

**DEALING WITH CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICT IN A MULTICULTURAL
ORGANISATION: AN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE**

by

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I declare that **DEALING WITH CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICT IN A
MULTICULTURAL ORGANISATION: AN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT
PERSPECTIVE** is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have
been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

MRS J C DOERR

DATE

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Our first task in approaching

Another people

Another culture

Another religion

Is to take off our shoes

For the place we are approaching is holy

Else we find ourselves

Treading on another's dreams

More serious still, we may forget that

God was there before our arrival.

(Author unknown)

DEALING WITH CROSS-CULTURAL CONFLICT IN A MULTICULTURAL ORGANISATION: AN EDUCATION MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVE

SUMMARY

This study investigated the effect of cross-cultural differences on conflict episodes in a multicultural organisation in South Africa. The sample consisted of seven people, who represented six cultures. The phenomenological method of inquiry was used.

Following the data collection process, the researcher identified the sources of conflict, then determined the qualities of leadership which aid in minimizing conflict. The five conflict management strategies were discussed, with further exploration into the use of confrontation and mediation. The researcher believes that the framework for describing conflict management strategies may need to be expanded as cross-cultural interaction is better understood. Finally, the study explored the positive and negative outcomes of conflict. Although many conflicts are costly to an organisation, some conflicts may assist people in cross-cultural understanding.

Because diversity is becoming a more pressing issue in the 21st century, most people and organisations are facing the need to effectively communicate cross-culturally.

The researcher recommends a three stage diversity training programme, which begins with new employees, then includes all employees and, finally, becomes an ongoing learning process in the organisation.

Key words: Culture, cross-cultural, conflict and multicultural organisation, South Africa, phenomenological approach.

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CHAPTER ONE

MOTIVATION AND DIRECTION FOR RESEARCH

Conflict is a crisis that forces us to recognize explicitly that we live with multiple realities and must negotiate a common reality; that we bring to each situation differing—frequently contrasting—stories and must create together a single shared story with a role for each and for both.

(Augsburger, 1992:11)

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Ubuntu is an Nguni word in African culture, which refers to people who are involved with the family and others in the community (Arai, Wanca-Thibault & Shockley-Zalabak, 2001:450; Du Toit, 1995:215). This singular word captures the essence of relationships in society. People involved in the dynamic ebb and flow of interpersonal relationships, often confront issues of uncertainty and conflict. Whenever a person encounters conflicting behaviour, she dips into a personal meaning reservoir and selects an appropriate meaning (Bergeron, 2000:38; Dana, 2001:50; Ormrod, 1995:184, Samovar, Porter & Jain, 1981:13). Sometimes this process works, but at other times there is a danger of selecting the wrong meaning. This is particularly true if the person is in a cross-cultural setting.

The changing demographics of a global society provide increasing opportunities for cross-cultural contacts within the community and work place, making effective

intercultural communication a necessity. Hiebert (1985:166), a professor of anthropology, stated: "It is estimated that in normal communication within the same culture, people understand only about 70 percent of what is said. In cross-cultural situations the level is probably not above 50 percent." The result of this inability to communicate across cultural lines is often conflict. That conflict may produce constructive or negative results (Grab, 1996:35). Results are also referred to as functional versus dysfunctional outcomes (Johnson, 1994:721).

Destructive results are seen in the form of violence and aggression in society as a whole. In 1999, a radio announcement was made concerning the taxi driver 'war' in KwaZulu Natal. The conflict erupted in a gun battle in Empangeni, which resulted in 11 people being shot and 24 wounded. This served as a good example of a destructive way of resolving conflict. Every day the television and newspaper reports are full of examples of violent accounts of conflicts. Commenting on the incident, The Star (1999:4) quoted KwaZulu Natal Premier, Lionel Mtshali, as saying, "Violence can never be an answer to unresolved problems." Johnson (1996:601) commented on the importance of managing conflict situations *before* (emphasis mine) behaviours become destructive. The rainbow nation of South Africa, which is composed of many cultures and races, is faced with the challenge of finding creative, non-violent solutions for the inevitable conflicts of a multicultural society. In this regard Rubin (1994:33) stated: "Constructive conflict management *is, has been, and always will be* an answer to critical social problems."

The school culture is experiencing some of these negative results of conflict among a diverse group of learners, educators and staff. Referring to schools, Hermann, Carstarphen and Coolidge (1997:208) remarked: “As multiculturalism increases, the potential for conflict increases because of inevitable cross-cultural misunderstandings.” Du Toit (1995:214), referring specifically to South Africa, indicated that educators and learners are not always aware of the feelings of rejection experienced by some learners. Du Toit (1995:214) continued: “These repressed negative experiences undoubtedly have the potential to lead to destructive conflict and to the serious disruption of schools, if they are not dealt with pro-actively.” In response to this trend, educators need to develop an understanding of cultural elements, with the purpose of creating positive cross-cultural interaction and the resolution of conflicts (Myers, Buoye, McDermott, Strickler & Ryman, 2001:99; Weaver, 1995:23). The positive result of reduced conflict in a school is improved student performance (Johnson, 1996:620). This fact emphasizes the need for purposeful conflict management.

Multicultural organisations such as businesses and churches are facing the dysfunctional outcomes of conflict. Waters (1992:438) declared: “It is axiomatic that a racially and culturally diverse workforce will experience conflict, if for no other reason, simply as a function of the diversity itself.” This factor has serious ramifications for an organisation, as is evident in the following example. Piturro and Mahoney (1992:15) described an American based company, Corning, Inc., which discovered in the mid-1980’s that the attrition rate of women and minorities in the company was twice the attrition rate of white men, and that this cost the company

three million dollars per year. A high turnover rate among employees is one of the results of conflict. There is also a decrease in productivity and performance whenever people feel devalued (Horowitz & Boardman, 1994:203). Johnson (1994:721) listed other dysfunctional outcomes as: reduced communication; less effective interactions; decreased problem solving; demoralized employees; and chaos. Negative results, according to Grab (1996:35), include: stress; reason clouded by emotions; and, challenges to the status quo.

Prior to this research project, this writer observed the destructive results of conflict in a multicultural organisation in South Africa. At a staff function of this organisation on September 13, 1999, the former Chief Executive Officer, who was German, commented, "This organisation is becoming a microcosm of the continent of Africa." Perhaps it would be more accurate to state that the organisation is becoming a microcosm of the world, due to the variety of cultures represented. Although this situation was created intentionally, it has produced multiple cross-cultural conflicts and misunderstandings. Horowitz and Boardman (1994:202) reported that business organisations are dealing with more conflict because of the increasingly diverse work force. Pitarro and Mahoney (1992:13) made the following comment in reference to a multicultural work force: "But now that we've assembled a rainbow work force, there's only one problem—how to make it work effectively."

Factors, which affect the outcome of conflict, are the amount of conflict and the management of conflict (Johnson, 1994:721). According to a study by Horowitz and Boardman (1994:198), there is a need for a model of conflict management, which

considers different cultures and value systems. Rubin (1994:44) also talked about the importance of broadening people's perspective through ideas which originate in other cultures. This is supported further by Wall and Callister (1995:547), who emphasized the need for researchers to investigate cultural influences on conflict management more extensively.

The process of communication and conflict management is complex. The dangers of being misunderstood multiply when working with people in a cross-cultural setting. Earlier theories of management and motivation applied to a homogenous workforce (Tan, Morris & Romero, 1996:54). The change from a homogenous to a multicultural workforce requires leaders to develop new cross-cultural skills. These skills have the potential of releasing new energy and creativity into the workforce. Piturro and Mahoney (1992:15) indicate that the positive results of diversity include: innovation in product development and sales; a competitive edge in the global environment; a redefined managerial mission, which makes room for a new status quo; increased morale and productivity; and a slower turnover of employees.

Diversity may be the greatest challenge of the 21st century. Due to sophisticated technology, diversity is a prevalent factor in the global society. One of the results is the formation of multicultural organisations. Proactive leaders need to pursue the development of new skills, which will assist them in leading these multicultural organisations. By identifying the sources in cross-cultural conflict, this dissertation aims to define a new role of leadership in managing conflict among people with a kaleidoscope of backgrounds. Du Toit (1995:215) summed it up: "There is also a

need for a realization by all that the diversity of the people of South Africa and of their being in and of Africa is not a liability, but a strength on which to capitalize.”

1.2 PROBLEM FORMULATION AND AIMS OF STUDY

1.2.1 Problem formulation

Personal observation of conflicts in a multicultural organisation and preliminary research indicated that there is a need for further study in the area of cross-cultural conflict management. The following research question was pursued: How is cross-cultural conflict dealt with effectively in a multicultural organisation, with specific reference to management strategies?

1.2.2 Aims of the study

This research project was aimed at assessing the effect of culture on the interactions of people in an organisation. The project specifically considered the effect of culture on a conflict situation. By interviewing people in a multicultural organisation, the researcher first defined the concept of cross-cultural conflict. Then, the researcher identified the factors which lead to cross-cultural conflict and those that minimize the negative results of cross-cultural confrontations.

A further aim of the study was to consider the role of leadership in managing conflict. The researcher attempted to identify the skills of cross-cultural communication, which

can assist a leader with the task of conflict management. Next, the researcher considered the five types of conflict management that leaders use to resolve conflict. Finally, the positive and negative outcomes of conflict resolution were explained.

1.3 DEFINITION OF TERMS

To better understand the intent of this research, four terms are clarified in this section.

The terms are: culture, cross-cultural, conflict and multicultural organisation.

1.3.1 Culture

Mayer (2000:72) defines culture as “...the enduring norms, values, customs, and behavioural patterns common to a particular group of people.” This shared knowledge makes communication possible.

1.3.2 Cross-cultural

The term “cross-cultural” is interchangeable with intercultural, multicultural and transcultural. Samovar, et al (1981:35) stated: “Intercultural communication is the overall encompassing term that refers to communication between people from different cultural backgrounds.”

1.3.3 Conflict

Because this dissertation is mainly interested in cross-cultural conflicts, the following definition of ‘conflict’ is most applicable: “Conflict may be viewed as a feeling, a disagreement, a real or perceived incompatibility of interests, inconsistent worldviews, or a set of behaviours” (Mayer, 2000:3).

1.3.4 Multicultural organisation

A multicultural organisation is any organisation such as a school, church or business, where people of diverse cultural backgrounds interact.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODS

1.4.1 Theoretical research

In this project, a literature review was first conducted to determine what has been established about the theory and the problem of conflict management in a cross-cultural setting. Primary and secondary sources were consulted in the literature review. The primary sources provided the findings of the experts on this study, while the secondary sources gave an overview of the findings and opinions of several researchers (Borg, Gall & Gall, 1993:22). In this dissertation the researcher chose to use several primary sources after finding that those authors were used repetitively in

other sources. According to Fouche and De Vos (1998:66) a review of relevant literature provides the framework for the main purpose of the research investigation.

1.4.2 Qualitative research

Qualitative research procedures were followed in this project. This section is a brief overview of the qualitative methodology. Chapter two contains a detailed description of this investigative method of inquiry.

A phenomenological method of inquiry was pursued during the data collection process, because the nature of the study involved the perception of people in a natural setting. Borg, et al (1993:194) referred to this as the “phenomenological reality,” which means that the researcher must try to understand the inner experiences of people, as well as their interpretation of reality. This method of inquiry is often used by anthropologists in cultural settings, which is a significant factor for this study.

This researcher gathered descriptive data from interviews. The interviews took place in the environment of the work place, and one general question was designed to aid the researcher in understanding the factors leading to cross-cultural conflict. Sprinthall, Schmutte and Sirois (1991:102) observe that this inductive approach should reflect the perspective of the participant in their circumstances and environment, rather than the view of the interviewer.

During the interviews, this researcher was free to pursue clarification or a more in depth response where necessary, and the participant was given the opportunity to offer a personal opinion. This freedom of interaction between the interviewer and participant is one of the advantages of qualitative research. These taped interviews were then analyzed in an effort to gain an in-depth understanding of conflict situations. Borg, et al (1993:198) suggest that interviews may assist the researcher in identifying relevant themes and patterns in a given context. Because of the nature of qualitative research, however, these themes and patterns are usually quite general in nature.

Selective sampling was used in the research project to ensure a cross-cultural group of people. The head of one department agreed to have the research conducted in his department. The head of department is American and his co-workers represent Rwanda, four cultures from the Republic of South Africa and one other American.

1.5 CHAPTER DIVISION

Chapter 1 provides the introduction to the study on cross-cultural conflict management. It also includes the main problem (section 1.2.1) and the aims of the study (section 1.2.2). This chapter examines the value of the study in terms of the present situation. It also clarifies key concepts in the study.

Chapter 2 provides a complete explanation of the qualitative research design. This chapter includes a description of the sample population, setting of the research, and

the procedure of the research. Limitations encountered in the research are also explained.

Chapter 3 presents the research findings. This study is based on the results of interviews using a qualitative research methodology. The chapter explains the implications of the data, in an effort to generate a general understanding of cross-cultural conflicts. Critical examination of qualitative data may yield significant and unexpected results.

Chapter 4 comprises a summary of the results and a conclusion. This chapter contains recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Research requires an enquiring mind which seeks fact and, after finding it, synthesizes the significance of such fact into an accurate and logical conclusion.

(De Vos, 1998:53)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Qualitative research could be defined as a craft, with the researcher as a master craftsman. Such a craftsman approaches a setting and a people much like a sculptor views a piece of granite. It is said that a sculptor does not see a rough, irregular piece of rock, but rather sees the details of a work of art. The task of the sculptor is to carve away the parts of the rock which do not belong to the finished product, and to skilfully expose an object worthy of consideration.

A researcher/craftsman also must view a chosen situation with a mind full of the possibilities of discovery. Anticipating the emergence of new understanding, the researcher carefully observes and participates in the lives of the people in the setting. Slowly and painstakingly, some elements of information are carved away and discarded, making way for the emergence of fresh knowledge and theoretical implications.

This chapter describes the qualitative process, with an emphasis on the phenomenological approach to inquiry. The phenomenologist attempts to understand and interpret human behaviour by analyzing conversations and observing the actions and reactions of participants (De Vos & Fouche, 1998:80). It is a naturalistic method of study, whereby the researcher focuses on a complex phenomenon within a specific context (Borg, et al, 1993:198). After collecting rich data through personal observation and interviews, the phenomenologist has the task of capturing meaning through the process of interpretation.

Following this phenomenological approach, this researcher began each interview with the following question: Describe a conflict you have experienced in this organisation. The researcher had no other structured questions. The interviews proceeded with a freedom of interaction between interviewer and participant.

2.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.2.1 Qualitative methodology: A theoretical basis

According to Sprinthall, et al (1991:102), qualitative research is holistic and humanistic in its approach. It is holistic in that descriptions of behaviour encompass the context. The humanistic side of qualitative research refers to the motivating purpose, which is to gain understanding of a specific issue through the perspective of other people.

2.2.1.1 Historical foundation

Research in the social sciences has been influenced by two major theories, 'positivism' and 'phenomenology.' The concept of 'positivism,' which underlies quantitative research, originated through sciences such as biology, physics and chemistry. According to Borg, et al (1993:194), the purpose of the quantitative methodology is to describe a given set of phenomena, with the purpose of controlling the phenomena through certain interventions. It is important that the researcher minimize personal opinions and biases, and remain as objective as possible.

Qualitative research methods, or 'phenomenological' studies, were developed in such disciplines as anthropology, sociology, history, psychology, linguistics and sociology. Because education involves the study of human behaviour, qualitative methodology is often employed there as well. The phenomenologist gathers descriptive data and seeks to discover how individuals experience and interpret their worlds.

According to Taylor and Bogdan (1984:3), Frederick LePlay is credited with the first qualitative study using participant observation in 1855, when he studied European families and communities. Patton (1990:69) claimed that phenomenological inquiry focuses on the question: "What is the structure and essence of experience of this phenomenon for these people?" Patton gave credit to the German philosopher, Edmund H. Husserl, for first using the phenomenological method of inquiry in 1913.

Qualitative research became particularly associated with anthropology due to the fieldwork done by Boas (1911) and Malinowski (1932). Because of the nature of work in other cultures, qualitative research has been effectively utilized by anthropologists. Lingenfelter (1996:35) stated: “If you are to understand the people, the society, and the culture in which you are working, it is essential that you engage in a programme of systematic observation and research.” Thus, the historical application of qualitative research supports its use in the present multicultural study.

2.2.1.2 Contrasting methodologies

Research methodology has traditionally been classified as either qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative and quantitative methods represent two separate approaches to research, each utilising considerable differences in data collection strategies, data analysis, data interpretation and the design and method of the research procedures (Gay, 1996:215). Best and Kahn (1993:183) further distinguished between the two methodologies, saying that quantitative research uses experimental research methodologies and qualitative research uses several interpretive research methodologies. Whereas the experimental or deductive approach focuses on the outcome of the research, the qualitative or inductive approach is more process oriented.

Preparation for quantitative research requires the choice of a research problem, which is broken into its component parts and studied under controlled conditions for a definite period of time (Borg, et al, 1993:198). One or more of the component parts

are formed into a hypothesis, which is specific, testable and stated before the study commences (Gay, 1996:214). During the data collection process, the researcher seeks to remain as objective as possible, by gathering numerical data through the use of such instruments as standardized tests. Formulas for statistical analysis are applied to the data to determine the results of the study. Because of the objective, value-free nature of quantitative research, the results may often be generalized to a larger population than originally studied.

Rather than beginning with a defined hypothesis, qualitative research commences with an idea or an interest. In the field of education qualitative research is often used to gain insight into some educational issue. “Inductive analysis enables the researcher to explore the data without prior hypotheses,” stated Best and Kahn (1993:186). In fact, the qualitative researcher begins the process of data collection with few predetermined questions or concepts (Gay, 1996:216; Patton, 1990:13). While the quantitative researcher must know how to use a chosen instrument of data collection, the qualitative researcher must develop necessary interpersonal skills for effective data collection (Schurink, 1998b:258). The quality of the narrative data relies heavily on the ability of the researcher to observe details, to ask questions and to interpret behaviour. Throughout the process, the researcher considers hypotheses which are tentative, evolving, and based on a specific study (Gay, 1996:214). Gay (1996:215) adds that the generalization of conclusions is speculative or nonexistent.

2.2.1.3 Verstehen

The basic premise of the qualitative approach is the emphasis on the qualitative aspects of human behaviour (Schurink, 1998a:241). Max Weber began to apply the term ‘verstehen’ to this phenomenological approach in 1968, referring to a phenomenologist who seeks to gain an understanding of the actions and reactions of people on a personal level (Van Wyk, 1996:128). Adding to that definition, Patton (1990:56) stated: “Verstehen....refers to the unique human capacity to make sense of the world.” Because human beings have an exclusive form of consciousness from other forms of life, they have the ability to empathize with others through personal experience.

According to Schurink (1998a:243) the qualitative researcher pursues ‘verstehen’ in a social-cultural context, as opposed to merely explaining the dynamics of the situation. Schurink (1998a:243) went on to describe the qualitative researcher as one concerned with naturalistic observation, during which the researcher applies the subjective exploration of reality from within the situation, rather than defining an objective reality from the perspective of an outsider, which is the goal of quantitative research.

2.2.2 Qualitative methodology: Personal rationale

2.2.2.1 Literature control

A literature review is conducted to determine ‘what is known’ about a specific research problem (Borg, et al, 1993:50). In this study, a literature search was conducted on the problem of conflict management in a cross-cultural setting. The review was done from a variety of disciplines: education, sociology, communication, and anthropology. From the foundation of the review, a research problem was defined, thus determining the direction of the fieldwork. This procedure is in line with the purpose of literature control, as defined by De Vos (1998:48), who indicated that literature should assist the researcher in planning the narratives for the actual research. At the end of the process, the narratives were compared with the research of relevant literature in order to draw relevant conclusions.

2.2.2.2 Purpose of this research

The purpose of this research project is to increase ‘verstehen,’ or understanding, of the factors which cause conflict in a multicultural setting. It is interesting to note that this philosophy of ‘verstehen,’ which motivates the methodology of qualitative inquiry, is also the essence of working with people in other cultures. Lingenfelter and Mayer (2001:120) described the challenge of working cross-culturally as the ability “...to walk from our own culture into the culture of others and to live in their way

rather than our own.” Qualitative research endorses this goal, as the researcher seeks to gain an inside perspective into a situation.

