identifies avoidance as a conflict resolution style that those with certain orientations use (Canary, Cunningham, & Cody, 1988; Kolb & Putnam, 1992b). However, my participants demonstrated that their orientation toward conflict was not the primary factor in their decision to avoid a conflict. Instead, they strategically avoid
conflict for a variety of reasons: (a) as a means of preserving important relationships, (b) as a form of dismissal in difficult relationships, or (c) as a form of self-preservation when they feel their employment is at stake. Finally, this theory describes the ways in which women participants continuously weighed the risk associated with the conflict to determine how to handle the resolution process.

The theory co-created through this study was developed from data I gathered by interviewing a select group of women professionals who lead in higher education administration. Nonetheless, it helps to better understand how women professionals process conflict situations in the workplace more broadly. While this research contributes to an understanding of women’s efforts to successfully navigate conflict, additional exploration is needed. Whether or not professionals prioritize connection with others in the workplace, relationships with colleagues and other professionals exist. As such, it is vital to develop a more robust understanding of the point at which these connections become salient.

In the concluding chapter of this dissertation, I explore potential areas of future research. Some of my suggestions stem from the data gathered in this study and others address gaps in the literature. In addition, I explore applications for and implications of my study, and I reflect on my method and methodology as a means of contextualizing my study.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I complete the dimensional analysis process and present this co-constructed theory for how women leaders navigate and resolve conflict in higher
education: the Feminist Conflict Process Theory. Having analyzed my data in previous chapters to determine that relationships was a central, constituting element of my research, I completed the structured grounded theory process in this chapter by developing a model, testing the conceptual linkages articulated in this model, and finally developing a flow chart that more accurately depicts the dynamic nature of this process.

I tested this theory in three ways: (a) against scenarios my participants described in the first round of interviews, (b) by gaining input from my participants in follow-up interviews, and (c) through exploring existing literature. I found that a majority of my participants embraced the process as I depicted as an accurate reflection of their perceptions and experiences. I also discovered elements of three fields of study—conflict resolution practitioner scholarship, psychology, and feminist leadership—capture aspects of the importance of relationships in the workplace, yet little empirical research focuses specifically on the role of connections with others in the workplace nor on understanding the point at which these connections become salient.

Additional research is needed to further explore the applicability of this theory to other women in higher education as well as other women leaders, to expand this scholarship to understanding multicultural perspectives, and to examine the significance of workplace social interactions. I conclude my dissertation by articulating specific research opportunities and reflecting on this study specifically.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

Conflict resolution is a critical skill for leaders in the higher education environment in which resources are scarce, values are different across campus, and backgrounds and experiences are increasingly more diverse. While more women have achieved higher ranks in postsecondary education, they continue to face biases, including discrimination based on gender, race, and sexual orientation. It is important not only to women, but to the academy as well, for women leaders to be successful in resolving workplace conflicts.

As I establish in this dissertation, established conflict resolution theories have been developed in a masculine paradigm, and gender negotiation scholars have begun to encourage the development of new theories that explore a feminist epistemological perspective of conflict resolution (Kolb & Putnam, 2006; Shuter & Turner, 1997). Thus, scholarship focused on how women leaders presently resolve conflict in higher education can serve as a foundation upon which additional research can contribute to a more inclusive understanding of conflict and resolution processes in the workplace.

My qualitative study, focused on the primary research question, *How do women leaders experience and perceive conflict in the higher education work environment?*, led me to develop the Feminist Conflict Process Theory and Flow Chart. This theory contends that some women leaders hold the nature and quality of their connection to the other party at the center of decisions regarding resolution processes. It further describes
the dynamics of the decision-making process in determining how to resolve conflicts in the workplace.

In this final chapter of my dissertation, I explore potential applications and implications of my research. I also suggest future research opportunities to explore beyond the scope of my study. In particular, I focus on future research related to the influence of race and ethnic background on conflict experiences. While I sought diverse perspectives through the inclusion of a diverse pool of participants, I was unable to focus this study on the significance of experiences faced by women who are from underrepresented populations. Finally, in this chapter I reflect on my methodology and method to put my study into context.

**Applications and Implications**

Several scholars note the important role that relationships have in conflict (Beersma et al., 2008; Knapp et al., 1988; Kolb & Putnam, 2005, 2006; Pruitt & Kim, 2004; Wilson & Putnam, 1990). Further, numerous conflict resolution practitioners observe the significance of connection with the other party to resolving conflict (Donohue & Kolt, 1992; Folger et al., 2001; Greenhalgh, 1987; Heitler, 1990; Moore, 2003). However, little empirical research has focused on relationships as a central constituting element. As I discuss throughout my literature review and research design, gender negotiation researchers acknowledge that current conflict theories were established in a masculine paradigm. These scholars endorse new research focused on the importance of understanding the role that relationships play in conflict for women. For example, Kolb and Putnam (2005, 2006) observe that current theories value
individualistic approaches, summarizing, “As a result of this individualistic view, theory and research on how parties construct interdependence are underdeveloped and typically treated as a residue of dependence” (p. 142). My Feminist Conflict Process Theory explores elements of interdependence, exposing an important aspect of informal, peer-to-peer conflict in the workplace: the centrality of relationships to the resolution process. In this section, I explore the value of such a theory.

The implications for this research are vast. First, this study demonstrates the importance of seeking a diverse feminist epistemological perspective so that workplace conflict theories are a truer reflection of reality. Women’s experiences have been explored in contrast to men’s, and they have been explored within the context of gender as a social construct. Theories to date, however, were developed within a masculine paradigm. In order to more aptly reflect the experiences of a broad spectrum of individuals who occupy the workplace, it is important to learn directly from these individuals. My research focused on a small subsection of diverse groups: women leaders in higher education who had diverse backgrounds and experiences. From this, I learned that some women factor in the nature of their relationship with the other party before deciding how to proceed with the resolution. This finding is a valuable contribution to the existing gender negotiation scholarship.

In addition to contributing to conflict resolution research, the Feminist Conflict Process Theory has an impact at the organizational level as well. As I articulate in my review of organizational literature, conflict impacts productivity in organizations both negatively and positively. The theory co-constructed in through this dissertation is
focused at the individual level of social interactions and can contribute to an organizational understanding of how its members process conflict. Further, as Bartunek (1992) notes, private conflicts contribute to the rational appearance of public conflict resolution, serving an important data-gathering role for organizations to be used to assist in the successful navigation of public forms of dispute resolution. Additionally, conflict resolution is an important skill for leaders in any organization. With leadership at all levels increasingly becoming more gender-balanced, an understanding of how women leaders resolve conflict could enhance organizational productivity as well.

Organizations themselves are made up of a collection of individuals working toward a common goal or purpose; thus, the Feminist Conflict Process Theory has the potential for contributing at the individual level, too. My study presents a unique perspective regarding the role of relationships in disputes between individuals who do not have formal authority or power over each other. Understanding this aspect of social interactions between individuals is valuable to those who must successfully navigate exchanges with colleagues.

Finally, while I had not intended for this model to serve as a guide for women in the workplace, during my follow-up interviews and as I have discussed this theory with colleagues, many women have commented on its value to them in anticipating future conflicts. Katrice, for example, stated that she had planned to look at the model the next time she faced a significant conflict in hopes that she would think through the potential ramifications of her actions. Another colleague asked to share the model with her male boss in order to prompt a meaningful discussion. During these conversations, however, I
have attempted to impress upon my colleagues that this is not a map for resolving conflict; it is simply an observation of how conflict has been handled by a select group of women.

Nonetheless, if the Feminist Conflict Process Theory were to be vetted more thoroughly through additional research, new scholarship could investigate its value as a learning tool for professionals in the workplace. This study was conducted with a pool of professional women who have been successful in their careers, as evidenced by their invitation to attend the HERS Bryn Mawr Summer Institute. Perhaps sharing this model with a broader audience would help individuals reflect on their own approaches to conflict, building valuable skills for future professional success. For example, it may help those who are prone to react impulsively to instead add a “pause” or “strategize” step in their resolution process. Also, those who consider interactions with their colleagues as distractions may begin to understand the value in investing time and energy into building relationships so that when faced with conflict, they might increase their opportunities for achieving resolution.

Building on the ideas presented in this co-constructed theory will bring more depth and breadth to the field of conflict resolution. In the next section, I explore some potential areas for future research stemming from my findings as well as data I was unable to explore in depth.

**Future Research**

The scholarship I present in this dissertation focuses on the experiences of women administrative leaders in postsecondary education. This study provides a foundation
upon which additional exploration can contribute to a more inclusive understanding for how individuals resolve conflict in the workplace. Here, I focus on three specific areas to be explored: (a) research that explores the nature of social interactions and their roles in the conflict resolution processes more deeply, including exploring the Feminist Conflict Process Theory from additional qualitative as well as quantitative perspectives; (b) research that seeks a broader understanding of conflict resolution from the perspectives of individuals with diverse backgrounds and experiences, exploring the salience of biases beyond gender biases; and (c) research that seeks to understand the role that leaders have in creating or minimizing conflict experiences between professionals at lower professional ranks.