The literature review for this project defined some of the possible causes of cross-cultural conflict. The fieldwork from a multicultural setting confirmed many of these sources of conflict.

The management of conflict was of specific interest in this study. Through literature and research, this study defined qualities of leadership which are conducive to minimizing conflict in a multicultural organisation. More specifically, this study attempted to pinpoint the communication skills necessary to minimize destructive conflict. Horowitz and Boardman (1994:200) suggested that skills of constructive conflict management need to be taught and practised, the same as learning any skill. Johnson (1996:601) stated this issue succinctly: “We must become more clever and adept in managing conflict situations before overt and destructive behaviours emerge.”

2.2.3 Qualitative methodology: Role of researcher

2.2.3.1 Researcher: Role distinctions

The researcher is the instrument for the collection of data in the qualitative methodology. Schurink (1998b:260) listed four master roles from which a qualitative researcher can choose. According to Schurink (1998b:260), Gold first defined these

roles in 1958. The roles are full observer, observer-as-participant, participant-as-observer and full participant. These roles denote the level of participation of the researcher, from being totally separated and acting as a spectator, to being totally immersed and belonging to the group as a full participant (Patton, 1990:206).

In the middle of the continuum, the observer-as-participant role is one in which the researcher interacts with participants in a friendly, casual manner; however, the researcher does not become significantly involved in all the activities of the setting. As a participant-as-observer, the researcher strives to establish meaningful relationships with participants, with the purpose of gaining an insider perspective. The participant-as-observer still does not fully belong to the group.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher chose the role of observer-as-participant. This researcher entered the work place with the express purpose of interviewing the employees; however, the researcher did not become involved in the work place.

The research must choose the role which will be most effective in the study at hand. This requires researchers to find an appropriate level of involvement during research. The researcher role requires flexibility and the ability to modify procedures during the process (Borg, et al, 1993:196).

2.2.3.2 Researcher: Ethical considerations

Because qualitative research is generally done in the social sciences, the research involves the actions and reactions of people. Such work requires a careful consideration of the ethical responsibilities of the researcher. Strydom (1998:24) defined ethics as the moral principles which determine the rules and expectations of correct conduct in a given setting. In research these socially accepted rules apply to the rights of the participants and to the responsibilities of informed researchers.

A participant should feel safe throughout the interview process. This safety includes freedom from emotional or physical harm. Physical harm is not usually a problem; however, emotional harm may become an issue depending on the nature of the study and the resulting questions asked during the interview. Emotional harm may be inadvertently caused by the researcher, if he pursues issues that bring pain to the participant. A sensitive researcher should be able to perceive an uncomfortable response and shift the questions of investigation in another direction.

In this study, this researcher tried to create an atmosphere of safety by having the interviews in a safe place and by informing the participants at the beginning of the interview that they were always free to refuse to answer any questions. With that freedom participants did not feel obligated to give information that brought discomfort. It should be further noted that no one exercised this option.

A participant has the right to personal privacy. This right is protected through the sensitivity of the researcher, who must refrain from delving into issues which would encroach on the privacy of the participant. The researcher is responsible to be aware of the participant's need for privacy throughout the research process.

The right to privacy encompasses the rights of confidentiality and anonymity. Strydom (1998:28) referred to confidentiality as the way in which information is handled. Anonymity in research means that collected information should not be associated with an individual or the individual's organisation in any way. Anonymity is safeguarded through the use of code names.

In this study, the researcher was careful to protect the rights of privacy, confidentiality and anonymity. The participants were not asked questions which would affect the right of privacy. Confidentiality was dealt with through the open use of a tape recorder. Because the nature of the study involved the explanation of work place conflicts, this researcher requested that the participants refrain from using the names of co-workers on the tape recording. Instead, participants referred to people as Person A, Person B or Person C. Anonymity was ensured through the use of code names. Anonymity was further employed in the typed transcripts of the interviews. Only the code names were used in the transcripts.

A participant has the right to know the nature of the research project. The researcher has the responsibility to be honest when explaining the purpose of the study.

Although a participant does not have to be told all the details pertaining to the study, the information given to the participant should be true.

This researcher explained the purpose of the study through the statement of consent (cf. Appendix 1). Participants were told that the research was being performed to assist in fulfilling the requirements for the Masters of Education degree offered by the University of South Africa. Participants were also informed that the study concerned cross-cultural conflict situations in their organisation. The participants all accepted this information. This researcher felt that the information given to the participants satisfied the criteria of “informed consent” which Strydom (1998:27) recommended.

Qualitative researchers have a moral obligation to carefully consider these ethical considerations while conducting their fieldwork. The personal values of the researcher are woven into every aspect of the research process. Researchers must also make personal decisions about ethical issues in data collection, data analyzing and interpretation and in writing the final report.

2.2.3.3 Researcher: Personal characteristics

This researcher is a currently married midlife woman and has two children living in the United States. The researcher completed her undergraduate degree in mathematics and education, and was employed for a short period. Employment was interrupted for the sake of family formation. The researcher was out of the labour market for 20 years, but spent most of these years in Zambia, Zimbabwe and South

Africa. Taylor and Bogdan (1984:243) made this observation: “Early practitioners suggested that the marginal person, the one caught between two cultures, has the greatest potential to become a good qualitative researcher...” This statement implies that the cross-cultural exposure of the researcher is an asset to the implementation of this methodology, as well as the purpose, of this study.

The researcher chose to strengthen her skills in the field of education by enrolling in postgraduate courses in the United States, and thereafter in the Republic of South Africa. Through these courses, the researcher was alerted to the study of cross-cultural communication and conflict resolution. These studies are particularly significant to the personal experiences of the researcher, who is working for a multicultural organisation in Johannesburg. Involvement with this organisation made the researcher aware of the need to try to understand the phenomenon of people in an organisation, who are working together toward common goals, yet representing many cultures.

The researcher is the key to effective qualitative research. Fouche and De Vos (1998:57) indicated that a qualitative researcher usually chooses a field of study which is of personal interest. This close connection between the researcher and the study is not generally noted in a quantitative study; however, the links actually form part of the process in qualitative research. The researcher can build on these links to develop trust and rapport with the participants.

2.3 DATA COLLECTION

2.3.1 Sampling

For qualitative research, the sample includes people and the environment (Gay, 1996:213).

2.3.1.1 Sample of people from literature review

A researcher must locate people who meet certain criteria and who are willing to participate in a research project. Tuckman (1999:259) said that the population for a study is "...the group about which the researcher wants to gain information and draw conclusions." From that large group, a researcher selects the sample, which will yield desired information (Gay, 1996:213). Whereas the quantitative researcher selects a large sample with the hopes that the research results will be generalisable to more people, the qualitative researcher usually works with a smaller sample and seeks understanding within a specific context.

After selecting the target population, the size of the sample must be determined. There are no rules for choosing the size of a sample in a qualitative study (Patton, 1990:184; Gay, 1996:216). The size of the sample is connected to the purpose of the research and the ability of the researcher to get information-rich data. Van Wyk (1996:15) addressed this issue succinctly: "The sample size is dynamic and ad hoc, and depends on the availability of the participants and saturation of the data, rather

than aiming at representativeness to generalize to a larger population.” Sample sizes for qualitative research should be judged according to how well they fulfil the purpose of the research, rather than following a predetermined logic for probability sampling, as used by quantitative researchers (Patton, 1990:185).

2.3.1.2 Sample of people for this project

Choosing the participants is the next issue. Purposive sampling is recommended for qualitative research (Schurink, 1998b:253; Patton, 1990:169). The underlying principle in strategies of purposive sampling is choosing information-rich cases (Patton, 1990:181). Schurink (1998b:253) adds that the qualitative researcher often selects people who are easily reached.

For this study, the researcher chose the purposive sampling technique. It was also important to find participants who were easily reached and willing to participate. The researcher and her husband are employed by a multicultural organisation. The researcher works from home; however, the husband is the coordinator of one of the departments and works at the head office complex. Within his department, he has six employees working at the head office. He acted as a gatekeeper and facilitated the undertaking of the study among the employees of the one department. The interviews included the department coordinator plus the six employees.

Of first consideration in this study was finding employees who represented a mixture of cultures. In the literature office, the department coordinator and one other person

were from the United States, one woman was from Rwanda, and four people were from the Republic of South Africa. It was also important to note that the four people from the Republic of South Africa represented four cultural groups: Northern Sotho, Indian, Coloured and English.

The second requirement for selection was that the participants were employed in the specified department, and the third requirement was that the participants worked at the head office.

Furthermore, the seven participants varied in terms of age, gender, marital status, education and work experience. This variety lent multiple perspectives to the interview process. The seven interviews provided rich data, which proved to be more than sufficient for this project.

At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to read and to sign a statement of consent (cf. Appendix 1). The statement of consent briefly stated the purpose of the research project, then explained that the interviews would take the form of an unstructured discussion.

The consent form also assured the participants of complete anonymity during the project. To ensure anonymity, each participant was given a pseudonym at the commencement of the interview. Some participants wanted to choose their own pseudonym. The statement of consent informed the participants that the pseudonym

would be used on the tape recording and in the dissertation. Participants were reminded that they could refuse to answer any question.

Following the completion of the statement of consent, the participants were asked to complete a general information questionnaire (cf. Appendix 2). This questionnaire included their pseudonym, personal information, cultural background and professional information. Table 2.1 showing this information is included in this section.

Table 2.1 Sample population

Pseudonym	Barnabas	Delyse	Muhe	Paul	Abraham	John	Jill
Gender	M	F	F	M	M	M	F
Age	52 years	64 years	49 years	33 years	72 years	51 years	31 years
Marital status	Married	Married	Married	Married	Widowed	Married	Single
Country of origin	United States of America	Republic of South Africa	Rwanda	Republic of South Africa	United States of America	Republic of South Africa	Republic of South Africa
First language	English	English	Kinya-Rwanda	English	English	English	Northern Sotho
Number of languages able to speak	1	2	3	2	1	2	5
Highest educational qualification	Masters of Divinity	1 year Diploma Business college	Masters of Business Administration	Matric	Masters of Computer Science	Standard 8	B.A. Honours
Number of years in full-time employment	24 years	33 years	20 years	1.5 years	50 years	30 years	8 months
Commenced current employment	1981	1969	1999	2001	2001	1970	2002

2.3.1.3 Sample setting from literature review

The term 'naturalistic setting' is often used in conjunction with qualitative research. Schurink (1998c:280) calls the setting a "natural habitat" where researchers can get first-hand information about the participants. Others refer to a setting as a place where the researcher observes events as they spontaneously occur, as opposed to a setting where variables are controlled or manipulated (Gay, 1996:208; Tuckman, 1999:397). Data are collected and studied in the context. The data are not extracted from the setting by instruments, such as questionnaires. Analysis of the data also takes the setting into consideration.

Besides choosing a setting where participants will cooperate and where relevant data will be collected, the researcher must choose a setting that is accessible. According to Schurink (1998b:258), the success of a researcher's fieldwork is closely linked to his ability to gain access to a setting through a gatekeeper. A gatekeeper is the person who is willing to give permission to the researcher to do research in a certain organisation.

2.3.1.4 Sample setting for this project

The setting for this project was one department of a multicultural organisation in Johannesburg. The researcher met with the staff in August to explain the research study, then conducted the interviews in September, 2002. The interviews took place

in the office of the department coordinator. Appointments were made with the participants, so everyone had a planned interview time.

The office of the department coordinator was large and well lit with fluorescent lights. During the interviews the door was closed, to give participants a sense of privacy and confidentiality. There were large windows in the room, but the vertical blinds were closed.

The researcher did not sit in the department coordinator's chair, but chose to sit on the other side of the desk. This was intended to establish a feeling of casual friendliness. The researcher planned to have participants sit beside her; however, Barnabas and Abraham chose to sit across from her in the coordinator's chair. Paul chose to sit further from the researcher, and arranged his chair at the side of the desk. The other four participants sat on chairs beside the researcher. The researcher chose to allow these adaptations in seating, knowing that participants needed to feel as safe as possible in the setting.

The tape recorder was on the desk in clear sight. Participants were aware of its presence, but accepted it. The researcher noted that at the end of the interview after the tape recorder was turned off, the participants sometimes remained and talked further. This may indicate some uneasiness in connection with the tape recorder.

There were few interruptions in the interviews. The tape recorder was turned off during the interruptions. Interruptions were also noted on the typed transcripts.

Because participants were asked not to use names when referring to a conflict, there was some confusion as to how to describe the conflict. This was solved by having the researcher write Person A, Person B and Person C on a piece of paper. The person representing A, B, and C was also jotted down. As the participant described the conflict, he or she pointed to these people or called them Person A, B or C. This method assisted the interview process and preserved the anonymity of people in the organisation.

It should be noted that the researcher was not a stranger to the participants. The researcher has lived in Johannesburg for five years and is well known at the head office complex. Because the department coordinator is the husband of the researcher, the researcher has frequently visited with the participants on an informal basis. This would include short contacts in the department, or social events such as meals in a restaurant. The researcher believes that these contacts assisted the research project since there was already trust and rapport established with each participant.

2.3.2 Length of fieldwork

The length of fieldwork varies according to the collection of data. Ideally, fieldwork should continue until the data reaches a saturation point, which is when the data begin to repeat itself.

Patton (1990:214) addressed the length of fieldwork by suggesting that the researcher should continue until the research questions are answered and the purpose of the study is completed. To clarify the point, Patton told of a Douglas-Lincoln debate, where Abraham Lincoln was asked this question by a heckler: “Tell us, Mr. Lincoln, how long do you think a man’s legs ought to be?” Lincoln replied: “Long enough to reach the ground.” Fieldwork must be done long enough to gain an in-depth understanding of the people and the context under study.

The fieldwork for this project was accomplished during August and September of 2002. In August the researcher met with the staff and gave an initial explanation of the research project. A short time later, the researcher again met with the staff and established an interview schedule. The data collected was rich and informative.

2.3.3 Fieldwork methods

A qualitative researcher needs to maintain an open mind when doing fieldwork. This may require a flexibility in the research design, even after the fieldwork has commenced. Patton (1990:193) advocated this approach by saying: “...purity of method is less important than dedication to relevant and useful information.” This implies that the researcher must remain focused on the objective of the research throughout the process of data collection.

Best and Kahn (1993:203) suggest that good qualitative research utilizes multiple methods of data collection, such as questionnaires, surveys, opinion Aires, projective

techniques and psychological tests. De Vos and Fouche (1998:90) gave the following list of data collection methods for qualitative research: participant observation; interpretation of documents; in-depth interviews; focus group interviews and audio-visual material. Patton (1990:10) and Tuckman (1999:403) narrowed the list to the following three methods of data collection: in-depth interviews; direct observation; and written documents. One method of data collection may help to verify a complementary method (Best & Kahn, 1993:203).

For the purpose of this study, the only fieldwork method used was interviews.

2.3.3.1 Interviews

In qualitative research, interviews are the most common method of data collection. These face-to-face encounters with people create opportunities for an in-depth understanding of a situation and a context. Tuckman (1999:237) suggested that questionnaires and interviews aid in data collection by 'asking' people questions, rather than only observing their behaviour. Qualitative interviews are meant to be flexible and dynamic, and are described to as nondirective, unstructured, nonstandardized, and open-ended. According to Gay (1996:223), the unique purpose of interviews is to obtain data, which cannot be gained in another way.

There is considerable variation in interview style within the context of qualitative research. Best and Kahn (1993:199) indicated that interviews vary on a continuum from very informal to very formal. In a very informal interview, the researcher asks

open-ended questions and maintains an open receptivity to the response. On the other end of the continuum, a very formal interview may be comprised of a set of prearranged questions, which are asked in a standardized manner.

Patton (1990:288-289) listed four types of interviews, which are described below. These four interview styles were noted in more current literature by Best and Kahn (1993:200-201) and by Tuckman (1999:405).

- Informal conversational interviews: The researcher does not choose questions or topics. This style allows maximum flexibility in studying a phenomenon; however, it makes data analysis difficult.
- Interview guide approach: Although the researcher works out an outline of topics before the interview, he is flexible with the sequence of topics in the discussion. This approach continues to be conversational and can be adjusted to a situation. The approach may make it harder to compare and categorize the data.
- Standardized open-ended interview: Prior to the interview, the researcher decides on a list of questions. During the interview, the researcher asks the questions in a predetermined sequence. This is true for each participant. Although all questions must be open-ended, this method of interview reduces the 'naturalness' of the questions. This style is helpful when organizing and analyzing data, however.
- Closed, fixed response interview: In this approach, questions are predetermined and responses are fixed. The participant is further limited to the researcher's predetermined responses. This mechanical approach makes

data analysis much easier, but answers by participants may not reflect the true experiences and feelings of the participants.

Although the interview method is effective for qualitative research, it should be approached with certain cautions. Leaning toward an informal conversational interview, Van Wyk (1996:131) emphasized that only truly open-ended questions allow for participants to answer in their own terms. Borg, et al (1993:221) stated that self-report answers, as in the case of interviews, may contain information which is distorted or incomplete. This occurs when the topic of research is threatening to the participants, if the participants fear that honest answers may harm them, or if the questions call for a higher level of insight than possessed. Best and Kahn (1993:199) indicated that some participants give a response according to their perception of what the researcher wants to hear, rather than giving a response from personal experience. Such a response would yield misleading data.

2.3.3.2 Fieldwork experience with interviews

The researcher used the informal conversational style of interview, in keeping with the phenomenological methodology employed in this study. The opening request for each interview was: Describe a conflict you have experienced in this organisation. The participant then led the conversation from there.

The researcher attempted to respond to comments with 'how' questions to maintain an openness and to elicit an undirected response. At other times, the researcher asked

questions to clarify information. The literature review done prior to the interviews assisted the researcher in asking questions. When Delyse was asked about behaviour that indicated a conflict, the researcher said: “Can you describe behaviour that showed you this tension?”

Several times, the researcher requested the participant to explain whether a conflict was constructive or destructive. This helped the participant reflect on the results of the conflict. In many cases the participant declared that there were positive results to the conflict.

If there was a break in the conversation, the researcher encouraged the participants to describe the effect of other cultures on conflicts and on communication. This helped the participants stay focused on cultural issues.

Personal comments were recorded on the tape recorder by the researcher, then transcribed. These were marked as personal comments (P.C.) and were placed in brackets. For instance, the interview with Delyse records:

(Personal comment (P.C.) A telephone call came and Delyse had to answer it. She said the other girl would not hear the phone ringing from her office. The researcher turned the tape recorder off while Delyse answered the phone and took care of the caller. Delyse had to leave the office briefly to complete this task.)

Because behaviour may be affected by the presence of the researcher, Tuckman (1999:412) cautioned the qualitative researcher to be careful not to influence the phenomenon being studied. The researcher for this study tried to remain objective throughout the interview process.

2.3.4 Fieldwork tools

When recording field notes, the researcher must be careful to make detailed and accurate notes in a systematic manner. A statement by Patton (1990:31) gave a good definition of field notes: “Pure description and quotations are the raw data of qualitative inquiry.” Because this study used the phenomenological methodology, the field notes were obtained by commencing each interview with one question, then maintaining an open conversation with the participants. The other fieldwork tool used was the tape recorder.

2.3.4.1 Questions

Tuckman (1999:240) emphasized the use of open-ended questions accompanied by unstructured responses when conducting qualitative inquiry, because this “...allows the subject to give a response in whatever form he or she chooses.” Tuckman (1999:401-2) also suggested the following four-step process of interviewing, which is derived from ethnoscience:

- Description. The interview is used to gather a descriptive narrative. Often used at the beginning of an interview, descriptive questions encourage people to tell about their lives.
- Discovery. In this step, interview questions move toward seeking the perspective of the participant. This begins to give the researcher a picture of the mental map, which the participant uses to categorize people.
- Classification. To seek further understanding, the researcher uses questions which define the boundaries used when classifying people.
- Comparison. The researcher compares the classifications and attempts to find links. Questions of comparison lend insight into the thought patterns of the participants. As themes develop, the researcher can pursue more probing questions.

The initial research question to participants must be focused on the central purpose of the study, but open and broad enough to allow for discovery (De Vos & Van Zyl, 1998:268). As the interview progresses, the topics of study may be revised according to the information gained in the interviews. Gay (1996:212) added that the researcher must be careful to remain open to new and unpredictable directions during the data collection process.

Throughout the interview process, this researcher followed the sequence of description, discovery and classification. Each interview commenced with a request for the participant to “Describe a conflict you have experienced in this organisation.” In the discovery stage, the conflicts were further clarified with an attempt by the

researcher to understand the conflict through the perspective of the participant. Classification was used in a cultural sense. This researcher sought to identify the cross-cultural distinctions that affected the described conflicts.

This researcher was aware of the need to listen carefully and to ask open-ended questions through the interviews. At the same time, the researcher understood the need to keep the conversation on topics related to the study, such as cross-cultural conflict issues.

During the interview with John, the participant began talking about a pension fund that had lapsed. The researcher found it difficult to follow the conversation at first, because the topic seemed irrelevant to the topic. In reviewing the data, however, the researcher found that John had in fact defined another source of conflict. This is an example of the importance of the researcher remaining open to unexpected turns in the conversation.

2.3.4.2 Field notes

Two of the most important instruments of the qualitative researcher are paper and pencil (Gay, 1996:218). These two simple tools assist the researcher in extracting valuable information from a chosen setting and putting that information into a format known as field notes. Field notes for qualitative research should be descriptive and reflective (Tuckman, 1999:417). In other words, the field notes include detailed

descriptions of the phenomenon actually observed, as well as the observer's reactions to the observations (Gay, 1996:225).

Descriptive field notes should include an account of the participant, setting and researcher. While recording these descriptions, the researcher should strive to be as detailed as possible, but must also shy away from evaluative words. Because qualitative research is contextual (Schurink, 1998c:281), these descriptions may yield important insights to the researcher during the data analysis process.

Reflective field notes are the initial responses of the researcher. Thus, reflection employs the intuitive nature of the researcher, but it is also linked to the researcher's personal introspection (Schurink, 1998c:292). For example, the researcher made the following comment on the transcribed copy of Jill's interview: (P.C. Jill kept referring to apartheid, but actually had a difficult time saying the word. She was almost embarrassed to say the word. Why is that?)

Another important function of field notes is that they facilitate active listening on the part of the researcher (Van Wyk, 1996:133). During the interview, the researcher must attend to the verbal and non-verbal communication of the participant. Non-verbal cues include body language, as exhibited through eye contact, gestures, tone of voice, facial expressions and posture (Schurink, 1998d:309).

In the interview with Muhe, the researcher recorded: (P.C. Muhe spoke very softly.) Although the researcher made this observation, it was difficult to determine the reason

for her quiet speech. The researcher did not know if this was Muhe's usual way of talking, or if Muhe was concerned about someone overhearing her. At another point in the interview with Muhe, the researcher said: (P.C. Her voice dropped very low and became hard to hear.) Muhe seemed to talk freely to the researcher, but did not want anyone to overhear her.

2.3.4.3 Tape recorder

In the early days of qualitative research, researchers relied on memory to record interviews. However, more data are obtained through the use of a tape recorder. Furthermore, the data are more accurate and complete with a recorder, and the tapes may be replayed by the researcher (Gay, 1996:218). The researcher must, however, request the permission of the participant to record an interview (Tuckman, 1999:414).

For this research study, the statement of consent (cf. Appendix 1) stated that the interview would be tape-recorded.

2.4 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Qualitative research requires that data analysis become an ongoing process, meaning that the researcher makes thoughtful, informed decisions throughout the data collection procedure (Gay, 1996:219). The thread of analysis is woven through the interview phase, where the researcher records 'personal comments' beside the narrative data. The thread winds through a coding process, which is a way to sort a

large quantity of descriptive data. Then the thread completes its journey as the data are interpreted and new findings are declared. Thus, the researcher seeks to define themes, which will lend a coherent synthesis of the data (Gay, 1996:227).

2.4.1 Ongoing analysis

In qualitative inquiry, data analysis begins during the interview as new avenues of research begin to emerge (Schurink, 1998d:300). The researcher records insights and interpretations beside the actual narrative data. In the data analysis of qualitative research, broad themes and patterns are looked for, rather than the narrow, precisely defined variables of quantitative research (Borg, et al, 1993:199). As possible topics become evident, the researcher may try to verify the topic during the interviews.

During the fieldwork, one theme that seemed to emerge was the positive results of cross-cultural conflict situations. This was not a unanimous opinion among the participants; however, several participants commented that conflicts produced an increased understanding of people from other cultures. Participants also commented that their conflicts taught them new lessons of communication, particularly when other cultures were involved. Because this researcher noted this theme early in the interview process, it became one of the areas which the researcher explored in subsequent interviews.

2.4.2 Coding process

At the conclusion of the fieldwork, the researcher must find a way to study, sort and analyze a large quantity of data. This systematic way of developing the interpretations of the data is referred to as coding (De Vos & Van Zyl, 1998:271). Gay (1996:228) claimed that this is a critical aspect in most qualitative studies.

The process of data analysis commences with the researcher reading and rereading the data, with the purpose of developing an intimate familiarity with the data. Thereafter, the following steps are taken (Best & Kahn, 1993:203; De Vos, 1998:48; Gay 1996:228):

1. Develop a set of content categories, according to the dominant themes and patterns found in the data.
2. Develop a one word code for each category.
3. Mark the text with the code word.

Next the researcher must cut the data apart, placing the coded themes in separate files. The researcher should be cognizant of the fact that the study will not use all the data collected.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used the process described above. Firstly, the interviews were read and reread. Each time the interviews were read, the researcher highlighted statements and jotted theme ideas in the margin. Secondly, themes were chosen. Again the transcribed interviews were reviewed. Using markers of different colours, the researcher coded the themes. For instance, sections of

transcript that applied to conflict resolution were coded with a blue R; leadership role was marked with a green L; sources of conflict received a red C; introduction material was given a red I; and, conclusion was marked as a black C. Thirdly, the interviews were cut into sections and placed in yellow file folders, ready for use.

2.4.3 Interpretation of results

In this phase of qualitative research, the researcher further considers the context in which the data were collected, being sensitive to the social, historical and temporal aspects (Best & Kahn, 1993:186). Strydom (1998:30) added that the researcher should take account of personal biases, and refrain from making value judgments about the opinions and views of the participants. However, in analyzing results of a qualitative study, the researcher is expected to add his own impressions and feelings to the data, then to interpret the data through reflection and introspection (Patton, 1990:205). This step is dependent on the researcher's background, skills and knowledge (Best & Kahn, 1993:204). Gay (1996:229) summed up this phase: "The conclusions in a qualitative study are the insights the researcher believes she or he has gleaned as the result of a lengthy, intensive effort."

Qualitative research is synonymous with discovery. It is an inductive methodology which does not use *a priori* assumptions and categories, but rather takes emerging concepts from participants and applies theoretical insight. The researcher applied this concept to the present study. Themes were taken from the interviews and compared

to themes found in the literature review. The results and interpretations are indicated in Chapter 3.

2.5 APPROACHES TO VERIFICATION AND STANDARDS OF QUALITY

Two concepts which must be considered in any research study are validity and reliability. Patton (1990:55) gave a concise statement on the need for valid and reliable research results: “Both qualitative-naturalistic inquiry and quantitative-experimental inquiry seek meaningful, credible, valid, reliable, accurate, and confirmable findings.”

2.5.1 Validity

According to De Vos and Fouche (1998:83), validity refers to whether or not a data collection instrument actually measures the chosen concept, and whether the concept is measured with accuracy. In qualitative inquiry, the researcher is the chief instrument in the data collection process. This fact brought Gay (1996:217) and Patton (1990:11) to observe that there is a high correlation between the validity and reliability of a qualitative study and the methodological skill, competence, experience and dedication of the researcher. It also follows that validity is affected by the biases, which the researcher possesses (Borg, et al, 1993:215).

Wolcott (in Eisner & Peshkin, 1990:127) attempted to satisfy the question of validity with the following nine points:

- Talk little, listen a lot. Wolcott stated, "...I find myself pondering what part of the whole story is being told and what part of that I am actually understanding."
- Record accurately. All fieldwork should be transcribed immediately to minimize the effect of selective memory.
- Begin writing early. The researcher should record first impressions. Wolcott referred to these impressions as "successive approximations."
- Let readers 'see' themselves. It may not be possible to verify information through triangulation. The researcher must remember that each participant will give a unique answer to an interview question.
- Report fully. The researcher may find it necessary to report comments that are not consistent with the course of the study.
- Be candid. Wolcott acknowledged the ongoing tension between the biases of the researcher and the actual words of the participant.
- Seek feedback. It may be advantageous to get further feedback from other colleagues.
- Try to achieve balance. Instead of striving for objectivity, Wolcott tried to achieve "rigorous subjectivity," which refers to a sense of balance and fairness.
- Write accurately. The researcher must make sure that the ideas in the research paper flow consistently.

Achieving validity requires integrity on the part of the researcher, as he records only what people actually say and do in the data collection process. This requires the researcher to be aware of personal biases and to take precautions in recording the

data. Eisner and Peshkin (1990:97) summed up the concept of validity by saying that “...efforts to describe the world become increasingly valid as descriptions correspond to the world described.”

2.5.2 Reliability

The concept of reliability has to do with the ability to reproduce the study with some degree of score consistency in another setting by another researcher. “In everyday English, reliability means dependability, or trustworthiness,” stated Gay (1996:144). An instrument of data collection is considered reliable if independent administrations of it produce similar results (De Vos & Fouche, 1998:85). In qualitative research the chief instrument employed in the data collection process is the researcher. Because of the biases of the researcher, reliability of qualitative data is more difficult to establish or control (Sprinthall, et al, 1991:101). Best and Kahn (1993:203) went so far as to reject the necessity for reliability or validity in qualitative research, declaring that the thought processes of a researcher cannot be replicated.

In spite of the difficulties of creating reliability in a qualitative study, the concept should not be ignored. Tuckman (1999:400) promoted the use of more structure in qualitative inquiry, claiming that structure develops ‘confirmability’ in the research process. Confirmability implies that other researchers, using the same procedures in the same setting, would note similar patterns and conclusions. To achieve confirmability, Tuckman (1999:400) suggested that, prior to the collection of the data, qualitative researchers should decide on general procedures to be used and construct a

set of interview questions. This concern for reliability was echoed in the following statement by Borg, et al (1993:215): “One of the hallmarks of scientific research is the replication of important findings by other researchers.”

2.5.3 Guba’s model of trustworthiness

Issues of validity and reliability must be attended to in any research project, whether the methodology is quantitative or qualitative. In most research projects, researchers establish validity and reliability in order to document the significance and the worth of the project. However, because the nature and methodology of quantitative and qualitative studies differs so drastically, it becomes necessary to define validity and reliability in different ways. Poggenpoel (1998:348) suggested that a new set of criteria be established to define the worth of qualitative research. According to Poggenpoel, Guba’s model of trustworthiness provides an adequate alternative model for measuring the merit of a qualitative study. Guba’s model uses the following four strategies: Credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

In the next section, these four strategies are applied to this study on cross-cultural conflict.

2.5.3.1 Credibility

Credibility is the truth value gained through the research design, the participants and the context (Poggenpoel, 1998:349). Credibility is also established through the authority of the researcher.

In this study, credibility was obtained through the careful handling of the collected data. Interviews were recorded on a tape recorder and transcribed onto a computer. This researcher endeavoured to record the information as accurately as possible.

Credibility was also gained through the rapport of the researcher with the participants. Because the participants knew the researcher in a friendly and informal way, there appeared to be a relationship of trust during the interviews. This prior relationship of trust assisted the researcher in getting complete descriptions of conflict situations in the organisation.

2.5.3.2 Transferability

Transferability, sometimes called applicability, refers to the possibility of generalizing the results of a research study to another group of people in another setting. Many researchers would agree with Borg, et al (1993:195) that the results of qualitative research are too context-dependent to have much meaning in another place or time. Guba (Poggenpoel, 1998:349) gave transferability of qualitative research a new perspective by indicating that the key issue is how well the research findings 'fit' into

a new context. Guba (Poggenpoel, 1998:351) went on to indicate that responsibility for transferability rests with the researcher making the transfer, not with the original investigator.

Three factors help to determine the 'fit' of findings. Firstly, there is a need for complete descriptions. For this study, the researcher satisfied this requirement by providing a complete description of the sample population, the setting, and the researcher. The researcher also showed the connection between the literature review and the actual research, which is the second significant factor in considering the 'fit' of research findings. A third factor is the use of verbatim quotes when recording the findings of the study. The researcher recorded the interviews, carefully transcribed the audio tapes and reported all findings with verbatim quotes from the participants.

2.5.3.3 Dependability

Dependability is referred to as reliability in quantitative studies. It refers to the stability and consistency of the study (Poggenpoel, 1998:350). If a study is dependable, it can be repeated with the same participants or in a similar context, and produce consistent results. Because quantitative research relies on a single reality within a controlled setting, it is easier to establish reliability. On the other hand, qualitative research acknowledges the concept of multiple realities, making dependability more difficult to establish.

One way to gain dependability in qualitative research is through a complete description of the research methodology. This researcher endeavoured to give this dense description, thus increasing the dependability and the stability of the study.

2.5.3.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is the fourth criterion in Guba's model of trustworthiness. Confirmability includes the issues of neutrality and objectivity in reporting the findings of research. According to Poggenpoel (1998:351), confirmability is focused on the evaluation of the actual data in qualitative research and whether or not the results of the study could be confirmed by another researcher.

This researcher attempted to meet the criteria for confirmability by reporting verbatim quotes in the research findings. Data can be confirmed from the actual transcripts or from the tape recordings.

The limitations of this study are recorded in the following section.

2.6 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

All scientific research, qualitative or quantitative, has its limitations. Strydom (1998:33) stated that fact rather harshly when he quoted Babbie: "Science generally progresses through honesty and is retarded by ego-based deception." This section

will consider the general limitations of this study, as well as the unique limitations which apply in a multicultural study.

2.6.1 General limitations

Quantitative research, the methodology of scientific inquiry, has prized objectivity as a key characteristic; however, qualitative research has been accused of too much subjectivity, because the researcher completes the process of data collection and data interpretation (Patton, 1990:54). As the chief instrument of data collection, the researcher becomes the key to a successful qualitative study. Gay (1996:222) commented that 'observer bias' cannot be eliminated; it must rather be minimized. The researcher should be aware of the possibility that her presence may create a different situation, or that her observations may be invalid. The background, personality, and research skills of the researcher critically affect the qualitative methodology.

Qualitative research usually involves quite a small sample of participants. This may be seen as a limitation in the world of quantitative inquiry, but it is one of the keys to the process of qualitative study. The essence of qualitative research is to develop an understanding of individuals in their natural setting (Borg, et al, 1993:194). This in-depth data is most likely achieved through a small sample. Gay (1996:219) noted, though, that the qualitative research design should not be unsystematic or haphazard. Patton (1990:186) supported that statement by saying that sampling procedures should be fully described, explained and justified.

Another area of possible limitation is in the actual data. Poggenpoel (1998:22) discussed the complicated issue of ‘truth’ in qualitative research. This is a reminder for the researcher to be on the look-out for exaggerations and distortions from the participants. Tuckman (1999:237) suggested that self-report depends on the cooperation of the participants, relies on the honesty of the participants, and requires participants to have enough self-awareness to understand their own feelings and thoughts. Patton (1990:205) concluded: “...it is necessary for the researcher to keep in mind that participants are always reporting perceptions—selective perceptions.”

2.6.2 Cultural limitations

Qualitative research relies heavily on the complex art of communication. At best, communication is often difficult between people of the same culture. In a multicultural study, communication becomes even more challenging. Samovar, et al (1981:18) suggested three problems with a systematic study of other cultures:

1. Culture lacks definite shape, making it inconsistent;
2. Culture cannot be manipulated or controlled;
3. Personal culture affects the perspective of the researcher.

Language is a significant part of communication and culture. Language gives clues to how people think about situations and people. Schurink (1998c:279) indicated: “...the life world of the research participants or subjects can only be appreciated if the words and expressions they use in specific concrete situations are revealed.” Many

times those words and expressions will need to be clarified by the researcher to understand their meaning. These clarifications are particularly important when conducting a cross-cultural study, because it is difficult to make conclusions or assumptions about behaviour and motivation in another culture (Cai & Fink, 2002:83; Ewert, 2000:30).

The key to minimizing the cultural limitations remains with the instrument of data collection, the researcher. De Vos, Schurink and Strydom (1998:6) cautioned researchers on the use of inference and emphasized the application of alternative explanations. This aspect follows the phenomenological nature of qualitative research, in which the researcher seeks to define the reality of the inner experiences of the participants, as well as their perceptions of the realities in the world (Borg, et al, 1993:194). Because culture is deeply embedded in an individual, the researcher cannot totally 'step out' of his own culture while striving to understand the culture of an participant.

2.7 CONCLUSION

Qualitative methodology was chosen by this researcher to explore the nature of cross-cultural conflict in a multicultural organisation. Through the study, this researcher attempted to identify the sources of conflicts and the skills necessary for a leader to manage cross-cultural conflict more successfully. Patton (1990:11) referred to qualitative methods of evaluation as "any effort to increase human effectiveness through systematic data-based inquiry." Arai, et al (2001:452) added: "Research

observation also helps to capture the complexities of organisational life that other data collection methods do not.” Perhaps the findings of this study will increase the effectiveness of people in the 21st century, who are responsible to lead multicultural organisations in an increasingly global society.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Successful social reconstruction requires ordinary men and women to build sound intercultural relationships. We need to be sensitive and open to cultural differences, and develop intercultural competence. (Steyn, 1994:15)

3.1 INTRODUCTION

One day the researcher was talking with two friends about a particular song. The American friend complained that the song could not be translated into the Afrikaans language. The translated words would be too long and would not fit the melody. Then, the Afrikaans friend spoke: “I know that song. Let me teach it to you.” She immediately sang a few lines of the song. She sang the words in the Afrikaans language, but sang to a different tune.

That day a totally new concept was presented. In a brilliant stroke, the Afrikaans friend re-defined a ‘song.’ In the past a song meant music with many verses and one tune. The Afrikaans friend illustrated that a song could also mean many tunes and one verse.

In its finest form, cross-cultural communication is a positive, mind-opening experience.

At times, however, the presence of people of another colour or race often leads to confusion, discomfort and irritation (Arai, et al, 2001:445). This in turn may open the door for conflict. Hesselgrave (1991:99) defined the communication challenge with these words: “Intercultural communication is as complex as the sum total of human differences.”

This chapter is based on the results of the interviews, which were conducted according to a qualitative approach. In keeping with the phenomenological method of qualitative research, interviews commenced with a request: Describe a conflict you have experienced in this organisation.

The themes extracted from the interviews are indicated in this chapter. Because the participants held various views of conflict, the first theme is a definition of conflict. Next the sources of conflict were identified. The sources of conflicts found through the interviews coincided with the wheel of conflict, developed by Mayer (2000:9). The wheel (cf. Figure 3.1) includes methods of communication, emotions, history, values, structures and needs.

After considering the sources of conflict, conflict management is discussed. Of particular importance to this study is the role of management in conflict situations. Participants identified several leadership skills which maintain positive cross-cultural relationships in a multicultural work place. These skills are: empathize with employees, develop multiple perspectives, suspend judgment, mentor employees, learn communication skills and provide adequate recognition.

The final section presents conflict resolution. Conflict resolution is connected to a manager's style of handling conflict. Therefore, the five management styles are stated (cf. Figure 3.2). Particular attention is drawn to the use of confrontation and mediation, as the participants noted the results of these two types of conflict resolution. This section concludes with a discussion on the positive outcomes and the negative outcomes of conflict resolution.

The first consideration is a definition of conflict.