**Additional social interactions.**

The results of this investigation suggest that social interaction is important for some female leaders. Additional research can expand our knowledge of gender negotiation beyond the experiences of a representative group of women leaders in postsecondary education. Thus, this theory must be explored and refined more fully through additional qualitative studies focused specifically on relationships. Further, Feminist Conflict Process Theory needs to be tested through quantitative studies to determine its applicability to a broader group of women professionals. Finally, this model could be explored to determine the significance of relationships to other groups of individuals: men, and women and men from diverse backgrounds, including but not exclusive to race, culture, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.
Future research in the conflict resolution field may also focus on the alternative models that some of my participants suggested. Studies can explore whether alternative models presented in this dissertation more accurately describe women’s experiences and approaches to conflict. Additionally, scholarship can explore what differentiates the woman who processes conflict as this model suggests, versus those who process conflict like the alternative models suggested in this dissertation. Finally, qualitative research could be used to explore additional models, while quantitative research could assist in refining and validating such models.

Reflecting on implications and applications as noted above, future research at the organizational level must recognize the importance of historical relationships—those relationships that exist before and continue after any given study. Laboratory settings or false teams are not sufficient substitutions for existing organizational partners. Ethnographic and field-based research must explore the nuances of personal relationships and their role in helping or hindering work-related conflict. It is important that future research focus on the connection that individuals have with others with whom they come in frequent or infrequent contact. Further, it is vital that the pool of participants be multicultural in makeup so that all perspectives are explored. Additionally, I recommend future research to include perspectives of diverse groups of individuals. I examine this idea more thoroughly in the next section, based on data gleaned from my investigation.

**Race and ethnicity salience.**

Additional research, both qualitative and quantitative, must explore the conflict resolution experiences of multicultural groups from a variety of professional ranks.
Feminist scholars note that cultural or ethnic background may be more salient to individuals than gender (Code, 1996; Collins, 2000, 2002; Fine, 1991, 1995). It is vital that conflict resolution theories explore the point at which such biases become salient. I present data points here from my “Race & ethnicity” dimension, which I found to be irrelevant to my central dimension but which has significant potential for future research in conflict resolution.

My participants discussed issues associated with race as they related to the conflict scenarios they described. For example, Katrice noted that her colleague in her first scenario also has the same ethnic background, enabling Katrice to bring a sense of understanding to the conflict. As she stated:

It occurred to me that, no matter what else is going on, ultimately she shares the same passion that I do, which in this particular case in this project, it’s working with minority students. She’s very passionate about it. She’s also a minority woman, so that’s part of what she’s bringing to the table, some personal angst, some anxiety over situations she’s dealt with, she’s faced, and all of that. (Katrice)

Thus, while Katrice did not share her colleague’s angst in this situation, she called upon her shared understanding of her colleague’s perspective in order to have more patience with her in the conflict situation.

Katrice also noted that her cultural background, which emphasized community, was in contrast to the Western values of individuation. This difference impacted her in resolving conflict as well. Irene shared this experience, too. As Irene responded to my question regarding gender:

We have two cultures that exist [in our organization]. One culture is [the] Korean culture: seniority is very important. The other culture [is] the American culture. . . . In that sense, gender isn’t really the issue. (Irene)
Katie’s second scenario also related to cultural differences. She felt, however, that racism was not the issue, but instead cultural differences regarding appropriate roles for women influenced the conflict. As she said:

These four guys file a complaint with our affirmative action office saying that foreign-born males were being kept from their chair position and that it was racist because of their ethnic background. . . . They were simply, in my opinion, angry because a woman was the chair. (Katie)

Katie’s experience in which, according to Katie, her male colleagues questioned the validity of a woman in a leadership position, highlights potential areas of conflict in the workplace relating to cultural differences.

Overall, conflict and cultural/ethnic minority issues proved to be the most significant unprompted topic my participants discussed. Like gender, the discussions ranged from overt feelings of discrimination, as in Katie’s second scenario, to simply feelings that racism played a role, as in Linda’s second scenario. In addition, there were observations of cultural differences, such as those Irene made, as well as the acknowledgement that shared experiences can be beneficial to resolving conflict, a strategy Katrice used. The experiences that my participants shared with me demonstrate the importance of exploring additional scholarship on the role of diversity in conflict resolution.

Another data-driven area of potential future research was found in my dimension labeled leadership. Many participants discussed the influence that the leadership had on their conflict situation, which I detail next.
Role of leaders.

Participants in this study discussed leadership and its impact on conflict in higher education from three perspectives: (a) their seeking assistance from their leaders in difficult conflict situations, (b) the impact that leadership had on the conflict situations they discussed, and (c) their own sense of responsibility in leadership. Specifically, Alma, Linda, Katrice, Cheryl and Chris noted their involvement of leaders in a few of the conflict scenarios they discussed. Katrice and Alma, in their respective first conflict scenarios, directly informed their bosses of the conflict in the event that the situation would impact them from a political standpoint. Katrice was also concerned that if her boss informed others of the conflict, it could inflame the situations, so she worked hard to get him to understand the importance of keeping the situation confidential for some period of time.

Alma, too, saw potential political ramifications of the conflict, so she not only informed her boss, the Provost, of the situation, but she also engaged him as a means for assisting her in a successful resolution. She added that at her institution, having those in power to assist in the conflict can make a difference. As she summarized:

As long as you can get your information to the highest person, you’re going to do fine in your conflict. . . . having that support, it almost could have been anybody I came up against. It wouldn’t make a difference how much of a conflict was still there, [what I needed to happen] was going to happen anyway. (Alma)

Once Alma gained her boss’s support, she was confident in her ability to successfully resolve any conflict associated with the change she was proposing. Alma also sought the assistance of her supervisor in her second and third conflict scenarios, but for very
different reasons: in both of these latter cases, she needed her boss’s help to defend
herself and her professional reputation.

Participants spoke of engaging their supervisors to interpret policy and to elevate
the conflict to those who had more influence. However, in Linda’s third conflict, her
boss would not assist her. As she described it:

I went to the vice president to try to mediate. He didn’t want to touch it. (Linda)
His refusal to help resulted in a multi-year conflict that ended only when Linda became
forceful with the other party in the conflict.

These participants’ experiences articulate two distinct reasons that they involved
their supervisors: to protect themselves from political fallout, and to gain their assistance
in difficult conflict situations. This involvement of the leadership was proactive on the
part of my participants. The data also suggests that leaders can have an influence on
conflict directly, whether or not they are involved in the specific dispute.

Norma, Katie, Linda and Mary spoke of the impact leaders can have directly on
the situations. For example, Norma’s provost was a finalist for a presidency in her
second conflict scenario, causing him to hesitate to make a decision that would impact his
faculty’s perception of him. This decision made progress toward resolving her conflict
more difficult. Also, Katie noted that the interim status in numerous leadership positions
throughout her campus served to sustain a particularly negative atmosphere. As she
reflected upon it:

I think when you have interims for that long, with no true guidance and leadership
from an institution, an institution will get a little lost. The kind of institutional
memory stuff that stability gives you is not there, and therefore, some people keep
their heads down, and other people just take advantage and just, “Hey I can take
advantage of this! No one knows I did this stuff before.” Change will always have a little bit of this, but six years of change brings on a lot of this. (Katie)

Leadership in transition also impacted Linda’s second conflict scenario. Her vice president had announced his retirement, but he gave a multi-year notice and then made a decision to accept into his unit a program that would significantly impact the future of the department. However, according to Linda, he was not going to be there to see it through—or deal with any of the negative ramifications. Miriam spoke of the impact of leadership in transition from a different perspective. Miriam was made interim director, but her dean never shared that information with other staff members. Miriam described the many challenges this caused for her in resolving conflict with her colleagues.

Linda and Tamera reflected on their role as leaders, describing how they perceive their personal impact on conflict in the workplace. Tamera commented that she often takes a leadership role when resolving conflict, even with peers, although she also acknowledged that being a good leader means being a “contributing team member” who listens. As she stated in reference to her second conflict scenario:

So listening to what other team members, what was important to them, what was their rationale for making a decision, what they were thinking, and then weighing that against what I knew or I was thinking, and supporting that, was important. (Tamera)

Tamera further noted that she feels the responsibility as a leader to focus on big picture issues while also being compassionate for the other party in the conflict.

Linda reflected on her own leadership role in conflicts as well. She noted that when she’s under a lot of pressure, she becomes quiet and that change in attitude can impact the staff’s attitude. She stated it is important to remember that the leader sets the tone, so she finds ways to acknowledge what is going on. As she said:
I have to go in the office and take a deep breath and come out and say the words: I’m sorry that I came in looking a little ruffled this morning. I have to say that; otherwise, the whole entire day goes to pot because I influence how they react.

(Linda)

Linda indicated that she feels a tremendous responsibility for her influence on her unit.

These examples demonstrate the impact that leaders can have on conflict situations, whether or not they are directly involved with the conflict. With my focus on peer-to-peer conflicts in this study, I did not ask in my interviews about the role of leaders in conflict. However, the topic came up with almost every participant, suggesting that leaders have direct and indirect influences. This data suggests that another area for future research is the impact that leaders have on the ability of individual members to resolve conflict in organizations.

While there are likely other areas of potential future research, those I cite here are of primary importance to this study, based on priorities established using my theoretical framework and my observations of the data. I conclude my assessment of this study by reflecting on the method and methodology of my study. In the next section, I articulate the influence that the theoretical underpinnings and the structure of the research had on this investigation.

**Reflections on Method and Methodology**

Code (1996) maintains that the point of exploring a feminist epistemology is neither to supplant traditional “malestream” epistemological modes, nor to add to the existing understanding of epistemology. Instead, Code encourages feminists to create a connection between the two. She states, “[W]hile feminist epistemological practice may indeed reject and/or seek to render problematic much of traditional ‘malestream’
epistemology, it can most fruitfully do so by remaining in dialogue with that tradition” (p. 158). The dimensional analysis form of grounded theory is an ideal means for exploring a feminist epistemology while remaining in dialogue with traditional theories, for it encourages the researcher to consider existing research throughout the research process (Kools et al., 1996; Schatzman, 1991). The point of my study is not to reject existing scholarship, but rather to augment it so that, eventually, scholars and professionals have a truer understanding of employees’ experiences in navigating workplace conflict.

As I note above, because my study reflects the experiences of a particular group of 15 female professional leaders in higher education, it can serve as a foundation for additional scholarship—qualitative and quantitative. In this section, I discuss the parameters of this study as a means for contextualizing my findings. Here I elaborate on the impact that the HERS (Higher Education Resource Services) Bryn Mawr Summer Institute had on my participants and my research. Further, I reflect on relevant factors of my participant pool and the role of my own positionality throughout this research process. Finally, I discuss the specific method and methodology I selected for my study.

The HERS Bryn Mawr Summer Institute was a convenient location for me to conduct my study. It contained the population of women that I planned to interview for this study, I had a close connection with the president of HERS, and I was invited to reside on campus free of charge in exchange for teaching two sessions. As a result, I was able to conduct all 15 of my initial round of interviews over 1 week. While I was careful to have a broad spectrum of participant backgrounds represented (see Appendix C), like all convenience samples, my pool had limitations.
Of particular importance is the lack of representation in my sample of women leaders from Minority Serving Institutions (MSI). As I note previously, no women from MSIs attended the 2009 Summer Institute, although several were accepted. Many institutions of higher education were impacted by an economic downturn, making it difficult to cover the cost of a 3.5 week summer intensive training session. As a result, I was unable to include these individuals in my pool.

It is also important to note that the HERS Institutes are designed to prepare women professionals for current and future leadership in postsecondary education. As stated on the HERS website:

HERS Institutes offer intensive residential professional development experiences for women in mid- and senior-level positions in higher education administration. The curriculum prepares participants for institutional leadership roles with knowledge, skills and perspectives for achieving institutional priorities and maximizing institutional resources. In addition, HERS Institute participants work with HERS Faculty and HERS Alumnae to develop the professional skills and networks needed for advancing as leaders in higher education administration. (HERS Summer Institute, 2010)

The application process for the HERS Institutes includes the submission of recommendation letters from top leaders of the applicants’ home institutions. Therefore, women who are selected to attend HERS training programs are those who are currently serving in leadership roles or those who are perceived as having potential for future leadership in higher education. This background likely impacted my participants’ perspective on resolving conflict, for they had, up to that point in their careers, achieved a certain level of success, as their institutions’ leaders’ endorsements of them indicates. As I observe in the future research section above, it is important to explore the experiences of other women to understand how their experience may differ from my participants’.
The HERS Bryn Mawr Summer Institute curriculum also may have influenced the input my participants provided. First, all attendees took a Myers Briggs Personality Test prior to the start of the Institute. According to the HERS President, this was intended to position them to be self-reflective throughout the institute experience. Many of my participants noted that they had been thinking about their conflict experiences prior to my interview. While this was beneficial to my study, it also could have impacted the way my participants responded to questions in that setting.

Secondly, the course reading material may have directly influenced their responses. For example, one of the assigned readings was Chapters 2 and 3 of Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever’s text, *Ask For It: How Women Can Use the Power of Negotiation to get What They Really Want*. It is possible, for example, that my participants presented to me examples that reflected their ability to successful navigate conflict based on knowledge gained from this reading material.

Further, as I fully articulate in the research design section of my dissertation, my positionality as a researcher influenced my data in ways that are difficult to measure. While I made efforts to acknowledge and minimize this influence, inevitably this made an impact. For example, as an insider I was invited to reside in the dorms during my week at HERS Bryn Mawr, alongside the participants. While I had my own suite, I frequently saw my participants during social hours, mealtime, and around campus. This insider status benefitted me because I was able to quickly put my participants at ease during my interviews. However, it may also have had negative influences as well. For
example, perhaps my participants were careful to answer my questions in a way that put them in the best possible light, not knowing if our professional paths would cross again.

Finally, as I articulate in my theoretical justification for this study, the theoretical framework guides decisions regarding the research design. Based on a framework that demonstrates the importance of gaining a multicultural feminist perspective, I elected to conduct a qualitative study that develops theory from the data collected. I had intended to have a more diverse pool in order to gain broad input on the topic of conflict resolution in the postsecondary work environment. Circumstances led to a diverse pool in terms of professional background and administrative experience; however, I had 10 white women participants, although I had hoped for a more evenly balanced pool racially.

In addition, I recognized during my data analysis phase that in order to fully embrace the multicultural aspect of my theoretical framework, I would have needed to explore the influence of biases beyond gender more directly. If I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of the influence of racial biases, for example, I would have needed ask my participants directly about those experiences and their perspective of the influence it had on their ability to successfully resolve conflict. As it was, I was only able to embrace multiculturalism in the form of diverse representation within my data pool, leaving the topic of the influence of race or other biases to be more fully explored in future research.

Despite this delayed realization, the dimensional analysis form of grounded theory provided the structure and a methodical process for analyzing the rich data I collected from approximately 40 hours of conversation with my participants. It provided the means for observing an important aspect of conflict resolution for many of my
participants: the role of relationships in the conflict resolution decision-making process. As a result, this study enhanced our understanding of a feminist epistemology for navigating and resolving conflict in higher education.

**Final Statements**

I have discussed this study from a theoretical standpoint, comparing my findings to current knowledge in gender negotiation. I have noted the significance of this knowledge, which contributes to a deeper understanding of conflict resolution from a feminist epistemological perspective, and I have used the “data” collected in this study to support my contention that this research contributes new knowledge to the discipline of conflict resolution. However, I have not paused to acknowledge the significance of the stories shared with me during many hours of interviews with each of my 15 participants.

These discussions were at times enlightening, at times difficult, and at times moving. The women who took their personal time to talk to me were kind, open, and honest with material that could be threatening, at the very least, to them personally or professionally. They shared personal stories, some of which were like opening old wounds—difficult exchanges with colleagues or bosses, false accusations, and damaged relationships. But they did so without reserve, with complete trust that sharing their experiences was of value beyond their own personal experiences.

The women who co-developed this theory with me were also incredibly encouraging to me as a scholar. They thanked me for providing an opportunity to reflect on these topics, suggesting they had learned something about themselves or others in the process. They listened to me as I shared the reason I chose the topic or the observations I
had made at that point in the research. They cared enough not to be disrespectful if they disagreed with my findings. And each and every one of them asked that I share the final dissertation document with them.

The dimensional analysis form of grounded theory does not provide a forum to communicate in the context of the study these types of connections with participants. The dissertation structure allows for an acknowledgements page and a foreword, in which the doctoral student can acknowledge and thank family, friends, faculty and others who have helped achieve his or her goals. While I avail of these opportunities, I believe that my co-researchers, those who invested time, energy and knowledge to this process, should be accredited in the body of the dissertation itself for their role in the co-creation of theory.