3.2 DEFINITION OF CONFLICT

After asking the initial question, the researcher noted that most participants were reluctant to refer to a conflict situation. Participants shied away from that term and substituted a different term. Jill and John preferred "misunderstanding;" Delyse said her conflict was a "cultural misunderstanding;" Abraham called conflict "tension;" Paul referred to a "problem;" and Muhe began by recalling a situation involving a "mistake." Later in the interview, however, Abraham gave an apt definition of a conflict. He said: *"Conflict means that there are at least two people that don't understand each other. Or they may understand each other, or just have different agendas."*

Abraham's definition identified two important aspects of conflict. First, there are at least two interdependent people involved in a conflict, and second, a conflict involves

issues of different agendas. Augsburger (1992:18) refers to conflict as a competition for similar goals, rights and resources. Mayer (2000:3) adds that conflict may be seen as a feeling or as inconsistent worldviews. Dana (2001:5) specifically zeroed in on a definition of a “work place conflict,” saying that it involves people whose responsibilities are interdependent, who are angry, who believe the other person is to be blamed for the conflict, and whose actions are causing problems in the work place. This definition is particularly relevant to this research project, as the qualitative research took place in a multicultural organisation.

Another important factor to consider in a conflict situation is the multi-dimensional aspect of communication and conflict (Arai, et al, 2001:445; Finley, 2000:23; Mayer, 2000:81). This was evident in the views of the participants. It was interesting for the researcher to note that the participants were aware of some of these dimensions and expressed them in the interviews.

Abraham commented on the tension of adding a new person to the work place. *“Well, always when you add a new employee, there’s a tension, I guess,”* Abraham said. *“I guess when Person A was added, I felt the tension. Everybody has to learn who the new player is...has to decide where they fit into the pecking order...what the scheme of things are.”* Muhe elaborated on this issue, but she added the dimension of the generation gap to her observation. She seemed to indicate that age difference and length of employment in the organisation were interrelated. Muhe said: *“...there is a conflict of generations also. I have been in the company for a long time. For the newcomers, they feel they are not heard.”*

Muhe also pointed out the gender issue, which she observed in her department: *“You see, there is another problem. When we are ladies, there are three ladies. The leader does not always understand ladies.”* Muhe appeared to place some of the blame for misunderstandings with the department manager on the difference of perspective between men and women. Haar and Krahe (1999:669) wrote specifically about this issue: *“Apart from cultural background, gender is another variable that has been shown to influence the management of interpersonal conflict.”*

Literature indicates the multi-faceted nature of conflict. Augsburger (1992:25) indicated that *“conflict is universal, cultural and individual.”* This reminder of the personal, or individual, dimension of conflict was particularly relevant to this project. It is important to know the person, as well as the cultural context. As the participants indicated, communication and conflict issues are affected by gender, generation, age, length of employment, race, and education. The complexities of personality, personal experiences, and culture broaden that list further. Barnabas summed up this multi-dimensional dynamic by saying: *“We have such a diverse culture among our staff, a diversity of culture...People of various ages; people of various racial and cultural backgrounds. And there are often conflicts among the staff members.”*

While recognizing that there are many factors responsible for a conflict, this research is chiefly interested in the role that culture plays in a conflict situation. Some authors indicated that cultural differences and misunderstandings create a major source of conflict (Hermann, et al, 1997:207). According to Horowitz and Boardman

(1994:199), people of other cultures may focus on unique factors of a conflict. For instance, some people may consider relationship-oriented goals and other people may strive for more task-oriented goals. Rubin's (1994:43) statement rings true in any culture: "Ultimately, people have to take responsibility for addressing their own conflicts."

After considering the definition of a conflict, it is necessary to identify the sources of conflict.

3.3 SOURCES OF CONFLICT

The sources of conflict play a critical role in determining appropriate ways to manage conflict. Participants referred to the following six dimensions of conflict: The communication process; anger, tears and frustration; the historical dimension; the inner value system; the organisational structure; and the human needs which drive individuals. As stated above, these sources of conflict fell into the same categories which Mayer used in his wheel of conflict. According to Mayer (2000:9), the six major sources of conflict include methods of communication, emotions, history, values, structures, and needs (cf. Figure 3.1). Mayer (2000:16) stated: "Culture affects conflict because it is embedded in individuals' communication styles, history, way of dealing with emotions, values, and structures."

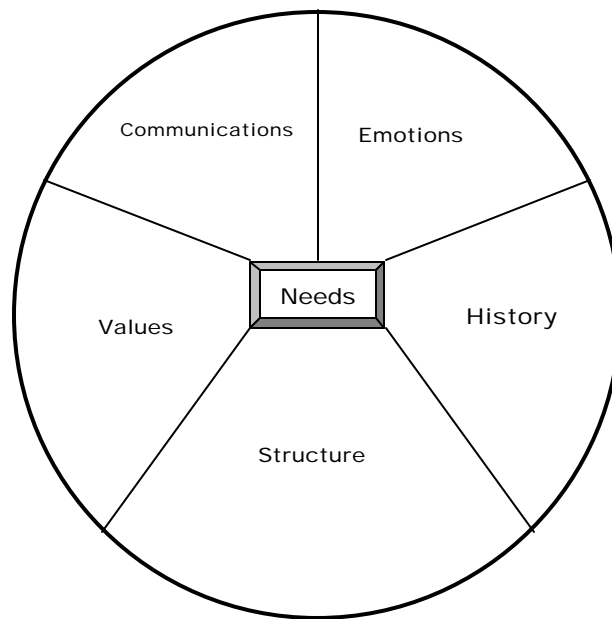


Figure 3.1 Sources of conflict (Mayer, 2000:9)

3.3.1 The communication process

The first source of conflict is communication, which is the method whereby people connect with each other. It is a complicated process, however, which is further affected by different cultural backgrounds. Delyse expressed her interpretation of an exchange with one of her co-workers: *“...I think it was basically a more cultural misunderstanding, the way it turned out. Because I thought I had asked a very simple question.”* In another interview, Jill appeared to refer to a similar situation. Jill had quite a different perception of the exchange with her co-worker. The researcher felt that Jill was defensive when describing the conversation: *“And, all of a sudden, when my boss is not in, someone who has got many years working here, used to come to me. I don’t know whether I misunderstood or misinterpreted her or what. Because she used to come to me and ask, ‘What are you working on?’”* Communication takes

place anytime a person receives information and assigns meaning to the words or behaviour (Bergeron, 2000:38). That behaviour may be conscious or unconscious and it may be intentional or unintentional.

Communication is a complex process, which is used to create understanding between people (Rutter, 1996:24). The process commences with a message, which is encoded in the mind of one person called a source, transferred by some form of media, and decoded in the mind of a person called a participant. The participant then encodes the message, and sends a reply or feedback to the original person. As Hesselgrave (1991:46) remarked: "...effective communication is not easily achieved and miscommunication is not easy to avoid." The process becomes even more difficult when the source and the participant originate from different cultures. The degree of difficulty is due to the dissimilarity between the two original cultures (Myers, et al, 2001:98). The greater the variation between cultural backgrounds, the more obstacles there are to communication.

This researcher identified four keys to communication in the interviews: The effective use of language, the consideration of perception, the role of ethnocentrism and the identification of stereotypes.

3.3.1.1 The effective use of language

The effective use of language is the first key to communication. Muhe spoke of her personal experience with other languages: *"In communication you have to try to*

learn the verbal language. Because for me, sometimes ...for example, some of the languages in South Africa, that click, they have bad manners in my language. When you do a click, it is bad manners...Then you have to get used to it. When people are talking, and they use that click, are they being nice to me or being naughty to me? But, slowly I learn it is their language. It has nothing to do with me personally.” In another part of the interview, Muhe added: *“You have to be aware of it all the time. I cannot say, ‘It’s done for all.’ No. I have to be always aware. I have to keep on remembering; it is their language.”*

According to Muhe, the very sounds of a different language can sometimes be insulting. She had the option of allowing the unknown verbal click to spiral into a conflict with her peers, because the click represented something offensive in her own culture. Instead, she discovered new information which reconstructed the meaning of the click in her mind and averted a potential conflict.

Coleman (1995a:733) understood the difficulty of this type of situation when he stated that it is a stressful experience when learning how to work with some form of cultural diversity. Steyn (1994:17) added that the attitudes which people attach to other languages cause major problems in communication. This is particularly true of those who find some language elements of another culture to be amusing or disgusting (Myers, et al, 2001:95)

On the positive side, language sometimes provides a guide for understanding another culture. Mayer (2000:81) said that “The most basic constant is that everyone

fundamentally wants to be understood...” Ewert (2000:30) and Finley (2000:21) added that it is important to make a conscious decision to respect people, even when their differences produce discomfort. As Muhe indicated, cross-cultural communication requires one to be constantly aware of the need for tolerance.

Muhe described another type of tension connected with language. She said that people sometimes talk in their mother tongue when someone present does not understand the language. She said: *“And then, another problem, we have many languages. I have to get used to people talking a language I don’t understand, when, they know we have a common language. Like, if they are picking one of the eleven languages of South Africa, when I think they should speak English. It is normal. When I meet my people, I speak in my mother tongue.”*

It is common for people to attribute negative intentions in a cross-cultural situation when speakers begin using an unknown language. Du Toit (1995:214) referred to this situation in regard to the responses of non-black learners about black learners: “...they are rude to speak in Xhosa in front of us, gossip about us in their own language.” Languages have the potential for forming immediate communication barriers (Lupi & Tong, 2001:164). This in turn can be the cause of a conflict. Conflicts are often escalated by someone attributing negative intentions to another person (Hermann, et al, 1997:222; Robbins, 2001:389).

In South Africa, government policies before 1994 enforced segregation. This historical reality continues to affect the present relationships between the races (Steyn,

1994:16). Until recently, the blacks and whites have had limited contact. Because of that fact, many people in South Africa are unaware that communication across linguistic boundaries can cause serious misunderstandings (Rutter, 1996:24).

3.3.1.2 The consideration of perception

The second key to communication is perception. Barnabas explained different perceptions to one of his staff members: *“On occasion, I have had to talk to the older member of staff [Delyse] and say, ‘This is how people interpret what you are saying.’ And invariably, she responds in a rather shocked manner, saying, ‘I had no idea that people perceived that.’”*

Perception refers to the meaning that people attach to information received through the senses (Ormrod, 1995:194). It is the cognitive process which helps one organize and interpret any stimuli from the internal or external environment (Swanepoel, Erasmus, Van Wyk & Schenk, 2001:76). Perception is subjective in nature, which means that people interpret meaning through their own field of experience. At times perception may provide an inaccurate interpretation to a situation, making it unreliable.

Perception is a critical issue in cross-cultural communication, because meaning is partially determined by cultural orientation. In an ambiguous situation, it is easier to make a premature judgment than to withhold judgment. Steyn (1994:17) added that intercultural interactions require people to consult each other for differing

perceptions, and further require people to refrain from placing value judgments on the exposed differences.

3.3.1.3 The role of ethnocentrism

Understanding the role of ethnocentrism is the third key to communication. This speech by Delyse is an apt of ethnocentrism: *“I just think we need to be very aware of each other’s culture. Even if it is a Western world, these people like to keep their culture. And I don’t think it should ever be made fun of or criticized, because it means a lot to each of us.”* The emotional response which people often have when first faced with another culture is known as ethnocentrism (Hiebert, 1996:97). According to Hiebert (1996:97), the response is connected with an attitude, and is not a result of understanding. The belief is that one’s own culture is superior in every way (Elmer, 1993:21).

Delyse views her world in South Africa as a Western world. She acknowledges that other people have “their culture,” but she implies that the Western culture is dominant. Although this response is normal, it is problematic in cross-cultural encounters. There are two dimensions which assist a person in overcoming this propensity toward ethnocentrism (Harris & Kumra, 2000:610):

1. An increased awareness of one’s own culture;
2. An awareness of the differences in work values and cultural values of other cultures.

Lingenfelter and Mayers (2001:23) add one further step to successful cross-cultural interaction, which is the desire to become a 'learner' in the new culture. Becoming a 'learner' implies the concept of discovery, as new ideas are shared and explored. It also requires people to be open and teachable in the face of new ideas.

Ethnocentrism is developed through the process of enculturation. Paul spoke of enculturation: "*And how culture comes upon us is what we are taught and the way we are brought up. And this is what differentiates people from one another and we call it culture.*" Enculturation refers to the fact that one's own culture is deeply engrained in the conscious and subconscious mind of an individual. The process begins at the moment of birth and continues throughout a lifetime. Enculturation affects everything that a person thinks, says and does. It is rarely called into question, until other cultural ways are confronted. Because of the strength of enculturation, people often compare new cultural ways to their own ways and come to the conclusion that their ways are best.

International businesses are wrestling with the unique issues of rapid globalization (Harris & Kumra, 2000:602). The dynamics of international companies frequently require moving managers to other countries. Mr. Kevan Hawley, an executive at South African Breweries, did a study on expatriate management in South Africa to determine the factors which are involved (Hawley, 1995:26). Hawley (1995:26) commented that a significant contributor to failure in Africa is "the devastating effect of ethnocentrism."

Jill expressed a healthier approach to other cultures. Her following words seem to indicate that she is becoming more aware of the influence of culture within herself and in others: “...*I think in all the cultures, the way we do things is not the way other cultures do things. And sometimes we can do things, thinking that it’s right, because it is right in your culture and in other cultures it’s not right. So that is why it is very important to learn how people do their things so that you may not be a victim at the end of...hating them.*”

3.3.1.4 The identification of stereotypes

The identification of stereotypes is an important key to cross-cultural communication. Abraham was aware of a stereotype behaviour sometimes applied to Americans: “*Asking people to do something for me makes me feel like the arrogant American still...if I wasn’t sensitive or hyper-sensitive or too sensitive, maybe that wouldn’t bother me, but it does.*”

Abraham assumed that he was stereotyped in the work place. Often stereotypes are totally wrong, and in other cases stereotypes are oversimplifications of preconceived notions (Hill, Stremmel & Fu, 2002:40; Steyn, 2001a:54). Although people of one culture do share certain characteristics, stereotypes are likely to cause unrealistic expectations in interpersonal relationships.

Probably some of the most damaging stereotypes are racially based. Muhe felt that some situations in the work place were affected by skin colour: “*There are double*

standards and judgments in assessing the mistake...For me, I thought it was a colour problem...When it was a black, it was bad. When it was a white, it was some mistake.” Jill reacted with a much stronger emotional response: “Then, well, I was very angry at first, because I am black, she is white. I was angry, because it is like she doesn’t have any trust to me. She thinks I cannot do my work best.” In a different part of the interview, Jill assigned negative intentions to a co-worker, due to colour: “But I could see that, well, the problem might be that she undermines me because I’m black skinned by nature.”

Steyn (1994:16) suggested that in multicultural countries such as South Africa, many people are misinformed about each other’s cultures, which produces mutually negative stereotypes. These racially based stereotypes are very sensitive and have a high potential for conflict situations.

One of the best ways to avoid the problem of stereotyping and unintentional slights is to make an effort at approaching all people as human beings (Arai, et al, 2001:447; Hiebert, 1985:98; Samovar, et al, 1981:87). This mental choice helps one to be more aware of the similarities among people, irregardless of race or skin colour. It also helps to build a positive attitude toward people of other cultures. Mayer (2000:71) commented that the continuities or similarities among cultures are more intriguing than the differences.

3.3.2 Anger, tears and frustration

Emotions are another factor on the wheel of conflict. Paul spoke of tears being shed over a conflict: *“...one came to me and explained their side of the story, whilst the other explained their side of the story. It was a very emotional conflict. The reason I am saying that is because tears were in the process.”* Jill said that the conflict made her angry: *“I was angry, because it is like she doesn’t have any trust to me. She thinks I cannot do my work best. And, well, I especially showed her that, you know, I am very angry and that I don’t want that to happen anymore. Although, I cried.”*

Anger is present in every conflict (Browning, Davis & Resta, 2000:237; Dana, 2001:4) claims that anger is present in every conflict. It may be hidden or obvious, but it is present. Depending on the depth of the conflict, other emotions may also be present. As the emotional level increases between the social actors, the difficulties of communication also increase. Rational thought processes are often at a minimum as well.

Delyse described another conflict, which happened several years ago with a different supervisor. The supervisor represented another culture. Delyse said: *“I mean years ago, when we were still down in a different building, there was one of the department heads there. Also, that was the first time that I have ever been rude to one of my superiors. And, of course, when I really get hurt or angry, then I cry...I told him [the department head] that he had no manners...and things changed drastically after that...so sometimes to vent your feelings does help.”*

Before the resolution of this conflict, Delyse said that the supervisor would stand at the time clock in the morning as she arrived at work. The supervisor would make such comments as “You are a minute late” or “You need a new watch.” Delyse, a South African, perceived his remarks as rude and unnecessary. It was a clash of cultures. The supervisor appeared to be from a culture with a high concern for punctuality. Lingenfelter and Mayers (2001:40) referred to this as a “time-oriented culture.” Such a culture places an emphasis on keeping previously determined schedules. This extreme orientation to time is often a source of problems in cross-cultural situations.

Delyse finally had enough of the supervisor’s perceived rudeness. She confronted him and vented her emotions. This display of emotions in overt conflict brought her hidden feelings into the open and aided in the resolution of the conflict (Chesler & Zuniga, 1991:179). According to Delyse, the whole atmosphere changed after “all these stand up arguments.”

Perception plays an important role, as the emotions spiral upward. Horowitz and Boardman (1994:207) indicated that an important influence on emotions is the perception of intentionality. This may determine if the social actor chooses anger or empathy toward the offender. In turn, the choice of emotions may be the deciding factor in whether or not the conflict escalates or de-escalates.

The head of the department, Barnabas, had a different perception of conflict situations in his department. It appeared that the people in his department react quite differently when he is present. He explained it this way: *“Ah, generally speaking, the conflicts are subtle. They are not out in the open. We don’t have shouting matches. Occasionally, we will have some pouting. But never have I experienced, or have I seen it come to a shouting match. Now, I have heard rumours, or been told tales, by some of the staff members, that occasionally harsh words have been spoken, loudly. But, they have never happened in front of me, and I don’t think they ever will.”*

Barnabas, an American, viewed the conflicts as “subtle,” and had never experienced emotional outbursts in his department. Barnabas was also confident that he would not see shouting matches in the future. It appeared that his style of leadership made such a display of emotions unacceptable. Prutzman and Johnson (1997:26) claimed: “Conflict resolution skills help people to respond to biased comments and help to create an environment in which prejudice is not considered acceptable.” It seemed that Barnabas had learned conflict resolution skills that were effective in a multicultural department. People in the department understood the expectations of Barnabas and reacted accordingly.

3.3.3 The historical dimension

History provides another dimension to a conflict situation. It was interesting that several of the participants in the interviews mentioned the role of history when talking about cross-cultural issues. John spoke of the history in South Africa, specifically

commenting on apartheid: *“It was very difficult for us in South Africa, because we had a time of apartheid, where there was different classes. The whites was in a higher class, coloureds was in another class, blacks was in a lower class...We weren’t equal...It wasn’t nice either to live like that. But since apartheid went away, we are all free now.”* Jill also made reference to apartheid, and suggested that the history of apartheid affected a current conflict: *“Because, I could see that it is a conflict and it is based on the skin and maybe our background...our apartheid background, maybe.”*

Muhe, Barnabas and Abraham, who are not South African citizens, commented on the role of history in the relationships of people in South Africa. Muhe said: *“For me, I look at it as a foreigner. As a foreigner, I see it as, that is their history. All of them, they bring their past to the present. They are still carrying their past in their mind.”*

Barnabas added: *“My take on that is that because of the cultural and historical background of this country, that often white people will speak down to black people.”*

Abraham had also observed the effect of history on the black employees: *“Well, I would think that the black employees feel more subordinate, probably because of culture, because they’ve been made to be subordinate.”*

As with every country, South Africa has a unique historical backdrop. The history of apartheid in South Africa heightens inter-racial issues in every organisation of the country (Swanepoel, et al, 2001:75). South Africa has made significant strides toward work place equity through the enactment of legislation. Significant legislation is the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, which promotes equal opportunity and the fair

treatment of employees in the work place, and attempts to eliminate unfair discrimination through the process of affirmative action (Squelch, 1999:7). Perhaps Swanepoel, et al (2001:163) identifies a more subjective aim of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 by indicating that its goal is to create a “diverse workforce” which represents the demographical differences in South Africa.