Thus, it is with incredible pride that I conclude this dissertation with an acknowledgement that, without the 15 women who participated in this study, I could not be offering this deeper understanding of the ways in which women leaders navigate and resolve conflict in higher education. As I use this knowledge as a foundation upon which I continue to expand my understanding of conflict in the workplace, I credit my researcher partners—Alma, Brenda, Cheryl, Chris, Irene, Karla, Katie, Katrice, Linda, Mary, Michelle, Miriam, Monica, Norma, and Tamera—with helping to gain a truer understanding of resolution processes, an accomplishment that will strengthen the academy for all its members.
References


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Appendix A

Tri-Level Analysis of Power

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Marx’s Position</th>
<th>Hartsock’s Critique</th>
<th>Analytical Framework for a Gender-Sensitive Perception of Power</th>
<th>Analytical Framework for a Multicultural Gender-Sensitive Perception of Power</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 1</strong></td>
<td>Production is view from a capitalist perspective, in which domination in the production process is assumed.</td>
<td>Production should be viewed from a worker-focused concept of cooperation, or a “humane community.”</td>
<td>Assume that production is shared among classes and genders.</td>
<td>Acknowledge society’s roots in an agonal and racist community. Assume that production is shared among classes, genders and races.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 2</strong></td>
<td>Acknowledge a ruling class. Domination is understood from a capitalist perspective, in which rivalry and competition are assumed the norm.</td>
<td>Acknowledge a ruling class and gender. Domination should be viewed both from a class and a gendered perspective.</td>
<td>Seek a feminist ontology: learn directly from women regarding their experiences with power and community.</td>
<td>Acknowledge a ruling class, gender, and race. Seek a multicultural feminist ontology. Learn directly from multicultural groups of women regarding their experiences with power and community.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tier 3</strong></td>
<td>Epistemology of the ruling class is disingenuous. Knowledge is developed ontologically, thus the division of labor results in differing accounts of reality.</td>
<td>Acknowledge a ruling class and gender. The ruling class’s account of reality is disingenuous not only because of the division of labor, but also because of the sexual division of labor.</td>
<td>Seek a feminist epistemology: learn directly from women regarding their perceptions and understanding of power and community.</td>
<td>Acknowledge a ruling class, gender, and race. Seek a multicultural feminist epistemology: learn directly from diverse groups of women regarding their perceptions and understanding of power and community.</td>
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## Appendix B

### Perry’s Theory of Knowledge Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages &amp; categories</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dualism/received knowledge</td>
<td>There are right/wrong answers, engraved on Golden Tablets in the sky, known to Authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Duality</td>
<td>All problems are solvable; Therefore, the student's task is to learn the Right Solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Dualism</td>
<td>Some Authorities (literature, philosophy) disagree; others (science, math) agree. Therefore, there are Right Solutions, but some teachers' views of the Tablets are obscured. Therefore, student's task is to learn the Right Solutions and ignore the others.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Multiplicity/subjective knowledge</td>
<td>There are conflicting answers; therefore, students must trust their &quot;inner voices&quot;, not external Authority.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Early Multiplicity                   | There are 2 kinds of problems:  
  - those whose solutions people know  
  - those whose solutions people don't know yet  
    (thus, a kind of dualism).  
  Student's task is to learn how to find the Right Solutions. |
| Late Multiplicity                    | Most problems are of the second kind; therefore, everyone has a right to their own opinion; or some problems are unsolvable; therefore, it doesn't matter which (if any) solution you choose. Student's task is to shoot the bull. (Most freshman are at this position). |
### Perry’s Theory of Knowledge Development

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages &amp; categories</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Relativism/procedural knowledge</td>
<td>There are disciplinary reasoning methods: Connected knowledge: empathetic (why do you believe X?; what does this poem say to me?) vs. Separated knowledge: &quot;objective analysis&quot; (what techniques can I use to analyze this poem?).</td>
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<td>Contextual relativism</td>
<td>All proposed solutions are supported by reasons; i.e., must be viewed in context &amp; relative to support. Some solutions are better than others, depending on context. Student's task is to learn to evaluate solutions.</td>
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| Pre-Commitment                          | Student sees the necessity of:  
  ▪ making choices  
  ▪ committing to a solution  
| Commitment/Constructed Knowledge        | Integration of knowledge learned from others with personal experience and reflection.                                                        |
| Commitment                              | Student makes a commitment.                                                                                                               |
| Challenges to Commitment                | Student experiences implications of commitment. Student explores issues of responsibility.                                                   |
| Post-Commitment                         | Student realizes commitment is an ongoing, unfolding, evolving activity.                                                                  |

NOTE: The journey is sometimes repeated; and one can be at different stages at the same time with respect to different subjects.
## Appendix C

### Participant Pool Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Mary</th>
<th>Michelle</th>
<th>Rita</th>
<th>Katrina</th>
<th>Norma</th>
<th>Monica</th>
<th>Linda</th>
<th>Tamara</th>
<th>VP for Development &amp; Alumni Relations</th>
<th>Dean</th>
<th>Academic Dean</th>
<th>Registrar</th>
<th>AVP, IT</th>
<th>Assistant Dean, External Relations</th>
<th>Assoc Prof &amp; Asst Chai</th>
<th>Assoc Prof, Program Dir</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institution Type</td>
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<td>Public, Large</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hidden, Small</td>
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### Appendix D

Decline Pool Summary

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Appendix E

Informed Consent Form

Project title: Women Leaders Resolving Conflict in Higher Education: A Feminist Epistemological Perspective

You are invited to participate in a study that seeks to gain a deeper understanding of how women professionals navigate and resolve conflict in the higher education administrative environment using a feminist epistemological lens. In addition, this study is being conducted to fulfill the dissertation requirements for the Ph.D. degree in higher education. The study is conducted by Maureen Silva, a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education, Organization & Governance program at the University Denver’s Morgridge College of Education. Results will be used to fulfill the degree requirements. Maureen can be reached at 303.718.1283/maureen.silva@du.edu. This project is supervised by the Ph.D. faculty advisor, Dr. Frank Tuitt, Assistant Professor, Morgridge College of Education, University of Denver, Denver, CO 80208, (303) 871-4573, ftuitt@du.edu.

Participation in this study should take about 2.5 hours of your time. Participation will involve one 1½ hr. in-person interview conducted at HERS Bryn Mawr Summer Institute, and one 45 minute phone interview, regarding your experiences with resolving conflict as a female professional in higher education. Participation in this project is strictly voluntary. The risks associated with this project are minimal. If, however, you experience discomfort you may discontinue the interview at any time. We respect your right to choose not to answer any questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate or withdrawal from participation will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your responses will be identified by code number only and will be kept separate from information that could identify you. This is done to protect the confidentiality of your responses. Only the researcher will have access to your individual data and any reports generated as a result of this study will use only group averages and paraphrased wording or quotes attributed to participants identified only by pseudonym. However, should any information contained in this study be the subject of a court order or lawful subpoena, the University of Denver might not be able to avoid compliance with the order or subpoena. Although no questions in this interview address it, we are required by law to tell you that if information is revealed concerning suicide, homicide, or child abuse and neglect, it is required by law that this be reported to the proper authorities.

If you have any concerns or complaints about how you were treated during the interview, please contact Susan Sadler, Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, at 303-871-3454, or Sylk Sotto-Santiago, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 303-871-4052 or write to either at the University of Denver, Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, 2199 S. University Blvd., Denver, CO 80208-2121.
You may keep this page for your records. Please sign the next page if you understand and agree to the above. If you do not understand any part of the above statement, please ask the researcher any questions you have.

I have read and understood the foregoing descriptions of the study called (name). I have asked for and received a satisfactory explanation of any language that I did not fully understand. I agree to participate in this study, and I understand that I may withdraw my consent at any time. I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature _____________________ Date _________________

___ I agree to be audiotaped.
___ I do not agree to be audiotaped.

Signature _____________________ Date _________________

___________ I would like a summary of the results of this study to be mailed to me at the following postal or e-mail address:
Appendix F

Initial Interview Protocol, including researcher instructions

Opening
Thank you again for your time and participation in my dissertation research. As indicated in the consent form, I am researching conflict that women leaders face in their professional capacity in higher education. I begin with a general question for you about conflict:

1. Please describe how you view conflict in the workplace.

General Instructions
I am not focused on how you as a manager resolve disputes among your staff, nor am I exploring how those to whom you report make decisions regarding conflict between you and your peers. Instead, I am interested in day-to-day conflict situations that women leaders in higher education face with peers and others on campus that are resolved without the aid of a third party.

2. Given this background, please tell me about a conflict situation in which you were involved in your professional capacity. Please think of one that did not involve you as or your superior as a mediator.
[Listen for:
A. Words used to describe the conflict, including analogies or metaphors
B. Details of conflict participants
   1. Gender
   2. Professional role
   3. Atmosphere
   4. Work environment
   5. Level of frustration]

3. What actions did you take in this situation?

4. Can you describe for me the conflict style you exhibited in this situation?

5. Can you describe for me the work culture or atmosphere in which this conflict took place?

6. Would you describe the situation above as a conflict that was resolved or unresolved?

7. To what would you attribute this outcome?

8. Can you provide an example of conflict in your past that you felt was (not)
resolved? [Selection of resolved or not resolved is dependent upon the example provided above.

9. What actions did you take in this situation?

10. Can you describe for me the conflict style you exhibited in this situation?

11. Can you describe for me, if it’s different, the work culture or atmosphere in which this second conflict took place?

12. To what would you attribute this (un)resolved outcome?

13. Are there other examples of conflict that you would like to share with me? [Allow for up to three more examples of conflict, asking about each if the participant perceives the conflict to be resolved or unresolved, to what she attributes the outcome, and the culture/atmosphere, if it’s different than the previous conflict situation.]