The South African Constitution acknowledges 11 official languages; however, there are as many as 24 different languages used in the homes of this nation (Van Jaarsveld, 1988:94). It would follow that there are at least 24 cultures represented in the country. Although legislation plays an important role in addressing historical issues of racial discrimination, it is not the final solution for multicultural organisations. Neither is it the solution for cross-cultural relationships, because harmony among people cannot be legislated. Human behaviour is linked to deeply engrained personal perceptions of people and situations. Steyn (1994:16) said that the finest way to get acquainted with other cultures is by developing individual, personal relationships. Lingenfelter and Mayers (2001:118) added that the key in successful personal relationships is accepting the possibility that other people have viewpoints which are worthy of consideration.

It takes time and effort to overcome the historical issues of a society. Multicultural organisations provide a good starting place for interaction between people of various backgrounds. Banks (2001:9) stated that these interactions will teach people to know, to care and to act in new and thoughtful ways. As relationships are approached with this positive attitude of learning, perceptions can be modified and behaviour can be

changed. Coleman (1995a:725) captured this idea: “As the range of an individual’s personal contacts increase, so will the breadth and depth of the social ideas and models that will affect his or her behaviour.”

Some countries have a long history of conflicts between people groups, which have had devastating results to the land and to the people. In other cases, families have maintained serious conflicts across generations. Sometimes a conflict between two people may have roots in an event that is many years past. In all these cases, conflict must be viewed within its historical context. Such a context produces a certain understanding of the complex systems of interaction that have taken place, as well as the over-all effect which the conflict has had on the identity of the disputants (Mayer, 2000:13).

3.3.4 The inner value system

A fourth source of conflict is the inner value system which people develop within their culture. A value system is often evident in how people greet one another and how people address one another. Jill, a young employee, had a conflict with a co-worker concerning this issue of greetings: *“For instance, one in my department I was just calling ‘auntie.’ And she said to me, I mustn’t call her ‘auntie.’ I just have to call her by name. But, it is difficult with me. Sometimes instead of calling, I will just look at you...and until...I will just look at you...and I look in your eyes...and not call you anything. Because, at the end, I feel like I have done something wrong.”*

For Jill, the term 'auntie' was a term of respect. Most probably the term reflected the value of age in Jill's culture. The senior member did not understand the meaning behind the term 'auntie' and reacted negatively to it. In fact, the senior member demanded that Jill use her first name. Jill could not go against her value system, so she chose to quit using any name when addressing the senior member.

Van Jaarsveld (1988:93-4) compared the greetings and the how-do-you-do sequences of conversations within the Afrikaans, English, and African languages. He discovered that the younger person will greet the older person first in the Afrikaans and English languages, whereas the older person will usually greet the younger person first in the African languages. It would follow that the expectations surrounding an ordinary greeting can cause a misunderstanding when the accepted pattern is broken.

Muhe seemed to act as a mediator between Delyse and Jill. Although Muhe is from a different country, she is black-skinned and older than Jill. Her advice to Jill showed Muhe's unique understanding of Jill's relationship with Delyse: *"It is not very easy, but have respect, like to your mother, but do it with the right attitude. Don't be intimidated. Do right. With respect."*

Another cultural value which was commented on in the interviews was the issue of the death of a spouse and the appropriate time of mourning before a widow may remarry. Jill observed the death of Delyse's husband, then watched as Delyse dated and remarried within a short time. Her response was: *"So, the things that separate me is like the white culture, if your husband dies, you can get involved and get*

married soon...With us, it has to take time to show that you are mourning for your husband...So, this is something that has, you know, shocked me. I am not used to this kind of thing. For us, it is like you don't love him enough."

This situation is another example of a conflict of values. Simerly (1998:4) said that a conflict of values is often one of the hardest conflicts to deal with, because it is not based on a rational thought process. When core values are threatened, the response is more instinctive. At times the conflict becomes 'good' versus 'evil,' which further increases the problem. That is when it is helpful to have an awareness of personal culture and of other cultures.

People make evaluations along three dimensions: the cognitive level, the affective level, and the evaluative level (Hiebert, 1985:104). On the cognitive level, we develop beliefs about certain issues through personal experience, through information received from a trusted source, and through an internal process of logic called inference (Samovar, et al, 1981:39). Beliefs vary in intensity according to the individual. One person may believe that snow is very cold, because of the actual experience of a blizzard. Another person may believe snow is cold because of pictures and information given on the television.

The affective level involves an emotional basis for decision making. People decide that they 'like' a particular kind of food, specific ways to plant a garden, a certain colour of house, or a unique style of clothing. These decisions come from within the culture, but affect the likes and dislikes of an individual.

On the evaluative level, people choose values which differentiate between right and wrong or good and evil (Mayer, 2000:11). These values develop through the process of enculturation and are usually operational on a subconscious level. The values govern the actions and reactions of an individual. The values also dictate appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in society.

The identification of personal values and the values of others are important in a cross-cultural situation. Hermann, et al (1997:224) indicated that understanding values and assumptions may help to avoid the misinterpretation of behaviour and intentions in a cross-cultural setting. Strydom (1998:31) made a stronger statement: “...no value judgments are to be made under any circumstances whatsoever on the cultural aspect of communities.”

The value system plays an important role in an individual and in a society; however, they are also a potential source of conflict. Robbins (2001:388) suggested that value systems are one of the most overlooked variables in the study of conflict. This is particularly true in a cross-cultural context, because a value system is rooted in a culture. Although values dictate a sense of morality in making decisions, they should not be treated as universal absolutes. Banks (2001:14-15) commented that an openness to value systems in other cultures helps people to begin the process of questioning personal assumptions. This in turn breaks down a monocultural perspective.

3.3.5 The organisational structure

The wheel of conflict includes structure as another source of conflict. Mayer (2000:12) defined structure as the “external framework” of a conflict. Issues of structure encompass job-related items such as the organisational structure, the availability of resources, and the actual setting of the interaction. Perhaps the structural elements are the least likely to be changed; however, conflict management may have to address these elements in an effort to help employees understand the situation.

The researcher identified two structural issues in the interviews: Work responsibilities in the office and change factors within the organisation.

3.3.5.1 Work responsibilities in the office

One of the structural issues which was evident from the interviews concerned the distribution of work responsibilities in the office. Delyse seemed to feel that Jill should participate in a wider range of activities than her job description required. This is Jill’s impression of the problem: “...when I came to work here, well, my boss gave me my job description. And, all of a sudden, when my boss is not in, someone who has got many years working here, used to come to me...and ask: What are you working on?...And I asked myself: How can she ask me that? Because, I’ve got my job description. If you want to know what I’m working on today, better to go and look at my ‘to do’ list or take my job description, and she will know what I am doing.”

Paul made this observation: *“When the boss was away, and we did have a conflict arising. Person A felt that Person B is doing unnecessary work.”*

It appeared to Delyse that Jill was doing personal reading during work hours. Delyse labelled the reading as “unnecessary work.” Jill was given a directive by the head of the department to read the material, but the directive was unknown to Delyse. After the resolution of the conflict, Delyse remarked: *“As I say, now you know in future how to approach the subject or find out from the top what the arrangements were in the beginning. You know that’s another thing I feel, if arrangements are made between staff members, everybody should know what the arrangements are.”*

The head of department, Barnabas, confronted Delyse and explained Jill’s job description to her, as well as the reasons behind the directives. He described the confrontation: *“And then I will also explain to them what I have told the younger member of staff. I will say: I have given that staff member permission to read these books, and it’s not that they are slacking off in their work. But it’s an opportunity for them to become familiar with the bigger picture.”*

This conflict over job responsibilities occurred while the boss was out of the office, making the motivation behind the conflict uncertain. Jill explained to this researcher that she has a definite ‘to do’ list on file. It appeared that everyone has access to this file. The researcher asked for further clarification, and Jill replied: *“Yeah, we do have our ‘to do’ list. We give them to our boss, and then after our boss signs it, then I take it to our file. We do have a specific file for our ‘to do’ list.”*

According to Grab (1996:35), one of the sources of conflict in an organisation is when someone makes an effort to control another person. This may have been true of Delyse. Here is Delyse's description of the conflict: *"Well, she came and asked me if I don't trust her, and I said I never thought about it as doubting YOU. It was just that we needed help. And the answer she gave me, you know, it's not going to solve the problem and get the work out. And I also feel that, being new, the more she learns the better when someone is not here."*

Delyse has worked for the organisation for many years, and may have felt she could influence the distribution of work in the office. Delyse seemed to have her own expectations concerning Jill's responsibilities.

Clear job descriptions are critical for effective human resource management. According to Robbins (2001:476), a job description should include a list of the responsibilities of the employee, along with an explanation of how to do the job and why the job is done. Swanepoel, et al (2001:264) added that people also need to know the reporting lines, and suggested that labour relations often improve in an organisation where job responsibilities and reporting lines are clarified.

3.3.5.2 Change factors within the organisation

The second structural issue concerned change factors within the organisation. Muhe made the following negative speech about change; however, her later comments

caused the researcher to believe that she was partly sarcastic: *“I have been in this company for three years. What can we do better? Nothing. I have been doing it for three years. It was working. Changes...we don’t need any changes...we have survived the three years...nothing else.”* Then, Muhe introduced the term technology. The researcher requested her to explain technology and she said: *“...How things are changing. For me, I think it is not fair to say the three years have been successful...that I don’t need any change. Is bad. Is wrong. You see, human beings, we feel secure with what we are used to. And when something is coming, and is coming with a younger person than me, it is not very acceptable.”*

As Muhe indicated, change may be due to factors such as advanced technology, which affects the entire organisation, or change may come from a new and younger employee. A new employee usually produces change within the department; however, even the departmental changes are often met with resistance. Abraham observed: *“But let’s say one of the ladies doesn’t particularly want...one of the employees doesn’t particularly want anything to change...So, it’s part of having seniority and being part of the system...and you may or may not have been consulted on, ‘hey, do you need somebody?’”*

Change produces ambiguity in the employees. In return, ambiguity often produces insecurity, uncertainty and resistance (Arai, et al, 2001:446). According to Bottery (1995:46), employees of an organisation develop methods of survival. Change upsets these methods, thus change brings opposition. When employees are brought into the process of change, there is the likelihood that the employees will see the necessity of

the proposed change and feel a sense of ownership of the innovative idea. Thus, top-down change may set the stage for a conflict.

Although change is difficult, it is not impossible. Van Wyk and Van der Linde (1997:33) commented that "...a human being is very adaptable." Although people tend to cling to the status quo, they are capable of change. Malone and Tulbert (1996:46) quoted the definition of a "boundless self" as given by Hargreaves (1994): "...a dynamic self responding to the changing environment through a continually reflexive stance." This is an appropriate definition of someone who is willing to meet the challenges that change produces in a multicultural organisation.

3.3.6 The human needs which drive individuals

Mayer placed needs at the hub of the conflict wheel. Included in Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs are: physiological needs, security and safety needs, belongingness and love needs, needs for esteem or recognition and needs for self-actualization (Steyn, 1996:6 cited Maslow, 1954). These are the basic human needs which drive individuals; however, these basic needs will affect the areas of communication, emotions, history, values and structure.

A conflict occurs when one or more needs is not being met. Fisher (1997:32) claimed that conflicts originate over needs that cannot be compromised or suppressed. Mayer (2000:8) added that a conflict cannot be transformed or resolved until the needs of the individuals are determined. People are careful to protect themselves in difficult

situations. If they perceive a threat to their needs, they will work to defend themselves. It is a human reaction. Dana (2001:21) stated: “Although our physical safety is rarely at risk in work place conflicts, our underlying interests and needs are always in jeopardy.”

The researcher noted that the needs expressed by the participants were similar to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Thus, the needs are grouped as the need for employment, the need for daily security and future security, the need to be part of the team, the need for a positive ‘report card’ and the need for self-fulfilment. These five categories are discussed in the following section.

3.3.6.1 The need for employment

The first need is the need for employment. The basic needs of survival, which parallel Maslow’s physiological needs (Steyn, 1996:6 cited Maslow, 1954), are connected to having a place of employment. John commented on a conflict with the former CEO of the organisation. Because of a major mistake that John’s department had made, the CEO was very upset and began to threatened to fire several people. John was frightened that he would lose his job, which would put his family in jeopardy. He stated: *“Yeah, he wanted to fire us all. It was involving the order...But it was a bit of a concern, because when we heard we were going to be fired, we were a bit panicked, because we didn’t know what was going to happen...He even wanted to deduct from our wages also. Yeah, and so at least nothing happened from that instance till now.”*

The need for employment may also be translated to salary issues. Muhe alluded to the issue of salary. To avoid using names, Muhe referred to people as Person C and Person B: *“And then they say...C is saying, for me I don’t have a paper, nothing, but I can do more than B. I am doing more than B, but I am less paid.”*

Employment is one way to supply the physiological needs of an individual and of a family. The physiological needs are the basic needs of survival, such as the need for food, clothing and shelter. The threat of losing a job, having wages deducted or being paid insufficiently brings immediate concern to an employee.

3.3.6.2 The need for daily security and future security

The second need involves present and future security issues of an employee. Maslow described this as the need for security and safety (Steyn, 1996:6 cited Maslow, 1954). Security must be maintained in the daily functions of the department. Employees work more effectively in such an environment. Abraham commented that there is also less conflict between people who feel secure in their job: *“...conflict is rivalry. And so, the more secure you make any individual, I think, in any culture, the less rival is required to maintain. I’ve got to puff myself up, I’m going to be a pill.”* (Personal comment by the researcher: *Abraham seems to refer to a troublemaker as a pill.*)

There is a need for daily security and a need for future security. This is evident in a situation involving John’s pension fund. John felt his future security was in danger

through mistakes in the finance department of the organisation. He stated: *“Well, in finance. The pension fund lapsed three times already. I was first concerned when it lapsed the first time. I spoke to the person in charge...then the last information I got about the policy was '94. He don't know what happened between the other years. They can't find any information. This was a bigger concern for me, because they changed policies without our consent. They just went and changed the policies, and don't let us know what's happening or nothing.”* John went on to indicate that his supervisor helped him solve the pension problem.

3.3.6.3 The need to be part of the team

People have a need to be part of the team in the work place. This corresponds to Maslow's need for belongingness and love (Steyn, 1996:6 cited Maslow, 1954). In a conflict situation, Jill decided to test the other employees. She wanted to discover who her allies were: *“And then, after all, well, I kept quiet and I said: I'm not going to tell my boss about this. And I'm not going to tell anybody, but I said, no, let me talk to my colleagues and maybe they will help me. And mind you, my colleagues are from different cultural backgrounds, and I didn't know, maybe they will side with her, or side with me. So, I started to be conscious for that.”*

Muhe was not directly involved in the conflict, but observed that people in the office were choosing sides. She said: *“And then there is another group. This and this, they go together.”* (Personal comment by the researcher: Here Muhe showed the

researcher in a notebook that Person A plus one other person in the department had formed a clique.)

The need to be part of the team is basically the same as the need to belong. To meet this need, an individual may seek support from other employees or form alliances with other employees. This need may develop into a conflict in the work place, if people choose to take sides over some issue.

The need to belong in a work place can be strengthened in positive ways. Abraham addressed the need for group cohesion; however, he was not referring to a conflict situation. He saw that the employees in the department needed informal times together on a regular basis: *“Well, by observation, I think that some of the employees didn’t get as much attention as they needed. That’s a personal view. And part of remedying that, was the persuasion, ‘Well, let’s take everybody out to lunch.’ And I think we all got to know each other better that way. I think it’s very helpful. I think it’s something that should be habitual. I think it’s needed.”*

3.3.6.4 The need for a positive report card

People have a basic human need to be appreciated. Maslow referred to this need as the need for esteem or recognition (Steyn, 1996:6 cited Maslow, 1954). When the researcher asked Abraham what people are looking for, he immediately replied: *“Recognition. And part of the way of saying that is by giving them more money, I*

guess. But that's not really what they're looking for. That's just...that's one way of handing out a report card."

Issues of appreciation and recognition are included in the development of a sense of positive self-esteem and self-worth. In an organisation, employees need to know that they are important as individuals. Employees also want to know that their work is appreciated and significant not only to the department, but to the organisation as a whole.

In a negative work environment, the need for recognition is not met. Delyse made a quick reference to such an environment: *"I don't like destructive criticism...It doesn't matter who it is."*

3.3.6.5 The need for self-fulfilment

The need for self-fulfilment is the need to feel one is a person of worth. Maslow labelled it as the need for self-actualization (Steyn, 1996:6 cited Maslow, 1954). The researcher asked Jill if the elderly people in her culture disagree with the fact that young people are being more selective about traditional cultural practises. She replied: *"They do disagree, but there is nothing they can do this time. Because these days we are able to read. And like for instance, in my case, I am a Christian. That way, I take the Bible as my source...as my manual for this life...what to be and what not to do."*

Here Jill indicated that she is making choices about “what to be,” by choosing the Bible as her manual for life and by being selective about the cultural practises of her past. This is an example of the process of finding self-fulfilment. It is the realization that one is ‘becoming,’ and has to do with growing in knowledge and character. In the end, this growth in self-actualization is connected to fulfilling personal dreams and goals.

Effective leaders learn how to provide a safe environment for employees. Skills in conflict management play an important role in maintaining a positive work environment.

3.4 CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Developing skills in conflict management is critical for a leader in a multicultural organisation. Piturro and Mahoney (1992:13) talked of a demographically diverse work force as a place where the potential for misunderstanding is so great that productivity is affected. This becomes costly to the organisation in several areas. Conrad (1991:135) suggested that managers may spend about one-half of their time handling conflict situations. This is time that could be spent in other areas of creativity. Dana (2001:19) said that up to 42% of employees’ time is spent either in an actual conflict or in an attempt to resolve some conflict. According to exit interviews, unresolved conflicts are a major factor in about 50% of voluntary employment termination (Dana, 2001:22). Thus, conflicts result in loss of work time, loss of productivity, loss of morale, loss of profit and sometimes loss of employees.

The concept of conflict management was coined due to the inevitable nature of conflict among people in an organisation and the fact that conflict can produce positive or negative results. Johnson (1994:718) defined conflict management according to a quote by Thomas (1976): “Conflict management is the purposeful intervention of leaders (principals) to stimulate and encourage beneficial or helpful conflict and to resolve, suppress, or prevent harmful conflict.”

This section of the dissertation will consider areas of purposeful intervention that a leader can use. The emphasis will be on skills needed in a cross-cultural situation. That list of skills includes: empathize with employees; develop multiple perspectives; suspend judgment; mentor employees; learn communication skills; and provide adequate recognition.

3.4.1 Empathize with employees

A leader needs to increase her ability to empathize with employees. Abraham described empathy well. *“So, what may be really minor to you or me, may be very major to some of the others. I don’t know that, but if I put myself in their house, I feel discriminated against...If I was sitting here, what would I think? See, if I can sit in everybody’s seat and say, ‘well, how would I look at this if I was being treated this way?’”...Whenever you run into something you don’t understand, then you look to see...well, is it culture...is it education...is it I got beat up doing this before...I’m*

afraid of losing my job...what are the motivations that keep people from giving their best?"

John referred to empathy by quoting the 'Golden Rule' from the Bible: *"There is that verse that says you must 'love your neighbour as you love yourself.' Because if you love yourself, you won't have trouble loving the next person."*

Empathy is the ability to exchange places with another person in order to understand the thoughts, emotions and behaviour in a given situation. Empathy is often referred to as walking in another person's shoes. It is a skill used to acquire a perspective other than one's own.

Empathy is not automatic; it is a developed response to people. According to Malone and Tulbert (1996:47), a centred person needs the ability to shift paradigms and view the world through the eyes of other people. Simerly (1998:4) added that a personality that is unwilling to empathize is a major source of conflict. One interpretation of that concept is that a self-centred person would be inclined to have trouble with interpersonal relationships.

A lack of empathy is especially problematic in a cross-cultural situation. Empathy weakens ethnocentrism by helping a person gain a new understanding of the values and beliefs of others. Barnabas commented on the cross-cultural aspect of empathy: *"I think a leader has to try to understand the various cultures and the implications of those cultures."*

Empathy is an effective tool in conflict management. To separate people from a problem, a leader needs to listen and empathize with all involved parties (Gmelch & Carroll, 1991:119). People are more inclined to be open to creative problem solving, if they know they have been listened to.

3.4.2 Develop multiple perspectives

A leader needs to acquire the skill of viewing the world through multiple perspectives. In the multicultural organisation studied, Barnabas was the head of department. Barnabas is an American who has lived in Africa for nearly twenty years. His years of cross-cultural experience have assisted him in learning that there are multiple perspectives. He stated: *“I will normally interpret the white member of staff to the black members of staff. Again, this is the advantage that I have of being an outsider, as well as the department head.”*

Self-awareness is the first step in developing multiple perspectives. Steyn (1994:17) stated that being aware of personal cultural assumptions is a crucial aspect in developing competence in intercultural exchanges. Gaining a multiple perspectives is an ongoing process which the leader must engage in, as well as teach employees. One of the responsibilities of a leader is to recognize the range of forces which affect each of the employees, then to assist the employees in understanding how these forces affect perceptions (Maruyama, 1992:160). This process defuses conflict situations, and it creates an atmosphere of cooperation in the work place.

3.4.3 Suspend judgment

Suspending judgment is a critical skill for a leader in a multicultural organisation. Barnabas experienced the need for suspended judgment when working with one of his staff members: *“...the member of staff...blindsided me with some demands that were rather extraordinary and totally unexpected. I probably wouldn’t have minded it if he had confronted me with it individually, privately, but I think he was afraid of my response. That’s my interpretation, and so, he hit me with it in front of the third party. And as a result of it, I was, ah, embarrassed by his, um, cheek, impudence, and, ah, and also for the organisation, in front of the third party.”*

Although Barnabas used evaluative words such as “cheek” and “impudence,” he chose to wait 24 hours before confronting the employee. He stated: *“And I didn’t take what he had done personally. That’s one of the reasons why I had to let it cool down for about 24 hours. Because at first, I took it as an affront to myself. But then, as I thought about it, I knew that it was not a personal attack.”*

Barnabas was upset with his employee; however, he maintained his equilibrium and gave himself time to reflect on the situation. Horowitz and Boardman (1994:202-3) discussed the need for business organisations to address conflict management in relation to a diverse work force: *“We believe that how an organisation chooses to manage conflict, and how employees experience conflict in the organisation, influences the psychological contract.”*

The psychological contract is an unwritten standard of expectation. It affects the motivation of the employee and the level of job satisfaction. It also has long-term effects. When a manager makes a decision about a conflict management strategy, he must consider not only the achievement of short-term goals, but the long-term consequences to subordinates (Weider-Hatfield & Hatfield, 1996:204).

Knowledge of personal cultural patterns should promote objectivity and assist a leader in suspending judgment. Ewert (2000:30), as well as Gmelch and Carroll (1991:119) also recommended avoiding premature judgment. Ewert applied the principle to a cross-cultural situation, while Gmelch and Carroll applied the principle to conflict resolution. Thus, the concept of suspended judgment seems especially relevant to this research project.

3.4.4 Mentor employees

A leader needs to be skilled at mentoring employees. Employees can be taught to empathize with others, to look for a perspective other than their own and to suspend judgment. The perception of people from another culture is a major issue in a multicultural work place, as is shown here by Muhe's statement: *"In my mind I have those recipes about the other colour people."*

As employees begin to understand the issues involved in cross-cultural relationships, stronger relationships are formed in the office. One author, in observing a group of

learners, noted that the learners were less likely to engage in social relationships with dissimilar others (Salend, 1999:9). It follows that a leader in a multicultural organisation should emphasize similarities among the workers, rather than differences. When confronting differences, the leader has an opportunity to help employees understand and appreciate the value of individual differences, thereby creating a sense of community. This follows the work done by Garcia and Pugh (1992:217) when they suggested that learners need to experience the diversity among cultures within their environments.

In some situations, diversity may be attributed to discrimination. Discrimination is often a volatile issue that needs to be dealt with. Kirtman and Minkoff (1996:16) commented that conflict is more manageable when addressed at an early stage. Chesler and Zuniga (1991:178) referred to “new layers of meaning” being opened up in majority/minority relations. It is the task of the leader to address the conflict before the issue of discrimination escalates. Prutzman and Johnson (1997:30) made an important observation: “What we tend to overlook is that conflict resolution skills and positive diversity skills escalate, too. The more we practise these skills, the better we become at dealing with bias.”

The leader needs to mentor employees, by providing opportunities for workers to experience the diversity of people from other cultures. This can be accomplished through informal or formal diversity-training (Tan, et al, 1996:54). When people process diversity in a safe work place, a way is opened for employees to develop new

perspectives and close interpersonal relationships. In turn, conflict is more easily resolved in such an environment.

3.4.5 Learn communication skills

Positive communication skills determine the effectiveness of a leader. A leader must first understand the basic communication process, then understand the effect of culture on the communication process, then combine these skills to manage conflicts in a multicultural work force. McFarland (1992:26) added that people skills are a valuable requirement of the job market.

It appears that learning communication skills is a life-long process, which is vital in every area of leadership. The following subtitles were taken directly from the interviews, and relate to the communication skills needed by someone in a leadership role. The subtitles are: listen with both ears; ask for clarification; practise crystal clear communication styles; be flexible in the choice of communication styles; take time to heal; and, push the right buttons.

3.4.5.1 Listen with both ears

A critical communication skill is the art of listening carefully. Paul commented on the importance of listening: *“You just listen and sometimes people just need to speak on their own to hear the answers, just to get it off their chests.”* John referred to an incident when the Chief Executive Officer of the organisation listened, but did not

believe the explanation: *“Yes, we told him what happened, but he didn’t want to take us on our word.”*

It has been said that people were created with one mouth and two ears; therefore, a person should practise more listening than talking. Steyn (1994:17) emphasized the habit of listening non-judgementally in a cross-cultural situation. Horowitz and Boardman (1994:201) listed active listening as a necessity in conflict management. Hermann, et al (1997:225) identified dialogue, especially taking the time to listen, as a key factor in developing mutual respect and in resolving conflict among people with different world views. The singular act of giving people full attention as they talk develops a confidence and trust between employer and employee.

3.4.5.2 Ask for clarification

To ensure understanding, the leader needs to ask for clarification when giving directions. Barnabas stated this succinctly: *“The leader also has to ask for clarification, once an order has been given or a procedure has been explained. It’s important for the leader to go back and seek clarification to make sure that people have understood what has been said.”*

Successful communication occurs when the message receiver produces appropriate feedback. Robbins (2001:286) described feedback as the check on whether or not the original intent of the message was received and understood. While listening for feedback, the communicator needs to tune into the paramessages, as well as the

primary message, of the receptor. Paramessages are nonverbal forms of communication, which tend to be a more honest indicator of understanding. Thus, when a paramessage contradicts the words of a primary message, people tend to place more trust in the paramessage (Steyn, 2001a:51).

Rutter (1996:24) commented that any message can be garbled through the sender's choice of words, the sender's meaning, or the message heard by the receiver. Seeking clarification through well crafted questions and through observation of paramessages minimizes the possibility of a garbled message.

3.4.5.3 Practise crystal clear communication styles

A competent leader practises clear communication styles with co-workers. Barnabas, the department supervisor, had already discovered this truth: *"It behoves the leader to have clear communication styles. And the leader has to think through very carefully instructions that they give, less they be misinterpreted by the various members of staff."* Delyse, an employee, found it important to choose the right words when assisting someone. She said: *"I think you have to be very basic in your asking of questions or explaining."*

Abraham noticed that directions must be repeated at times before correct meaning is established. He observed: *"Sometimes you have to give the same advice three times, so that it's worded in different ways, so you recognize really what they're talking about. As opposed to being able to, or knowing that you have direct communication."*

The responsibility for giving clear instructions lies with the leader. In a multicultural organisation, a leader has to become sensitive to cultural issues, along with a variety of personal issues, to communicate effectively. Because the productivity of the work place depends on communication skills, a leader must sharpen her ability to communicate in a clear and straight-forward manner. Steyn (1996:42) set forth five principles of effective communication:

1. Keep the message simple, using direct and simple language.
2. Keep the message clear and concise, so that instructions are understood.
3. Deliver the message at a time when the receptor is most receptive.
4. Give the message at a speed which will assist the receptor in understanding.
5. Minimize the use of junk words that detract from the primary message.

Perhaps a sixth principle needs to be added to this list: Repeat the message several times, until the receptor grasps the intended meaning. Kale and McCullough (2003:103) support the repetition of a message, as a way to ensure that people receive accurate information. Redundancy could be a key to communication, particularly in cross-cultural situations.

Kale and McCullough (2003:103) said: “Hundreds of years ago, a Roman rhetorician said the crucial question is not whether your message can be understood but whether it can be misunderstood.” The leader needs to develop a clear communication style that employees can understand and respond positively to.

3.4.5.4 Be flexible in the choice of communication styles

A leader needs to be flexible in choosing communication styles which are appropriate for individual workers. Barnabas explained the following from personal experience: *“I will have to be more patient and more didactic with certain members of staff. With other members of staff, I can just say a word or two, and they will take it and run with it. So, some I can be very directive with, some I have to be instructional, and so I have to change communication styles...There are times when, you know, when something is very urgent and very pressing that I can be very directive.”*

Barnabas seems to practise the art of adjusting styles of communication according to the experience, competence, and length of employment of the employee. When working with a new member of staff, Barnabas understands the importance of being didactic. In that capacity, Barnabas believes that new employees need more patience and specific instructions for a task. Barnabas has also discovered that some members of staff need only minimal instruction to complete a task. A lengthy, didactic approach with such employees would frustrate the people rather than help them. Barnabas knows his employees and endeavours to adjust his communication style to match the person.

3.4.5.5 *Take time to heal*

Because of the painful nature of some conflicts, leaders and employees may need to take time to heal before trying to resolve the conflict. Paul stated: *“Take time to heal, and when the bosses come, and then we just clarify the air, and found out there was not even a conflict in the first place. It was just a miscommunicating and misunderstanding on both parties. So, had I tried to solve the situation, or tried to solve the conflict, it would have just made matters even worse, and created more conflicts.”*

In these comments, Paul identified an important principle. Because many conflicts are multi-dimensional, it is sometimes difficult to isolate the key source of the conflict. Too much conversation may bring more conflicting issues to the surface and escalate the conflict unnecessarily.

3.4.5.6 *Push the right buttons*

There are times when a leader must ‘push the right buttons,’ which means that the leader may need to ask questions about controversial or emotional topics. Paul mentioned this principle: *“The second method I’m saying is you have got to press a few buttons, but be careful what buttons you press.”*

People in conflict need the opportunity to air their grievances; however, a leader must be cautious when granting an individual this opportunity. Robbins (2001:386)

cautioned that too little or too much communication may increase the likelihood of conflict. Mayer (2000:115) said that a conflict resolver must address the needs of people at an appropriate level of depth. In other words, the leader must endeavour to solve the needs of the present situation, without delving into deeper emotional wounds.

3.4.6 Provide adequate recognition

A leader needs to be creative in providing adequate recognition for each employee. Abraham used the image of a crown as an excellent metaphor for recognition. *“Crown everybody with something special---something they can be responsible for---something they know they’re going to be the best at---something they know the whole organisation is going to rely on them for. Then crown everybody and tell everybody what the crowns are.”*

Furthermore, Abraham made several observations about the nature of the crowns. His comments were especially appropriate for a multicultural organisation. He said: *“In some cultures, in the white culture particularly, you give people a title, because it is prestige in the cultural community. Now if you know the culture well enough to hand out perks, like if you can give a certificate to an employee in this culture to take home and put on the wall, then he’s getting perks from his family and from the community leaders and from everybody else.”*

Abraham expressed the importance of giving everyone a chance to be crowned. Steyn (2001c:58) suggested that a leader needs to “become a detective” and discover the contributions of each employee. It is a way of acknowledging the strengths of individuals in specific job-related abilities (Hill, et al, 2002:41). Eventually, everyone in the organisation becomes aware of the meaning of the crown and may even seek out the expert when there is a problem to be solved. In a multicultural organisation, a leader can make the crowns more meaningful by making them culturally significant. According to Abraham, a crown has a wide-reaching effect on the employee’s family and on the community.

Rewards have several forms in the work place. Weider-Hatfield and Hatfield (1996:196) placed rewards into four categories:

1. System rewards, which include salary and benefits;
2. Job rewards, which tend to be intrinsically related to meaningful work;
3. Performance rewards, which provide a sense of achievement;
4. Interpersonal rewards, which link employees together with a sense of belonging.

A leader’s choice of management style determines how or if the employees experience these rewards. Collaborating strategies of management produce productive relationships in the organisation, causing workers to feel a sense of interpersonal rewards and performance rewards (Weider-Hatfield & Hatfield, 1996:203).

Recognition is an important tool for motivating the workforce to perform at their best. For the employee, recognition may increase job satisfaction and a greater commitment to the organisation. For the organisation, recognition has the potential for increasing productivity and creativity for job-related issues.

Although leaders strive to practise positive skills of conflict management, there are times when serious conflicts require resolution.

3.5 CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Most conflicts originate over basic human needs that are perceived as being in jeopardy. Conflict resolution is a process of transformation in which the resulting outcomes satisfy the basic needs of all the involved parties (Fisher, 1997:32). The process of conflict resolution should also promote cooperation among the workforce (Augsburger, 1992:63).

This section first reviews the following five styles of handling conflict (cf. Figure 3.2): Forcing, problem solving, avoiding, accommodating and compromising. Because participants specifically referred to confrontation and mediation, these two subjects are discussed separately. The last two sections consider the positive outcomes and the negative outcomes of conflict resolution.

3.5.1 Management styles

A manager's style of handling conflict generally proceeds in a context that tends toward competition or cooperation. These contextual issues influence the perception of conflicts along with the strategies chosen to resolve the conflicts (Johnson & Johnson, 1996:470). Nicotera (1994:600) claimed that leaders may choose different conflict management strategies in different situations, or leaders may shift to a different strategy within a given situation.

According to a literature review on conflict management done by Johnson (1994:715), Blake and Mouton (1964) are credited with first defining five management styles using a two-dimensional grid: concern for people and concern for production. Rahim (1983:368-369) redefined the dimensions as concern for self (competitive) and concern for others (cooperative). Steyn (2001b:72) used the two-dimensional grid developed by Ken Thomas, which identifies the two dimensions as being assertive/unassertive or cooperative/uncooperative. Assertiveness measures an attempt to satisfy the needs of the organisation, and cooperation measures an attempt to satisfy subordinate needs. The resulting management styles are: forcing, problem solving, avoiding, accommodating and compromising. Figure 3.2 is taken from Steyn (2001b:72):

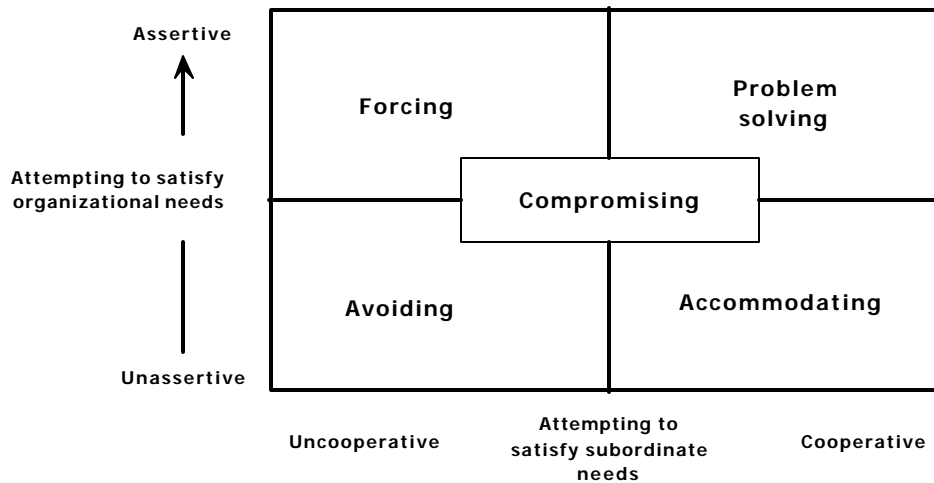


Figure 3.2 Five management styles (Steyn, 2001b:72)

3.5.1.1 Problem solving

Barnabas, the head of the department, described his leadership style: *“My leadership style in general is pretty laid back, and I am not a strongly directive person. I lead primarily through relationships.”*

Barnabas had to be absent from the office for a four month assignment in the United States. In his absence, Paul took some of the leadership responsibility in a conflict situation. He remarked: *“I always consider myself to be a leader and I’ve got to assess the situation before I even help with the conflict resolution. And as a result, I heard both sides...And there was a bit of animosity for a few days, but the way I handled it was the ‘silence’ mechanism. Sometimes when conflict arises in situations like this, and where you love both the people and you know both the people, and you can’t give a direct or a positive answer to solve the situation. We can’t have answers for everything.”*

It was interesting for the researcher to note that both men tended toward a problem solving style of conflict management. Barnabas and Paul listened to the concerns of both parties and attempted to find a mutually satisfying solution to the conflict issue. Because of the emphasis on cooperation, problem solving is usually the most effective way to manage a conflict (Steyn, 2001b:74). The results of this problem solving style often include the perception that conflict management is constructive, and leads to better cooperation with the superior on future tasks (Weider-Hatfield & Hatfield, 1996:193).

3.5.1.2 Forcing

The conflict management type called ‘forcing’ is the use of authority to resolve a conflict. Dana (2001:49) refers to this style as a power play. According to Steyn (2001b:72), the leader sometimes exerts his authority in the form of rewards, threat of punishment, bribery or physical force.

3.5.1.3 Avoiding

The avoiding style of conflict management is considered to be unassertive and uncooperative. Dana (2001:49) labels avoiding as distancing, saying: “Its purpose is to ensure our safety by avoiding contact with our adversaries.”

3.5.1.4 Accommodating

Accommodating is sometimes called the ‘smoothing’ style of conflict management. It usually focuses on solving the conflict by satisfying the other person’s needs (Mayer, 2000:30).

3.5.1.5 Compromising

Compromising is a method of solving conflict through ‘bargaining.’ Mayer (2000:30) described compromising as “directed toward sharing losses and gains jointly.” Steyn (2001b:73) said that it is useful when there is a balance of power between the individuals or when limited resources have to be shared.

3.5.2 Two alternative conflict management styles

Participants referred to the use of confrontation and mediation. Those two alternative conflict management strategies are discussed here.

3.5.2.1 Confrontation

Barnabas chose to use confrontation with one member of his staff. He said: “*I confronted him. I talked to him very straight about what he had done, why it had been a problem, and a better way to deal with it.*” Barnabas went on to explain the response of the employee: “*His response was accepting...He apologized and the*

relationship was not damaged. That's another thing I respect about him. He can be very confrontational and very straightforward when he wants to be, but once the conflict is dealt with, it is not taken as a personal affront." It is possible that the use of confrontation reflected the cultural background of Barnabas. Augsburg (1992:40) claimed that Western culture prizes confrontation when working with a conflict situation.

Many leaders are flexible in their strategies of conflict management. Mayer (2000:41) commented that people often vary their styles according to the circumstances; however, he went on to say that people usually have a characteristic approach when handling a conflict. One of the conclusions that Hughes and Robertson (1980:14) came to after a study of conflict situations was that the choice of conflict management strategy largely determines whether the outcome of a conflict will be constructive or destructive.

3.5.2.2 Mediation

Mediation, or third-party intervention, is another tool that is useful in constructive conflict management. According to Jill, third-party intervention is the preferable way to resolve a conflict in her culture. She said: *"Yeah, I will talk to a friend and the friend will come to you and talk to you on my behalf. And talking to you on my behalf, meaning maybe you are going to be open maybe to say: 'Ah, I didn't want that like this.'* Then it is going to be up to you to tell my friend: *'Okay, can you call*

him and tell him if we can come together?’ Me, and my friend, and you will sit down and resolve our conflict.”

Dana (2001:14) defined mediation as a process of conflict resolution where a neutral third party helps people in conflict find solutions to difficult issues. In other words, a third person helps to clarify the issues and reconcile the interests of the disputants. Rubin (1994:40) commented that there are many situations which require outside assistance.