14. Overall, how would you describe your conflict resolution style in your professional capacity?

15. How would you describe your conflict resolution style outside of your professional capacity?

16. To what would you attribute the difference in style? [If those two descriptions are different]

17. Are there other aspects of conflict that you face in your professional capacity that we have not reviewed yet and that you would like to share with me?

Closing
I thank you for your assistance. As I’ve shared with you, I intend to conduct a follow-up interview with you via phone in the fall, once I’ve had an opportunity to review the interviews I’m conducting this week. I will schedule this interview at a time that is convenient for you. I will also be in a private location so that I can place you on speaker phone and record our follow-up interview.
Appendix G

Interview Protocol piloted in 2007

1. How would you define conflict in the workplace?

2. How would you define conflict resolution in the workplace?

3. Can you provide an example of conflict in your past that you felt was resolved well?

4. What would you attribute this outcome to?

5. Can you provide an example of conflict in your past that you felt was not resolved or not resolved well?

6. What would you attribute this outcome to?

7. Do you think the fact that you’re a woman leader was a factor in these conflicts or their outcomes?
Appendix H

Final Interview Protocol

Opening
Thank you again for your time and participation in my dissertation research. As indicated in the consent form, I am researching conflict that women leaders face in their professional capacity in higher education. I begin with a general question for you about conflict:

18. Please describe how you view conflict in the workplace.

General Instructions
I am not focused on how you as a manager resolve disputes among your staff, nor am I exploring how those to whom you report make decisions regarding conflict between you and your peers. Instead, I am interested in day-to-day conflict situations that women leaders in higher education face with peers and others on campus that are resolved without the aid of a third party.

19. Given this background, please tell me about a conflict situation in which you were involved in your professional capacity. Please think of one that did not involve you as or your superior as a mediator.

20. What actions did you take in this situation?

21. Can you describe for me the conflict style you exhibited in this situation?

22. Can you describe for me the work culture or atmosphere in which this conflict took place?

23. Would you describe the situation above as a conflict that was resolved or unresolved?

24. To what would you attribute this outcome?

25. Can you provide an example of conflict in your past that you felt was (not) resolved?

26. What actions did you take in this situation?

27. Can you describe for me the conflict style you exhibited in this situation?

28. Can you describe for me, if it’s different, the work culture or atmosphere in which this second conflict took place?
29. To what would you attribute this (un)resolved outcome?

30. Are there other examples of conflict that you would like to share with me?

31. What actions did you take in this situation?

32. Can you describe for me the conflict style you exhibited in this situation?

33. Can you describe for me, if it’s different, the work culture or atmosphere in which this second conflict took place?

34. To what would you attribute this (un)resolved outcome?

35. Overall, how would you describe your conflict resolution style in your professional capacity?

36. How would you describe your conflict resolution style outside of your professional capacity?

37. To what would you attribute the difference in style?

38. If they are different, do you think that your work style would benefit by having some of your personal style infused into it, or vice versa?

39. Do you think gender has any impact on either these conflicts you’ve described, or in conflict in general in your workplace?

40. Are there other aspects of conflict that you face in your professional capacity that we have not reviewed yet and that you would like to share with me?

41. One participant noted the physical responses she has to conflict…do you have anything to say about that?

Closing
I thank you for your assistance. As I’ve shared with you, I intend to conduct a follow-up interview with you via phone in the fall, once I’ve had an opportunity to review the interviews I’m conducting this week. I will schedule this interview at a time that is convenient for you. I will also be in a private location so that I can place you on speaker phone and record our follow-up interview.
Appendix I

Follow-up Interview Protocol

Opening. Thank you for your time again. I appreciate it very much.

First, do you have any questions regarding the transcript that I sent to you? [Reviewing the transcript is optional. Discuss any questions/concerns they have.]

Secondly, as I shared with you during our first interview, I am conducting a study of women leaders in higher education to hear what they have to say about conflict and conflict resolution in their professional capacities. Since our first interview, I have been analyzing the data to see if what I heard in our interviews was similar to or different from that which I found in the literature.

Certainly, some of what my participants spoke of is reflected in past research. One thing I noted that was unique relates to the approach that many—but not all—of my participants used in their effort to resolve conflict. Specifically, many of my participants seemed to have a relationship filter, if you will, to determine the approach to take in resolving a particular conflict.

I generated a model of this relationship filter, which I sent to you via email. Have you had a chance to review it? My questions today center around this model.

1. I’ll start with a general question: Does this model, as it stands, seem like an accurate representation for how you decide to approach a conflict?
   a. If yes,  
      i. Specifically, in what ways is your approach to conflict reflected in this model?  
      ii. Are there aspects of this model that do not reflect your approach?
   b. If no,  
      i. Specifically, in what ways is your approach to conflict not reflected in this model?  
      ii. Are there aspects of this model that do reflect your approach?
2. In general, do you think that your relationship with the other party in a conflict situation has an affect on your decisions regarding how you’ll approach the conflict situation?
3. As you recall, I didn’t ask any questions as it relates to relationship with other in the conflict situations. However, here are quotes from our discussion that gave me clues regarding your relationship with other in the conflict scenarios we discussed, leading me to conclusions regarding the approach you used:
4. Is there anything else about this model that you want to discuss or add to our discussion?

[Closing: explain next steps in research process, thank for time, offer to send pdf of final dissertation]
Appendix J

Family Code List

1. Positive
2. Negative
3. Negative behavior
4. Spectrum of conflict
5. Race/Ethnic culture
6. Leadership
7. War Language
8. Type
9. Type: Decision-making Conflicts
10. Type: Procedural Conflicts
11. Type: Program Conflicts
12. Type: Resources Conflicts
13. Type: Human Resources Conflicts
14. Type: Work Activity Conflicts
15. Style
16. Style: Attentive
17. Style: Avoidance
18. Style: Collaborative
19. Style: Communicative
20. Style: Confrontational
21. Style: Defensive
22. Style: Facilitator
23. Style: Persistence
24. Gender
25. Emotions
26. Pause
27. Work Culture/Atmosphere
28. Higher Education
29. Allies
30. Problem people
31. Relationships
Appendix K

Dimension Connection to Perspective

Relegate remaining dimensions into salient, relevant, marginal or irrelevant (as they relate to the perspective: RELATIONSHIPS)

1. Positive—**IRRELEVANT**
2. Negative—**IRRELEVANT**
3. Negative behavior—**IRRELEVANT**
4. Spectrum of conflict—**IRRELEVANT**
5. Race/Ethnic culture—**IRRELEVANT**
6. Leadership—**IRRELEVANT**
7. War Language—**IRRELEVANT**
8. Type—**IRRELEVANT**
9. Type: Decision-making Conflicts—**relevant**
10. Type: Procedural Conflicts—**relevant**
11. Type: Program Conflicts—**relevant**
12. Type: Resources Conflicts—**relevant**
13. Type: Human Resources Conflicts—**relevant**
14. Type: Work Activity Conflicts—**relevant**
15. Style—**IRRELEVANT**
16. Style: Attentive—**salient**
17. Style: Avoidance—**salient**
18. Style: Collaborative—**salient**
19. Style: Communicative—**salient**
20. Style: Confrontational—**salient**
21. Style: Defensive—**salient**
22. Style: Facilitator—**marginal**
23. Style: Persistence—**salient**
24. Gender—**relevant**
25. Emotions—**relevant**
26. Pause—**relevant**
27. Work Culture/Atmosphere—**marginal**
28. Higher Education—**marginal**
29. Allies—**relevant**
30. Problem people—**relevant**
Appendix L

Irrelevant Dimensions

Positive: An initial family code created to capture what my participants said about conflict more generally. This code encapsulates the positive aspects of engaging in conflict in the workplace, such as the perspective that conflict enables progress. This dimension contains 98 codes, making it too broad to be meaningful.

Negative: An initial family code created to capture what my participants said about conflict more generally. This code encapsulates the problematic aspects of conflict, including difficult work environments, transition with leadership, and problematic employees. This dimension contains 277 codes, making it too broad to be meaningful.

Negative behavior: An initial family code created to capture what my participants said about conflict more generally. This code encapsulates descriptions of people behaving badly in the workplace. This dimension contains 61 codes, making it too broad to be meaningful.

Spectrum of conflict: This family code represents the broad view of conflict that my participants held about conflict. Some of them noted the normalcy of conflict in the workplace, others did not view everyday challenges as conflict, and still others found conflict in the workplace to be highly stressful, attempting to avoid conflict where possible. This dimension was too broad to be meaningful.

Race/Ethnic culture: This family code summarizes discussions about issues associated with race or ethnic bias as they related to the conflict scenarios they described. For example, one participant discussed the ability to connect with the other party because they had the same racial background, another participant discussed common approaches to resolving conflict in her culture, and one participant felt that racial bias might have been at the center of one of her conflicts. I did not address racial or ethnic bias in my interviews, so the data within this family code is not robust enough from which to draw conclusions. While not relevant to this study, this area holds potential for future research, as I discuss in Chapter 7.

Leadership: This family code captures perspectives participants regarding leadership and its impact on conflict in higher education. Three primary perspectives are included in this code: participants seeking assistance from their leaders in difficult conflict situations, participants’ sense of responsibility in leadership, and the impact that leadership had on the conflict situations they discussed. While not relevant to this study, this area holds potential for future research, as I discuss in Chapter 7.

War Language: This family code captures use of language one often hears associated with international conflict. With a feminist epistemological lens, I anticipated hearing less competitive language and more cooperative language. As such, I was struck by the frequency of this language. However, my data analysis revealed that the use of this language was descriptive and a relatively benign.
**Type:** This family code encompasses all the conflict types I observed in my data. As such, this dimension became irrelevant in the analysis, although the various codes within it were relevant and discussed in detail in the data analysis section of the dissertation.

**Style:** This family code encompasses all the conflict resolution styles I observed in my data. As such, this dimension became irrelevant in the analysis, although the various codes within it were relevant and discussed in detail in the data analysis section of the dissertation.
Appendix M

Differentiation of Dimensions

**Contexts**: dimensions that are peripheral to the perspective; boundaries for inquiry—situation/environment for dimensions

- Work Culture/Atmosphere
- Higher Education
- Gender
- Types: Decision-making Conflicts
- Types: Procedural Conflicts
- Types: Program Conflicts
- Types: Resources Conflicts
- Types: Human Resources Conflicts
- Types: Work activity Conflicts

**Conditions**: dimensions that facilitate, block, or shape actions/interactions

- Allies
- Problem people

**Processes**: intended or unintended actions because of conditions

- Emotions
- Pause

**Consequences**: outcomes of specific actions

- Style: Attentive
- Style: Avoidance
- Style: Collaborative
- Style: Communicative
- Style: Confrontational
- Style: Defensive
# Appendix N

## Sample: Testing the Feminist Conflict Process Model with Scenarios

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Relationship quote</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Relationship Model</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Professional schools issue their own transcripts. . . . they’re not neutral bodies in the sense of the word. I’ve made a recommendation to my Vice Provost, who’s made a recommendation to the Provost. . . . So I’ve tried to approach this by being very diplomatic.</td>
<td>I kind of tiptoe around, because everybody’s really looking at me as the outsider coming in. And when I mention something... that’s different, that’s not the status quo at INSTITUTION, causes conflict right away. “Who is she . . . ? You know, they don’t have trust or faith so I’m slowly trying to earn the trust and faith” (111). “If they really took the time to investigate what was going on, they’d come up with the recommendation I was coming up with, so it’s really just me talking to them and building relationships with them to get over the conflict” (98).</td>
<td>Relationship difficult</td>
<td>Sig. ramifications, concern for institution, strategize, research, inform higher ups</td>
<td>APPROACH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Two VPs didn’t get along, which impacted everything. The Institution set up a program that involved several depts., but it never got started in the start. “I say during a social function to the director of financial aid, ‘Do you know anything about the check in process?’ So she immediately gets her back up . . . . So the next thing that happens . . . . I get implicated for not preparing for the process.”</td>
<td>“And horrific emails about this whole thing, so I don’t want to damage myself or my career. I’m thinking I’m not going to make it 10 times worse and keep going back at her, plus I’m not at the same level to speak to her the way she’s speaking to me” (74).</td>
<td>Relationship difficult</td>
<td>Sig. ramifications, concern for self, DEFEND SELF, enlisted boss's help, document</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>“At my last job I had conflict with the student newspaper all the time. That goes back to the politics of those two people as well. That the students were always coxed to write a slanderous article regarding any new initiative coming out of my office. And the vice president of enrollment management oversaw the paper.”</td>
<td>“At my last job I had conflict with the student newspaper all the time. That goes back to the politics of those two people as well. That the students were always coxed to write a slanderous article regarding any new initiative coming out of my office. And the vice president of enrollment management oversaw the paper. And it always something negative on my side” (94).</td>
<td>Relationship difficult</td>
<td>Sig. ramifications, concern for self, DEFEND SELF, enlisted boss's help</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>A faculty member requested assistance in getting a new computer graphics degree program going that would involve three departments. “I emailed people . . . said, ‘Gee, what do you think of this idea?’ And they all emailed back and said, ‘Let’s have a meeting.’ So I ended up inviting about 6 people to the meeting . . . . I walked up to the room . . . and I immediately knew, ‘Oh we’ve got some conflict problems here,’ because instead of 6 people being in the room, there were 12!”</td>
<td>“As kind of a personal note, I try to honor the experience of people that are within those conflict situations that I work with. I don’t try to reduce somebody to a problem or, you know, or a horrible person or an idiot or all those different labels. I never reduce people to that. I try to honor who they are and what they are trying to accomplish and if they display a great deal of passion, I try to understand why and how, rather than reducing it to, ‘this person’s a pain in the ass. I’ll just get rid of them and move forward.””</td>
<td>Relationship important ...all are important.</td>
<td>Relationship important, resolution top priority, ADDRESS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>“When I took the DEPARTMENT5 appointment, I was working full time in the DEPARTMENT5, teaching in the master’s program. The provost asked me if I would consider accepting the appointment to direct the DEPARTMENT4.” “So I said, ‘Yes, I’d like to do this.’” He said, ‘Do you want me to tell your DEPARTMENT5 chair or do you want me to do it?’ I said, ‘I’ll do it. I’ve been there a long time, I wanted to show a good deal of respect.’”</td>
<td>I had been very close friends with her for 9 years and I knew a couple of things about this particular conflict. Number one: her behavior was indicative of problems that were . . . ran deeper than anything I might have done in accepting the DEPARTMENT4 appointment. I also knew that there was nothing I could do to resolve the conflict. What I wanted in that situation was for her behavior to stop” (132). &quot;I relied heavily on my spiritual practices to get me through, because it was very painful on an emotional level and on a personal level and on a professional level, it was very painful over an extended period of time for me because I loved her and I cared about the department chair, because I’d worked with NAME4 for 9 years closely and had a very good personal and collegial relationship with her&quot; (134) “I mean, we were very close friends and associates and the whole thing. And she just totally went nuts on me.&quot;</td>
<td>Relationship important, then relationship difficult</td>
<td>Resolution top priority, attempted to ADDRESS, but</td>
<td>relationship turned difficult, so moved to relations difficult, sig ramifications, concern for self, DEFEND SELF with documentation, seeking help from other, now formal grievance process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix O

### Sample: Scenario Detailed Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Actions</th>
<th>Style exhibited</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Attribution of outcome</th>
<th>Work culture/atmosphere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Alma | 1        | “Professional schools issue their own transcripts. . . . they’re not neutral bodies in the sense of the word. I’ve made a recommendation to my Vice Provost, who’s made a recommendation to the Provost . . . So I’ve tried to approach this by being very diplomatic.” | 1. “Really just doing my homework on the situation and trying to gather all the information I can other than what’s actually happening.”  
2. “I try to get the historical perspective on it, and the cultural perspective.”  
3. “Trying to . . . maybe not communicate directly with what the end result’s going to be, but sort of lay the foundation for what’s yet to come.” | I was really more laid back about it.  
Letting people the people who were opposed to my recommendation do all the talking...[so] I could really assess what they’re saying...[and] persistent.” | Resolved: When I said I see this situation resolved as I specifically talked to you about working on the software and the issues surrounding the software and transcript. But still there’s some more layers to be implemented.” | “I guess to educate the people why this has to . . . this new initiative has to take place. Why is it good for the institution? Why is it the right thing to do.” | “I’m trying to think . . . though, culture around the conflict. It’s . . . I almost want to say underground.” |
| Alma | 2        | Two VPs didn’t get along, which impacted everything. The Institution set up a program that involved several depts., but it never got started in the spring. “I say during a social function to the director of financial aid, ‘Do you know anything about the check in process?’ So she immediately gets her back up . . . So the next thing that happens . . . I get implicated for not preparing for the process.” | 1. “I told [my VP] about it.”  
2. “I come in during the winter break because the [VP] of Enrollment Management sends these scathing emails to President’s council about the process.”  
3. “I just tried to be as professional as possible because it was such a political event.”  
4. “I waited until there was some decent results, but I made sure I openly copied everybody she did as well, so that they could see I’m not incompetent.”  
5. “In the meantime, I’d gather so much information for my boss to take to president’s cabinet...I sent him all the documentation.” | "Aggressive or defensive. Probably more defensive." | Resolved. "At the end, the president ended up saying, who was a new president at the time, you know, is this resolved and moving forward, and everybody at president’s council said, 'Well, yes it is.' Whereas it wasn’t resolved whatever." | "Lack of leadership . . . .Because it was simple enough to resolve and it could have been resolved at presidents council. It should have never got there." | "And that’s why I started the conversation that these two VPs were always at each other throats, so this was again another component of him versus her or her versus him. As ridiculous as the situation was, didn’t matter if we were talking about this check in process or what color of paint we were going to put on the wall, it was going to be, no matter what you say, I disagree with you." |
# Appendix P