Third party intervention tends to be more common in non-Western cultures, though research seems to indicate an increase of mediation in Western cultures. Lingenfelter and Mayers (2001:113) discussed the importance of mediation, as opposed to confrontation, in a non-Western culture, by saying that mediation helps “...to build relationships or to repair the breaches that conflict has torn in the fabric of social relations.” Referring to a Western culture, Drake and Donohue (1996:306) concurred with Lingenfelter and Mayers by reporting that a mediator can sometimes build trust and reduce antagonism through creating a cooperative climate.

Conflict resolution may have positive or negative outcomes for the individuals and for the organisation.

3.6 OUTCOMES OF CONFLICT

3.6.1 Positive outcomes

It is possible for conflict resolution to result in positive outcomes. Delyse discovered a new understanding of her co-worker as a result of the resolution of a conflict: *“But now there is no more tension, nothing like that. And I think we understand each other much better now. Maybe it takes something like that to make you think. It made me think anyway.”* Jill also felt that the outcome of a conflict was helpful, and she felt that she had learned new ways to resolve conflicts. She stated: *“I think...can you say it [the conflict] was helpful? It was helpful for me in the sense that now I, you know, at least I know how to behave myself toward my co-workers, and when we have conflicts, how to resolve them...Although it was hurtful at first, but now I took it as helpful to me.”*

Paul talked of a conflict which involved culture and race. Although those are especially sensitive areas, he felt that the conflict was resolved in a positive way: *“Okay, let’s put it this way, the way the boss and I handled it, did give us positive results. Had we handled it in a very different light, it would have given us negative results, because we are dealing with deep, emotional areas here as far as culture and race is concerned.”*

Conflict situations often result in a positive synergy that affects personal and job-related relationships. Day-Vines, Day-Hairston, Carruthers, Wall and Lupton-Smith

(1996:407) stated that people must learn that differences are not deficiencies, but are alternate ways of experiencing the world.

The outcome of a conflict affects the productivity and the future of the organisation. Abraham addressed this issue: *“So, conflict is good if there is a win-win situation for the organisation. Not necessarily a win-win for the two people involved. Win-win may get one fired, and that’s still good for the organisation. So, it’s the productivity of the organisation has to over-rule the personal interests of the individuals.”*

Beneficial results are most likely to be realized if a conflict is resolved in a win-win way. This is made possible when creativity is used to generate alternatives, to choose correct conflict strategies, and to involve the right people (Grab, 1996:35). Simerly (1998:3) said that a new term used in organisational theory is “satisficing decisions,” which are procedures which will bring sensible solutions to a conflict when it becomes impossible to satisfy everyone.

In the end, however, conflict resolution is used to help an organisation accomplish its goals. Robbins (2001:394) predicted that the increase of cultural diversity among employees should provide benefits to an organisation. Piturro and Mahoney (1992:15) claimed that diversity can result in increased morale and productivity among employees, plus providing a greater competitive edge in the global environment for the organisation. The way an organisation manages the changing demographics of its workforce will determine employee morale and productivity, as well as the success of the organisation (Tan, et al, 1996:54).

3.6.2 Negative outcomes

Conflict resolution sometimes yields negative outcomes. According to Abraham, some people refuse to cooperate. He commented: *“In our society...any society...there are always some people, who through some pain in the past, or some personal personality or character are difficult to be a team player.”* Abraham continued: *“It can be a hurtful situation if it’s allowed to exist. And so, if its repetitive conflict, that means it is being allowed to exist...It means somebody is not learning something. Somebody is not adjusting.”*

Muhe described another hurtful conflict: *“Because there was a time she was almost resigning. It was very hard. And I saw [person] A talking to somebody else about [person] B. And she...(Personal comment. Muhe showed the researcher the spitting gesture which A had used, in referring to B.) I saw it with my eyes.”* As a result of that encounter, Muhe said of conflicts: *“I think sometimes they are not good.”*

The process of conflicts, as well as the outcomes, can be costly to the organisation.

Dana (2001:18) provided a comprehensive list of the costs of conflict:

1. Wasted time;
2. Bad decisions;
3. Lost employees;
4. Unnecessary restructuring;
5. Sabotage, theft, damage;

6. Lowered job motivation;
7. Lost work time;
8. Health costs.

Besides being costly to the organisation, each conflict episode affects the relationships among the employees of the organisation. If the participants are satisfied with the resolution, relationships of cooperation are strengthened. Conflicts not solved satisfactorily may produce violence, labour strikes or court action. Dana (2001:33) commented: "...companies can often avoid the headaches of labour strife by managing conflicts effectively when they are informal clashes, before they escalate into formal disputes."

Conflict in an organisation may be functional or dysfunctional (Robbins, 2001:385). The difference between the two is due to the amount of conflict, the time spent handling the conflict, and the style of management. While functional conflict stimulates the organisation and increases productivity, dysfunctional conflict has a negative effect on communication, interactions among employees and employers and problem solving (Johnson & Evans, 1997:42).

3.7 CONCLUSION

The following words by Muhe captured the essence of this study: *"In any company, you have to learn from scratch. This is what I used to say, if you go into a house, you*

learn how they clean their cups. Then you know how to clean yours, but you have to learn how they clean theirs.”

When entering a new company or culture or relationship, a person must be a ‘learner.’ That means that the person must be ready to observe and listen carefully, then be willing to be flexible and change. That is also the key in effective conflict resolution.

This chapter was a summary of the findings of the qualitative research done in one department of a multicultural organisation. The chapter explored a definition of conflict, sources of conflict, the management of conflict and the resolution of conflict. The section on conflict management specifically discussed the role of a leader. The leader has the responsibility to choose strategies of conflict management and to learn new skills for cross-cultural effectiveness.

The following observation by Weaver (1995:24) concludes this chapter:

“We might assume that just bringing adults together from various cultures and allowing them to interact with each other will decrease misunderstanding. Their cultural differences will eventually become less important or disappear. In fact, exactly the opposite is true.”

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When I think of what has helped me bridge cultural gaps, it is more than just sensitivity; it is enjoyment of the differences, even when they arise in conflicts.

(Mayer, 2000:87)

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The influence of diverse cultures is having a major impact on relationships in every type of organisation, including industries and schools. This cross-cultural phenomenon affects communication, causing confusion and often producing conflict among the workforce. It is therefore important for people to have a clear understanding of the process of communication and to know the sources of cross-cultural conflict.

Cross-cultural conflicts may have positive or negative results, according to how the conflicts are managed. This factor makes it necessary to investigate the styles of conflict management with the purpose of determining which styles facilitate productive results for the organisation. It is also critical for those in leadership roles to develop new skills for handling the complexities caused by different cultures, to mentor other people in diversity training and to turn the problems of diversity into new sources of strength for the organisation.

4.2 SUMMARY

The purpose of this study was to discover new ways for cross-cultural conflict to be managed effectively in a multicultural organisation (section 1.2.1). As indicated in section 1.2.2, the researcher first defined the concept of cross-cultural conflict, then identified the sources of such conflict and finally determined interactive factors which could produce positive results from a conflict. The study included an investigation of the role of leadership in managing conflict. While looking at the leadership role, the study considered types of conflict management which are most effective in a cross-cultural setting, and skills which a leader can develop to increase his sensitivity to the effect of cultural backgrounds on conflict situations (section 1.2.2).

The phenomenological method of inquiry was used during the empirical research. Accordingly, the researcher began each interview with the following request: Describe a conflict you have experienced in this organisation. This section gives a summary of the formulation and results of the research, as indicated in each chapter.

Chapter one provides the basis for the study. Section 1.1 explains the background to the study and the motivation for pursuing answers to the problem of cross-cultural conflict in a multicultural organisation. After conducting a literature review using primary and secondary sources, a research question was formulated (section 1.2.1) and the aims of the study were clearly defined (section 1.2.2). The field of study was

delimited to one department in a multicultural organisation in South Africa (section 1.4.2).

In chapter two the elements of the qualitative methodology are elucidated with an emphasis on the phenomenological approach to inquiry (section 2.1). This approach was chosen after considering the historical foundation of qualitative inquiry (section 2.2.1.1), by comparing its advantages and disadvantages with the quantitative methodology (section 2.2.1.2), and through an understanding of the concept of 'verstehen' (section 2.2.1.3). Next, the role of the researcher was defined as the main instrument for the collection of data (section 2.2.3.1). The ethical responsibilities of the researcher were given in section 2.2.3.2, along with an explanation of the precautions used in this study to protect the rights of the participants (section 2.2.3.2).

The data collection process was explained in chapter two (section 2.3). The literature review gave information on how to select a sample which would yield rich, in-depth data (section 2.3.1.1). For this study, the researcher chose to use purposive sampling (section 2.3.1.2). Section 2.3.1.2 includes a complete description of the participants, using their pseudonyms in table 2.1. The analysis of data for qualitative research requires a careful description of the setting, because the researcher observes the participant within a specific context (section 2.3.1.3). The sample setting for this project is given in section 2.3.1.4.

Chapter two includes information on the length of fieldwork (section 2.3.2) and methods used in fieldwork (section 2.3.3). Because the researcher chose to use

interviews for this study, the theory behind the use of interviews was given in section 2.3.3.1. Following the section on theory, the researcher explains that the informal conversational style of interview was employed in this study (section 2.3.3.2). The informal conversational style is preferred when using the phenomenological methodology (section 2.3.3.2). Fieldwork tools are described in section 2.3.4, with a literature study on the effective use of questions in an interview (section 2.3.4.1), a section on the importance of maintaining a journal of field notes (section 2.3.4.2) and an explanation of the use of a tape recorder for an accurate record of the interviews (section 2.3.4.3).

Chapter two indicates that data analysis and interpretation are ongoing processes, as the researcher interviews the participants (section 2.4.1). At the conclusion of the interviews, however, the researcher must use a systematic method to study, sort and analyze the data (section 2.4.2). Section 2.4.2 gives a complete description of the method used in this study to identify relevant themes and to code the transcripts of the interviews. The researcher then interprets the results of the data by using the emerging themes of the interviews and comparing them to theoretical insights from literature (section 2.4.3).

The validity and reliability of a study are discussed in sections 2.5.1 and 2.5.2. An alternative model for measuring the merit of a qualitative study is Guba's model of trustworthiness (section 2.5.3). The four strategies considered in Guba's model are credibility (section 2.5.3.1), transferability (section 2.5.3.2), dependability (section

2.5.3.3) and confirmability (section 2.5.3.4). These strategies are applied to this study.

Chapter two concludes with an examination of the limitations of the research (section 2.6). The general limitations of the qualitative methodology are discussed in section 2.6.1, and the specific limitations of this cross-cultural study are stated in 2.6.2.

Chapter three records the emerging themes found in this study through a careful analysis and interpretation of the data. The first theme to be considered was a definition of conflict, as described by the participants (section 3.2). It was noted through the data analysis that participants were reluctant to label a difficult situation as a conflict (section 3.2). Section 3.2 also considered the multi-dimensional aspect of conflicts.

Section 3.3 lists the six sources of conflict found in the data analysis. The six sources are: the communication process; anger, tears and frustration; the historical dimension; the inner value system; the organisational structure; and, the human needs which drive individuals (section 3.3). These coincide with the sources of conflict identified by Mayer (2000:16) and shown on his wheel of conflict (cf figure 3.1).

The first source of conflict is the communication process (section 3.3.1). Communication in a cross-cultural situation is dependent on the proper use of language (section 3.3.1.1), an understanding of the effects of perception (section 3.3.1.2), a knowledge of the role of ethnocentrism (section 3.3.1.3) and the ability to

identify personal stereotypes (section 3.3.1.4). The intensity of emotions aroused in a conflict situation may include elements of anger, tears and frustration (section 3.3.2). Thus, the display of these emotions is the second source of conflict (section 3.3.2). The role of history was evident as the third source of conflict (section 3.3.3). Cultural and racial biases may be embedded in the history of the social context, either in the organisation or in the country (section 3.3.3). The inner value system of an individual is the fourth source of conflict (section 3.3.4). The fifth source of conflict is the organisational structure of the work place (section 3.3.5), which includes the distribution of work responsibilities in the work place (section 3.3.5.1) and the change factors within the organisation (section 3.3.5.2). The final source of conflict is the human needs which drive an individual (section 3.3.6). The needs defined by the participants of this study were: The need for employment (section 3.3.6.1); the need for daily security and future security (section 3.3.6.2); the need to be part of the team (section 3.3.6.3); the need for a positive 'report card' (section 3.3.6.4); and the need for self fulfilment (section 3.3.6.5).

Conflict management is the theme discussed in section 3.4. A leader can practise skills of purposeful intervention for conflict situations (section 3.4). The most useful skills for cross-cultural conflict are: empathize with employees (section 3.4.1); develop multiple perspectives (section 3.4.2); suspend judgment (section 3.4.3); mentor employees (section 3.4.4); learn communication skills (section 3.4.5); and provide adequate recognition (section 3.4.6). Specific communication skills (section 3.4.5) needed by the leader are: listen with both ears (section 3.4.5.1); ask for clarification (section 3.4.5.2); practise crystal clear communication styles (section

3.4.5.3); be flexible in the choice of communication styles (section 3.4.5.4); take time to heal (section 3.4.5.5); and push the right buttons (section 3.4.5.6).

Chapter three reviews the art of conflict resolution (section 3.5). The five types of management styles are diagrammed in figure 3.2 (section 3.5.1). An emphasis was placed on the integrative style of conflict management, because that style was evident in the conflict resolution attempts of two participants (section 3.5.1). The two alternative conflict management styles discussed in section 3.5.2 are confrontation (section 3.5.2.1) and mediation (section 3.5.2.2).

As stated in section 3.6, it is possible for conflict to be resolved in a positive way (section 3.6.1); however, at times conflict may have negative consequences (section 3.6.2). Negative outcomes affect the organisation as well as the individual (section 3.6.2).

Chapter four gives the summary of the chapters (sections 4.2, 4.2.1, 4.2.2, 4.2.3, 4.2.4). Then the conclusions are given (section 4.3), as found in literature (section 4.3.1) and as discovered through empirical investigation (section 4.3.2). The researcher proposed several recommendations in section 4.4, recommendations for further research were noted in section 4.5 and the concluding remarks of the study were given in section 4.6

The findings of this study leads to certain conclusions.

4.3 CONCLUSIONS

4.3.1 Conclusions from literature

Studies on cross-cultural conflict resolution are expanding rapidly because of its importance in every aspect of society. The following conclusions are drawn from the literature review.

4.3.1.1 Diversity in the workforce and potential for conflict

Issues of diversity are multi-dimensional, encompassing culture, race, gender, disabilities, religious belief, sexual orientation and economic status. The prevalence of these issues makes diversity a management issue which can create new strengths in the business or break the business through strife and lawsuits (Barbian, 2003:45).

4.3.1.2 Cultural differences as source of conflict and misunderstandings in the work place

Cross-cultural communication often produces uncertainty and confusion among co-workers. As people act on personal assumptions, the potential for conflict increases. Employees need new social skills, as well as cultural information, to effectively work with each other. These skills include active listening techniques, the ability to empathize with others and the ability to develop multiple perspectives (Roerden, 2001:27). Ewert (2000:30) suggests that employees need tools of cultural analysis,

along with specific cultural information, to help them understand cross-cultural interactions. Ewert (2000:31) states: “Understanding does not inevitably lead to harmony, but it is a necessary pre-condition.”

4.3.1.3 Problem solving as preferred conflict management style in a cross-cultural organisation

The way conflicts are negotiated reflects the values and norms of a culture (Medina, Lozano & Goudena, 2001:159). Therefore, it is necessary for managers to learn how to problem solve or collaborate across cultural lines (Mor Barak, 2000:350).

Five management styles were diagrammed in Figure 3.2. According to Steyn (2001b:74), problem solving is considered to be the most effective type of conflict management. After completing a study on cross-cultural differences in conflict styles, Cai and Fink (2002:76) also found that integrating or problem solving, was preferred.

4.3.1.4 Good communication skills as key for cross-cultural management

Cross-cultural managers need to know and understand the communication process in order to express themselves effectively. Communication skills assist people in presenting ideas, in settling conflicts and in mentoring others (Bergeron, 2000:38). Harris and Kumra (2000:604) indicate the importance of ‘soft’ skills, such as communication and negotiation, in the portfolio of international managers. While defining intercultural communication, Kramsch (2002:275) states that “bridges of

tolerance’ are necessary between diverse cultures. The main obstacles to building bridges of tolerance are the presence of prejudice and discrimination (Mor Barak, 2000:345); however, the foundations of those bridges are laid through positive communication skills, particularly active listening techniques (Arai, et al, 2001:447; Chesler & Zuniga, 1991:180; Lupi & Tong, 2001:165).

4.3.1.5 The cost of conflict

Conflict is costly for an organisation, if not managed correctly. Although diversity in the work place presents a challenge, there are significant benefits to managing cross-cultural communication and conflict correctly (section 3.6.1 and 3.6.2). The organisation benefits through greater productivity and the employees benefit through increased job satisfaction.

The following conclusions are based on the rich, narrative data collected in this study.

4.3.2 Empirical conclusions

4.3.2.1 Multi-dimensional nature of conflict

Participants noted several factors which cause tension in the work place. These factors include culture, the addition of a new employee, age difference, length of employment and gender (section 3.2).

4.3.2.2 Conflict derived from many sources

The six sources of conflict found in this study are: the communication process (section 3.3.1); anger, tears and frustration (section 3.3.2); the historical dimension (section 3.3.3); the inner value system (section 3.3.4); the organisational structure (section 3.3.5); and the human needs which drive individuals (section 3.3.6).

4.3.2.3 Need for leaders to empathise with employees

Empathy is a critical issue in working across cultures (section 3.4.1). One of the participants, Abraham, asked the following question: *What are the motivations that keep people from giving their best?* To answer that question, a manager must understand the cultural values and needs of employees.

4.3.2.4 Leadership and the ability to develop multiple perspectives

To develop multiple perspectives, a leader has to first be aware of his personal views (section 3.4.2). From there he can begin to learn the multiple views of reality as experienced by the backgrounds, experiences and cultures of employees.

4.3.2.5 Leadership and the ability to suspend judgment

Suspending judgment requires a leader to remain in a state of ambiguity until further information is received (section 3.4.3). In a conflict situation, this assists the leader in

listening objectively to an employee or employees. Suspending judgment is especially necessary in a cross-cultural situation where the prior assumptions of the leader could prove incorrect.

4.3.2.6 Leadership and mentoring

Leaders have a responsibility to mentor employees of culturally dynamic organisations (section 3.4.4). Employees must first gain an awareness of personal values and beliefs. This gives people a heightened sensitivity to the cultural similarities and differences of others. This sensitivity does not happen automatically, though, it must be consciously learned through an ongoing process of education, training and mentoring.

4.3.2.7 Leadership and communication skills

Participants made many comments about the importance of good communication in the department (section 3.4.5). Employees want the leader to listen to them (section 3.4.5.1). The head of department, Barnabas, noted that he needs to ask for feedback after giving someone directions to make sure that the person understands (section 3.4.5.2). Participants gave several illustrations of times when communication was not clear (section 3.4.5.3). This can cause a misunderstanding among employees. Along with giving clear instructions, a leader may need to be flexible in the choice of communication styles (section 3.4.5.4). A leader who is sensitive to the needs of the employees can make correct adaptations to fit the current task and person. One of the

participants, Paul, said that leaders should take time to heal (section 3.4.5.5) and push the right buttons (section 3.4.5.6). These two issues require a leader to choose a correct response to a conflict, whether the response is to give people time to think the conflict through or if it is necessary for the leader to encourage dialogue.

4.3.2.8 Leadership and the provision of recognition for accomplishments

Recognition for a specific accomplishment is motivational for an employee and provides increased job satisfaction (section 3.4.6). This concept is in keeping with a comment by Abraham: *Crown everybody with something special.*

4.3.2.9 New mediation skills

Jill described third-party intervention as the most acceptable way to resolve a conflict in her culture. Her example was of an interpersonal conflict; however, the method could be applied to a conflict within an organisation as well (section 3.5.2.2).

4.3.3.0 Increased understanding of another culture

One of the most surprising and rewarding themes of the field study was that several participants expressed increased understanding of co-workers as a result of a conflict episode (section 3.6.1). This theme emerged early in the interviews, causing the researcher to more actively pursue it in subsequent interviews.

The conclusions from literature and the empirical conclusions led to the following recommendations.