## Sample: Conflict Work Culture Descriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Conflict Summary</th>
<th>Work Culture/ Atmosphere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New computer system, conflict with other who don’t trust her b/c she's new person, became political quickly</td>
<td>Institution: underground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>System for counting students, other was VP who attempted to pin it on her in front of President's cabinet</td>
<td>Immediate: Him versus her or her versus him (Conflict between 2 VPs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Slanderous student newspaper article, encouraged by others in opposing department</td>
<td>Immediate: him versus her or her versus him (Conflict between 2 VPs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New program idea that was resisted by several faculty/departments</td>
<td>Immediate: territorial, culture of fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict with former boss when accepted new position</td>
<td>Immediate: professional violence; collegial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Institution: student centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Question regarding submissions of grades</td>
<td>Immediate: control with an iron fist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict over dress rehearsal for jazz ensemble</td>
<td>Immediate: Patronizing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other faculty mad that she provided information to one of other's adjuncts re: syllabus question</td>
<td>Immediate: control with an iron fist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Computer problem, no one in IT willing to take responsibility</td>
<td>Immediate: Ongoing tension: academic affairs &amp; business affairs units. Institution: friendly, student-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Priority housing for honors students</td>
<td>Immediate: Open: academic affairs &amp; student affairs. Institution: friendly, student-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chair of dept. that switches out faculty for honors courses at last minute w/o communication to Honors Program</td>
<td>Immediate: authority isn’t clear Institution: friendly, student-centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Conflict with faculty member regarding team teaching. He did not care to team teach with her, but he never informed Irene.</td>
<td>Institution: Peer structure; not very hierarchical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict between faculty re: late admit</td>
<td>Institution: Peer structure; not very hierarchical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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## Appendix Q

### Professional Styles Overall

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Overall description</th>
<th>Key words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>“I always try to communicate as much as possible . . . trying to express myself or listening to the others . . . to get facts on the situation. The older I get, I realize things aren’t as serious . . . [and I] don’t take things so personally.” “I bend . . . trying to see what’s for the greater, good for the institution . . . talking to them and building relationships with them to get over the conflict.”</td>
<td>Communicate, listen, greater good, building relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>“My perception of how I resolve conflict resolution coming from my background is I must cultivate courage, curiosity, patience, and the umbrella over all of that is to recognize what you have to work with. The strengths that everybody brings that you have to work with in any given situation, and letting go of ownership, letting go of control. That’s my style.”</td>
<td>Cultivate courage, curiosity, patience. Recognize other's strengths, let go of ownership.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>“I guess I’m a compromiser. For me, giving something to get something seems to work best.”</td>
<td>Compromiser, give to get</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>“My first reaction is always avoidance, but then I realize I really need to do something about this. Then it’s persistence, and then really trying to come up with creative solutions. I always try to give as much as I get. I tend not to be rigid. I try to look for other ways to resolve a conflict. But if it’s a conflict that I feel needs to be resolved, I will keep at it until I get some kind of resolution.”</td>
<td>Avoid if possible. If not, persistence, creative solutions, give as much as get.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>“Before I took this administrative job, when I worked as the Buddhist minister, I don’t want to have [confrontation]. . . . After I took the academic dean’s position, I think I’ve changed. I try to imagine the other end and try to understand the reason and . . . through the explanation we come up with consensus or agreement.”</td>
<td>Imagine and understand other, and come to consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla</td>
<td>“I’m present in a communication . . . I’m present in an exchange, meaning I’m all there. I’m tending to what’s going on at the moment, really pay[ing] attention to how my contributions are being received by the other party.” “The more I’m putting forth what I believe about something, the more I try to pay attention to how it’s being received, because then it’s not just factual.” “Part of my style [is to] pay attention to the reactions I get, and then address it.”</td>
<td>Being present, paying attention to other's reactions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>“Engaging and calm. I seriously doubt that someone could hit me with something that would surprise me.” “I tend not to get [upset, or anxious].”</td>
<td>Engaging, calm, focus on end goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrice</td>
<td>“Consensus. I am very willing to compromise . . . if you can give me a persuasive enough argument to see your point of view, I will completely drop mine. . . . But, I also expect the same thing of other people.” “Maybe [my approach] is even beyond strategic; maybe it’s methodical in some ways. I just want to get to the goal.”</td>
<td>Compromise, want to get to the end goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Overall description</td>
<td>Key words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>“You begin to then try to resolve things in a more civil, developmental way. You don’t let the emotion take over, and I learned really that it’s very important that when you’re totally, totally hot under the collar, that you don’t attempt to do any of it. That you step back and you give it a day.” “observe and listen . . . and if it doesn’t get resolved immediately . . . you have to give it the time.”</td>
<td>Civil, developmental, observe, listen, give it time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>“I have to first of all be patient. I have to try to listen. I have to try to be positive, even if I realize there’s a lot of really negative stuff going on.” “I do try to listen. I try to be consistent.”</td>
<td>Listen, be consistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>“I think of myself as a resourceful, thoughtful person that’s going to make hard decisions sometimes for the best of the situation . . . I’m direct [and] I can be creative with the resolution. I know I can just go talk to a person, have the discussion, with the expectation that we can agree to disagree.”</td>
<td>Direct, creative, thoughtful, resourceful, willing to agree to disagree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>“I don’t feel comfortable with confrontation, so I think my style is more passive . . . when I am passive, I realize that I can’t be as effective in communicating the most important points to somebody . . . as I became a manager and I’ve had more experience in it now in the past year, I have become a little less patient. So I’ve seen my style change in the last year. I’ve become less patient and realize that I have to be more direct.”</td>
<td>Passive, but as a manager, becoming more direct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>“I am, quote, a good listener. So I do try to listen first a lot of times. I really try to restate what I hear people say, so I feed it back to them . . . so I think right then and there I have the opportunity to just get it out so it doesn’t escalate.” “I can easily see both sides of the situation . . . and I’m not going to draw a line in the sand.” “I know that timing is everything, and sometimes you just need to let things be for a while and you circle back . . . I’m also persistent.” “I try to enjoy people for who they are and what they can bring . . . I don’t think I have unrealistic expectations of people in the workplace.”</td>
<td>Good listener, see both sides, persistent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>“I don’t back down, I don’t move away. . . . [if] whatever’s causing the conflict is having a negative impact on something, then I’m not going to let you off the hook.” “I think that I’m really good at [conflict] with people who prefer not to be in conflict.”</td>
<td>Don’t back down, good with those who aren’t interested in &quot;being in conflict&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamera</td>
<td>“Flexible, initiator. It’s always important to me to lead and to approach conflict from the perspective of the greater good.”</td>
<td>leadership, greater good</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix R

### Sample: Personal Style Summary & Comparison to Professional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Personal description</th>
<th>Key words</th>
<th>Reason for Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>Much more laid back, except with my husband screaming. I think of conflict with my friends or somebody at my kid’s school: I go with the flow, don’t push the issue as much. I guess it depends on what it is. I mean if it was something serious with my kid--if it’s medical or school, meaning what kind of services are they going to get? I’m head strong with it that way, but if it’s just day-to-day life stuff, I’m real laid back.</td>
<td>Laid back, unless defending the family</td>
<td>&quot;I think the work sucks my energy! I think I’m exhausted dealing with issues. By the time I get home--and that’s really unfortunate. It sounds like my family gets the raw end of the deal.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>Same.</td>
<td>Same: Cultivate courage, curiosity, patience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>Pretty much the same, with that added dose of bad German humor.</td>
<td>Same: Compromiser, give to get</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>You know I don’t think it’s a lot different. Again, I avoid conflict. Back in the stereotype definition of conflict, I rarely lose my temper, and I’m a very even keeled person, which I think frustrates some people I deal with, although not my spouse. He appreciates it. But yeah, my first response is always to avoid, and I would say that that’s true with my personal relationships as well.</td>
<td>Same: Avoid, rarely lose temper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>I have a sister nearby me and I think most of the time I listen. I listen. Most of the time I don’t really insist what I want...follow the flow. Depending on who I am facing. If someone is really insisting and someone who is really indecisive, than I am doing leading role. So, I seem to be pretty flexible depending on context.</td>
<td>Listen, follow the flow, depending upon context</td>
<td>Changed, as a manager, to confront problems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix S