4.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.4.1 The development of a three stage programme for the organisation

The researcher recommends the development of a three stage programme for the multicultural organisation which was studied. The programme would include all staff members from the top management to the security staff. The objective of the programme would be to explore cross-cultural issues of communication and conflict management. The following three stages are suggested:

1. An induction programme for new employees is critical. The researcher was involved in an induction programme for the multicultural organisation studied in this dissertation. The culture specific training provided in that induction programme proved to be beneficial to the participants.
2. A diversity training and conflict resolution seminar for the organisation would be stage two (sections 3.2 & 3.3). This seminar needs to involve the entire organisation.
3. Finally, a long-term plan for on-going training of cross-cultural issues and conflict resolution strategies is necessary (sections 3.3.1.1, 3.3.5.2, 3.4.2, 3.4.3, 3.4.4, 3.4.5, 3.5.1.1 & 3.5.2). The demographics within

the organisation continue to change, making the continuous renewal of cross-cultural knowledge and experiences a necessity.

4.4.2 The continuous development of conflict management strategies for leaders in the organisation

Although all staff members need to be familiar with conflict management strategies, the leaders in the organisation seem to need advanced training in this area. This recommendation is in response to the many conflicts experienced and observed in the organisation. It is also in keeping with findings of the literature review that leaders must continually sharpen their conflict management skills to ensure the best future for their organisation (Grab, 1996:34). Mayer (2000:86) adds that part of the learning process requires a leader to become familiar with unique cultural approaches toward conflict and communication.

Moreover, the following three recommendations for further research were determined.

4.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

4.5.1 Expansion of research to other contexts

The present study involved only one department of a multicultural organisation. It would be advantageous to expand this kind of research to include the other

departments. Furthermore, it would be helpful to compare the dynamics within two multicultural organisations.

4.5.2 Evaluation of diversity programmes

According to the literature review, diversity training programmes are still being developed (Arai, et al, 2001:453; Barbian, 2003:48; Gifford, Rhodes & Shelton, 2001:10; Harris & Kumra, 2000:612) . There is uncertainty concerning which elements should be included, the best way to teach the programme and an appropriate way to evaluate a programme.

4.5.3 Further research on cultural values

Cultural values are deeply embedded in the subconscious mind, yet affect all communication and behaviour. Cai and Wilson (2000:324) suggest that values make a difference in communication goals and in the quality of the communicated message. Although it is more difficult to identify values, it would be advantageous in the further development of cross-cultural communication skills.

4.6 CONCLUSION

This study employed the phenomenological methodology to identify the sources of conflict in a multicultural organisation. After identifying the sources of conflict, the study determined qualities of leadership which aid in minimizing conflict, and the

conflict management strategies which are most effective in cross-cultural episodes. The study also explored the positive and negative outcomes of conflict. Although many conflicts are costly to an organisation, some conflicts may assist people in cross-cultural understanding. The following statement by Mayer (2000:92-93) succinctly concludes this study: “The most serious conflicts in our world, with the gravest consequences, involve cross-cultural issues...Resolution must involve a new approach to interaction, in which the diversity of people becomes a source of strength and not a cause of tragedy.”

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APPENDIX 1

STATEMENT OF CONSENT

As part of a dissertation for the Masters of Education degree through the University of South Africa, I am conducting a limited research project entitled: “Dealing with cross-cultural conflict in a multicultural organisation: An education management perspective.”

To gain further understanding of this subject, I would like to interview the employees of this one department. These interviews will take the form of an unstructured discussion, which will be tape-recorded.

You are guaranteed complete anonymity during this project. At the time of the interview, you will be given a pseudonym. This is the name which shall be used on the tape recording and in the research paper. Although verbatim use will be made of comments recorded during the interview, the identity of participants will not be disclosed at any time. The name of this department and the organisation will also be protected.

The analysis of the data will be included in the dissertation and may be used in the future in articles published in professional journals.

If you are willing to participate in this interview, under these specific conditions,
please sign below to indicate your consent.

Participant:

Date:

APPENDIX 2

GENERAL INFORMATION: PARTICIPANTS

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Full names:

Pseudonym:

Gender:

Date of birth:

Marital status:

CULTURAL INFORMATION

Country of origin:

First language:

What languages are you able to speak?

PROFESSIONAL INFORMATION

Highest educational qualification:

Total number of years in full-time employment:

Date when you began working for this organisation (month, year):

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW WITH JILL

Interviewed on: 16 September, 2002

Transcribed on: 17 September, 2002

J: Okay, the question is, if you would describe a conflict that you have experienced in this organisation. And, uh, again, I just want to remind you that we won't use any names. So, if you want to assign like Person A, Person B, and Person C, then we will work with A, B and C, and generate information about it. But, it can be either a conflict or a misunderstanding or what you perceive as a misunderstanding. If there is something that you can describe to me.

Jill: You want to know the misunderstanding of me to what.....the people I am working with? Or the conflict that maybe I have experienced since I worked here?
Based on culture.

J: Yeah.

Jill: Okay, well, yes. (Laughter) Yes, I had once one big conflict or maybe I can say it was a misunderstanding. And I think it was basically on cultural things, in the sense that when I came to work here, well, my boss gave me my job description. And, all of

a sudden, when my boss is not in, someone who has got many years working here, used to come to me. According to me, I don't know whether I misunderstood or misinterpreted her or what. Because she used to come to me and ask: What are you working on? You see. And I asked myself: How can she ask me that? Because, I've got my job description. If you want to know what I'm working on today, better to go and look at my "to do" list or take my job description, and she will know what I am doing. You see?

J: Is there a job description? Or, I mean, is there a "to do" list somewhere?

Jill: Yeah, we do have our "to do" list. We give them to our boss, and then after our boss sign it, then I take it to our file. We do have a specific file for our "to do" list. Then, well, I was very angry at first, because I am black, she is white. I was angry, because it is like she doesn't have any trust to me. She thinks I cannot do my work best. And, well, I especially showed her that, you know, I am very angry and that I don't want that to happen anymore. Although, I cried. And then, after all, well, I kept quiet and I said: I'm not going to tell my boss about this. And I'm not going to tell anybody, but I said, no, let me talk to my colleagues and maybe they will help me. And mind you, my colleagues are from different cultural backgrounds, and I didn't know, maybe they will side with her, or side with me. So, I started to be conscious for that. But, anyway, I called them individually, and then I asked them.....

J: You mean on the telephone?

Jill: No, I called them to my office. And then they came to my office and I asked them if ever this thing has ever happened to them or maybe or maybe I am the first candidate to experience this. And then I found that, you know, one of my colleagues, experienced this and he reacted to this. And then, well, I asked their advice: How can they help me to handle matters? And because they are....they are Christians, they encouraged me go and pray and to love her. And then, well, I prayed for her and I told myself: I am not going to tell my boss. I will just have to resolve this matter between me and her without my boss being involved. Because, it's like, it is going to be something big. I think maybe it's going to go on like this. It is then that I will take it to my boss, but let me just handle it. Because, I could see that it is a conflict and it is based on the skin and maybe our background—our apartheid background, maybe. Then, well, I called her....I called the lady....I asked her: Do you have any problem with me? Or with my work? Because it is like you don't trust me. And she apologized, and said: No, no, no. There is nothing like that. There is nothing like that. I said: No, but the way you are following after me, any move that I make, you are just there on my footsteps.....It is like you don't have any trust to me. So, this thing makes me not to be comfortable with my work. Every time when I work, it is like I'm trembly. And you are looking at me. I want to be free when I do my work. So, can you tell me if you do have any problem with me? And she said: No, I don't have any problem. But I could see that, well, the problem might be that she undermines me because I'm black skinned by nature. But, anyway, I was positive. I had to be positive, and said: I have to love this person and show her that I can do my work without being monitored. And without being supervised. Because I am mature enough to take care of whatever. If I don't do my work, still my work will need me to

do it, because no one will ever come and fix it or do it for me. I just have to come and do it and make sure everything is complete. So, I think those are the little conflicts that I have. But, anyway, now, everything goes well. Everything is just super. Because I think that the thing is, it's because I sat down with her. Although, my boss came.....I don't know who told my boss....because he came to me and asked....I didn't even ask him, who told you this, because I don't want to come and tell. I didn't know. So, we were able to resolve everything, and everything was just super.

J: So, did you see the conflict as being hurtful or helpful?

Jill: I think.....can you say it was helpful? It was helpful for me. In the sense that now I, you know, at least I know how to behave myself toward my co-workers, and when we have conflicts, how to resolve them.

J: Oh, okay.

Jill: Although it was hurtful at first, but now I took it as helpful to me. It is very helpful, because now at least we are cautious when we go and ask something or talk to our colleagues. You go there with the spirit of wanting to help, not of wanting to spy.

J: So, did the conflict help you understand another culture? Or just another person?

Jill: It definitely helped me understand another person. I can't say that it helped me to understand culture, because it's like, well, I know that we are from different cultural backgrounds, but at the same time, since we are from the apartheid thing....

J: The history.....

Jill: The history, yes. Because the white people and the black people were not in a loggerhead before. So, whenever somebody do you something, you will just think of that thing, if ever he's white. But if ever it was black, I don't think I could have had a problem.

J: Oh, oh.

Jill: You see. Maybe if it was Muhe, I couldn't have had the problem. I couldn't have had the problem and said: Why do you ask me about this? You see. The fact that we have this mentality of....

(P.C. Jill kept referring to apartheid, but actually had a difficult time saying the word. She was almost embarrassed to say the word. Why is that?)

J: Yeah. It goes on affecting us. Of course. History does affect us.

J: So, now, this department is all different cultures.

Jill: Yeah.

J: Have you kind of learned new ways of...new lessons in communication?

Working with all the cultures?

Jill: Yeah. Yeah.

J: Can you express any of the things you have learned with that?

Jill: All right. What I have learned is that here, I am working with different people like, for instance, the Indians, the Afrikaaner, and another one from Africa. So, what I have learned is that the way the Indian people do their things is not the way my people do it. And the way the Afrikaaners take things..... Like for instance, in my culture, whenever you speak to someone that is older than you, you just have to..... Like for instance, I can't call you by a name and just say, "Joanie." But, my culture doesn't allow that.

J: Right. I understand.

Jill: It wants me to call you, like for instance, "mom" or "auntie" or you see. So, what I have learned is, yes, we do have different ways of approaching other people. Like, for instance, with the Indians, immediately he comes to you. Let me say, if he comes to you once, twice, and only to find someone that's older, someone doesn't show.....Like for instance, I can't say....I don't know how to put it....then he's just

getting out of you....and completely out.....and not coming to you and greet anymore,
or....being....

J: You mean when he comes, he just doesn't greet anybody?

Jill: He doesn't greet because maybe of the first impression he gave to you of him.

J: Oh, okay.

Jill: Yeah. And then with us, we do persist. If

J: Oh, yeah. That you will keep greeting.

Jill: Yeah, I will keep greeting. And I will keep.....unless maybe you stopped me.
Like you stopped me. Like for instance myself, I call my colleagues, using
“auntie....” For instance, one in my department I was just calling “auntie....” And
she said to me, I mustn't call her “auntie.” I just have to call her by name. But, it is
difficult with me. Sometimes instead of calling, I will just look at you...and until....I
will just look at you.....and I look in your eyes.

J: And not call you anything.....

Jill: And not call you anything. Because, at the end, I feel like I have done something
wrong. So, with some other cultures, I experience that, you know, it is not a problem.

J: But even greeting can be a problem among the cultures then. I mean, and like you say, the Indian....sometimes you are not sure why he doesn't greet you. Where....in your culture, do you think greeting is VERY important?

Jill: It is VERY important. It is very important. I cannot just pass you by.

J: Right. And what does it mean if I don't greet you?

Jill: For me it can mean, you know, that you are such a person who doesn't love me. A rude person. Or something of that nature. Someone who is not good at all.

J: I mean it is....it is that important. A greeting. In your culture....

Jill: In my culture it is very important. It is very important. Okay. So if someone doesn't greet you, then he gives you some question marks. Did I hurt him or her? Why does he not greet me?

J: That's a tough one. What are other issues that you have found here? Have there been other cultural issues? Greeting is an important one, but is there other issues not that you can describe to me that you kind of bumped into?

Jill: The other one is like, for instance, in my culture, if somebody is older....like for instance if they have a husband....if maybe I am old.....even if I am not old....if it can

happen that my husband dies.....there is no thing of getting involved in a.....you can get involved, but not getting married. So, the things that separate me is like the white culture, if your husband dies, you can get involved and get married soon.

J: Oh, I see.

Jill: With us, it has to take time to show that you are mourning for your husband....take 10....15....5 years to mourn for your husband before you can be involved. So, this is something that has, you know, shocked me. I am not used to this kind of thing. For us, it is like you don't love him enough. In some other cultures, they can even think that you are the one who killed him or her.

J: Yeah. Right. We have heard that, too.

Jill: That is one...that is part.... of the cultural things that I have learned. Well, anyhow, I don't learn them, because that is how they do their things.

J: So, do you feel like you are learning how to deal with other cultures?

Jill: Yeah, I am learning. I am learning.

J: But what is your secret. I mean, what is the best thing that you can do to deal with another culture? That YOU can do? You say you are learning, but do you have any suggestions to me....what is the best way to approach these other cultures?

Jill: Well, I think the best way to approach these other cultures is to.....to.....to.....learn more....of their, I don't know....yeah....to put it....

J: To learn their ways?

Jill: Yeah to learn their ways. And immediately you are well acquainted to how they do their things and how they live. And it is then that you are able to approach them with sensitivity.

J: Okay.

Jill: That's what I think, because it is not long I've been here. I am still learning. And I am learning how do they do their things, how do they respond....So, through learning, I think that this will give me the ability to approach them in the way that you don't hurt them.

J: Oh, okay. To find ways to be careful with their feelings.

Jill: Yeah, because I think in all the cultures, the way we do things is not the way other cultures do things. And sometimes we can do things, thinking that it's right, because it is right in your culture and in other cultures it's not right. So that is why it is very important to learn how people do their things so that you may not be a victim at the end of....hating them.

J: Okay now, explain to me, in your own culture, how would people in your own culture deal with a conflict? If there was a major conflict between you and someone else in your culture, now aside from this organisation, just somewhere else, how would that conflict be resolved? What would be the proper way of resolving it in your culture?

Jill: Okay, in my culture, if I've got a...a...a problem with someone, in my culture, what we do is, you can go to....you mean to resolve a conflict?

J: Yeah.

Jill: I will send someone. Let me say, if I have got a problem with you....

J: Okay, yeah, that would be good.

Jill: Yes, then I will ask maybe somebody to come to you and tell you that you have hurt me.

J: So, you would talk to a friend?

Jill: Yeah, I will talk to a friend and the friend will come to you and talk to you on my behalf. And talking to you on my behalf, meaning maybe you are going to be open maybe to say: "Ah, I didn't want that like this." Then it is going to be up to you

to tell my friend, “Okay, can you call him and tell him if we can come together?”

Me, and my friend, and you will sit down and resolve our conflict.

J: Oh, so now would I say to the friend, “This is the problem.” And then, would the friend come back to you and explain things to you? And yet, we would still all three have to sit down and talk about it?

Jill: Yeah, we will talk about it. If maybe you said, alright, it will depend....

J:on the issue....

Jill: Yes, on the issue. If maybe it’s okay, then we will just have the final general problem, I will in fact just tell you that I am sorry for what I have done. And when the friend comes and tell me, “no problem,” then I will just take it there.

J: And that will be the end of it?

Jill: That will be the end of it. But it will depend on the issue. And it will depend on you accepting that, yes, I have done this and I’m wrong. And if you feel that, you are not wrong, you can tell her to come and we sit down and I will tell you that I am not wrong for what I have done. It will depend on the issue.

J: But it would be acceptable for me to apologize to the friend, and the friend will bring my apology to you.

Jill: It's acceptable.

J: Then that will be the end of the conflict.

Jill: That would be the end of the conflict.

J: Which is quite different then, well for instance, my own culture. The western culture believes in going straight to someone.

Jill: Yeah, and even some of the African cultures believe in going straight to someone, and if after you have talked the truth, and then if we don't agree, then we stand up and call somebody. But with my culture, you go through to a friend first. You use the friend as a mediator.

J: So, have you ever tried that here? (P.C. Meaning in this organisation.)

Jill: I wanted to try, but I said, "no." That thing can kill me, that I must do that like....I must send someone to talk to my...my....my. Then I said, "No! I want to go by myself."

J: So, you chose to go against your culture?

Jill: Yes, I chose to go against my culture.

J: And confront.

Jill: And confront.

J: (Jill laughed.) Was that hard? Was it hard for you to go against your culture?

Jill: No, it wasn't hard for me, because it's like, as a Christian, I didn't have any problem. I knew that I am applying what is in the Word. And that if maybe we are not going to agree, it's then that I will call somebody to come in to intervene for us. But for now, I just have to go and confront. (Jill laughed.) Because one thing I believe, some of the cultural things, they are not good. And we cannot just take and apply them, because they are the culture. You just have to be selective. Most of these days that we are living in, we are studying....we are learning to do all these things. Then, we are changing.

J: Okay, so you find that you select from your culture.

Jill: Yes, I do select. Myself, I really do select.

J: Oh, and is that common for a young person? To be more selective of culture?

Jill: Is that?

J: Ah, is it more commonI mean, you are younger than me....

Jill: Yeah, it is common to the young people.

J: Yeah, that's what I wondered....if young people are more selective about culture?
They will choose this and choose that?

Jill: Yes. That is what we are doing these days.

J: Is it?

Jill: Yeah, but in those days, I don't think we were going to do that. But these days, because we are studying, and we are getting exposed to whites and to things. We are able to even reason by ourself....that's what I would like to say....we can like to reason, yes. We are selective. We don't just take anything.

J: Oh, okay. And is that....um....inside your own culture, do you find the older people disagree with being selective?

Jill: Yes, they do. They do disagree, but there is nothing they can do this time. Because these days we are able to read. And like for instance, in my case, I am a Christian. That way, I take the Bible as my source....as my manual for this life....what to be and what not to do. So, I take what the Word....what God directs me to do. Because, one thing most of with my culture, most of the things that are

there, they are contracted to the Word of God. (P.C. It appeared that Jill meant contrary, rather than contracted.)

J: Oh, you see it as contradictory.

Jill: Yes, they are one hundred percent contracted to.

J: And how much does education affect your culture?

Jill: (Laughter.) That's it. It's really affecting it. I can see it. It's affecting it.

J: Oh. In what way?

Jill: It's affecting it in the sense that most of the things that we do now is western. We do the modern things. Everything is getting modernized these days. So, that is why I'm saying that it's affecting it....like....what example can I give....I want to give an example. Ummm.....like for instance, in my culture, if like, maybe I am the last one in my family. My mother died. I was supposed to keep on the black things....the black clothes.....from the period my mother died until the next year. If my mother died February, then the next year February, I would put on those black things and go to the witchdoctors and do one, two, three, four. They say they are washing away the bad lucks. Those things, you see. So, there are some that are still doing that, but the young people don't want to do that anymore. You see. But, some, they are still believing on that. So, but some, we are not doing that, because it is

something a contradictory thing in a Christian, to connect with the Word of God.

Because you can't just do it by yourself, these days you have to go to somewhere, and

J: And they do it through a witchdoctor...

Jill: Yes. Can you see that? (Laughter.)

J: That's amazing. (More laughter.)

Jill: We can't do that anymore.

J: Oh, wow, that's amazing. Well, Jill, do you have anything else you want to just comment to. I think we have covered everything. Ummm...is there anything else you would like to add about working cross-culturally or anything that comes to mind?

Jill: Yeah, I think for me, it is very nice to work with people from different cultural backgrounds, because this way you will learn many things and you get exposed to good and bad things of each culture and that's good. I love it.

J: Yeah, I do, too.

Jill: (More laughter.) I love it, yeah. It's good to work with people from different cultural backgrounds. It also moulds your character and your behaviour.....how to behave to other people. And how to handle the, you know, the...the...the conflicts.

J: Even just talking.

Jill: Yes, you see so....

J: It doesn't have to be conflict. It's communication.

Jill: Yeah, everything. It's really very good for me, and I am enjoying it.

J: Do you know? I love it, too.