### Gender Comparison

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Conflict Summary</th>
<th>Gender of Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>System for counting students, other was VP who attempted to pin it on her in front of President's cabinet</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Question regarding submissions of grades</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other faculty mad that she provided information to one of other's adjuncts re: syllabus question</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Conflict between CFO, who was close to President &amp; who thought Irene was spending too much on phone calls</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other responsible for moving staff members from one project area to another.</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other (new supervisor of former &quot;brilliant&quot; employee) not managing him well</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other was mentee who felt selection for PI on grant was wrong selection</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other was former staff responsible for project Katrice was given to run</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other was member of Diversity Summit who resisted Katrice's input despite the fact that Katrice was called in for her expertise</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other was former supervisor who wouldn't step out of her old role--And Linda's new role</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other was offended, feeling that Mary had shown disrespect in a training session</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other would not decrease # of special event fundraising</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Overlapping roles with other</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Culture survey, other decided they could do it internally</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Office moving, need other to organize process</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamera</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other was HR VP resistant to firing incompetent member of Tamera's team</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict with former boss when accepted new position</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict over dress rehearsal for jazz ensemble</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Computer problem, no one in IT willing to take responsibility</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chair of dept. that switches out faculty for honors courses at last minute w/o communication to Honors Program</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Conflict with faculty member regarding team teaching. He did not care to team teach with her, but he never informed Irene.</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Complaint by foreign born nationals</td>
<td>Male</td>
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339
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Conflict Summary</th>
<th>Gender of Other</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shortfall in budget, other wanted her to cover</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Had a failing project dumped on her by her boss &amp; his colleague; other project coordinator resisted helping</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dean colleague suggested bringing her strongest unit into his</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other scheduled phone conference mtg that turned out to have numerous participants</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>International fundraising liaison to schools; other resistant to moving forward</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other felt she was undermining him in his new position</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other resisted recommendation of committee focused on retention issues</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other was technical person responsible for implementation of emergency text msg program, but wouldn't finish project</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamera</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other was old guard resistant to new guard idea. 3 participants: two new (one Tamera) and one old</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamera</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other was Pres who wanted to appoint VP, despite campus's resistance to her. Cabinet objected</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Slanderous student newspaper article, encouraged by others in opposing department</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Priority housing for honors students</td>
<td>Male?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New computer system, conflict with other who don’t trust her b/c she’s new person, became political quickly</td>
<td>Male?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New program idea that was resisted by several faculty/departments</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict between faculty re: late admit</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advisory board &amp; other faculty mbrs contacts Katie for help b/c other (faculty) have misrepresented data in order to get dept name change approved</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Electronic student voting; other was faculty concerned with implementation</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Others were campus community concerned about transition from public to school-run Health Services clinic</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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</table>
## Appendix T

### Conflict Type Code List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Conflict Summary</th>
<th>Conflict Type Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New computer system, conflict with other who don’t trust her b/c she's new person, became political quickly</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>System for counting students, other was VP who attempted to pin it on her in front of President's cabinet</td>
<td>Work activity, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Slanderous student newspaper article, encouraged by others in opposing department</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New program idea that was resisted by several faculty/departments</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict with former boss when accepted new position</td>
<td>HR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Question regarding submissions of grades</td>
<td>Work activity, her</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict over dress rehearsal for jazz ensemble</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other faculty mad that she provided information to one of other's adjuncts re: syllabus question</td>
<td>Work activity, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Computer problem, no one in IT willing to take responsibility</td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Priority housing for honors students</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chair of dept. that switches out faculty for honors courses at last minute w/o communication to Honors Program</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Conflict with faculty member regarding team teaching. He did not care to team teach with her, but he never informed Irene.</td>
<td>Work activity, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict between faculty re: late admit</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irene</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Conflict between CFO, who was close to President &amp; who thought Irene was spending too much on phone calls</td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other responsible for moving staff members from one project area to another.</td>
<td>Work activity, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other (new supervisor of former &quot;brilliant&quot; employee) not managing him well</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Advisory board &amp; other faculty mbrs contacts Katie for help b/c other (faculty) have misrepresented data to get dept name change approved</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Complaint by foreign born nationals</td>
<td>HR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katie</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other was mentee who felt selection for PI on grant was wrong selection</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other was former staff responsible for project Katrice was given to run</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other was member of Diversity Summit who resisted Katrice's input despite the fact that Katrice was called in for her expertise</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shortfall in budget, other wanted her to cover</td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Had a failing project dumped on her by her boss &amp; his colleague; other project coordinator resisted helping</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other was former supervisor who wouldn't step out of her old role--And Linda's new role</td>
<td>Work activity, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Scenario</td>
<td>Conflict Summary</td>
<td>Conflict Type Code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>----------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dean colleague suggested bringing her strongest unit into his resources</td>
<td>Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other was offended, feeling that Mary had shown disrespect in a training session</td>
<td>Work activity, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other scheduled phone conference mtg that turned out to have numerous participants</td>
<td>Work activity, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Electronic student voting; other was faculty concerned with implementation</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Others were campus community concerned about transition from public to school-run Health Services clinic</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other would not decrease # of special event fundraising</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Overlapping roles with other</td>
<td>Work activity, both</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>International fundraising liaison to schools; other resistant to moving forward</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Culture survey, other decided they could do it internally</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Office moving, need other to organize process</td>
<td>Work activity, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other felt she was undermining him in his new position</td>
<td>Work activity, her</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other resisted recommendation of committee focused on retention issues</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other was technical person responsible for implementation of emergency text msg program, but wouldn't finish project</td>
<td>Work activity, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamera</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other was old guard resistant to new guard idea. 3 participants: two new (one Tamera) and one old</td>
<td>Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamera</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other was Pres who wanted to appoint VP, despite campus's resistance to her. Cabinet objected</td>
<td>Decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamera</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other was HR VP resistant to firing incompetent member of Tamera's team</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
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</table>
## Appendix U

### Sample: Conflict Resolution Style Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Conflict Summary</th>
<th>Conflict Resolution (ConRes) Styles</th>
<th>ConRes Style Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shortfall in budget, other wanted her to cover</td>
<td>civilized, developmental path</td>
<td>Attentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dean colleague suggested bringing her strongest unit into his</td>
<td>calm, consistent message, reacted a little</td>
<td>Attentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other was offended, feeling that Mary had shown disrespect in a training session</td>
<td>attentive, reassuring</td>
<td>Attentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other felt she was undermining him in his new position</td>
<td>big sister</td>
<td>Attentive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Question regarding submissions of grades</td>
<td>humor (to avoid)</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chair of dept. that switches out faculty for honors courses at last minute w/o communication to Honors Program</td>
<td>avoidance</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other was former staff responsible for project Katrice was given to run</td>
<td>strategic, tempered, purposeful, but avoided out of professional/personal respect</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other scheduled phone conference mtg that turned out to have numerous participants</td>
<td>avoidance</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karla</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Other responsible for moving staff members from one project area to another.</td>
<td>straightforward then avoided</td>
<td>Avoidance (after Communicative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miriam</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>International fundraising liaison to schools; other resistant to moving forward</td>
<td>open communication, then tried to avoid it</td>
<td>Avoidance (after Communicative)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monica</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Office moving, need other to organize process</td>
<td>passive aggressive</td>
<td>Avoidance (after Confrontational)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Priority housing for honors students</td>
<td>collaboration, persistence</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katrice</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Other was member of Diversity Summit who resisted Katrice's input despite the fact that Katrice was called in for her expertise</td>
<td>lead to consensus</td>
<td>Collaborative</td>
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### Appendix V

#### Sample: Scenario Summaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Conflict Summary</th>
<th>Conflict Type Code</th>
<th>ConRes Style Codes</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Work Culture/ Atmosphere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New computer system, conflict with other who don’t trust her b/c she's new person, became political quickly</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Persistent</td>
<td>Resolved</td>
<td>Institution: underground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>System for counting students, other was VP who attempted to pin it on her in front of President's cabinet</td>
<td>Work activity, her</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>Unresolved</td>
<td>Immediate: Him versus her or her versus him (Conflict between 2 VPs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Slanderous student newspaper article, encouraged by others in opposing department</td>
<td>Decision</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>Unresolved</td>
<td>Immediate: him versus her or her versus him (Conflict between 2 VPs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>New program idea that was resisted by several faculty/departments</td>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Resolved</td>
<td>Immediate: territorial, culture of fear. Institution: student centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brenda</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict with former boss when accepted new position</td>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Defensive (after Communicative)</td>
<td>Unresolved</td>
<td>Immediate: professional violence; collegial Institution: student centered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Question regarding submissions of grades</td>
<td>Work activity, her</td>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>Unresolved</td>
<td>Immediate: control with an iron fist. Department: easy going folks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Conflict over dress rehearsal for jazz ensemble</td>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>Collaborative (after Confrontive)</td>
<td>Resolved</td>
<td>Immediate: Patronizing. Department: easy going folks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheryl</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Other faculty mad that she provided information to one of other's adjuncts re: syllabus question</td>
<td>Work activity, her</td>
<td>Defensive</td>
<td>Unresolved</td>
<td>Immediate: control with an iron fist. Department: easy going folks.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>