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A correlational study of dimensions of organizational conflict, management styles, and burnout among directors of special education in Virginia

Allan Fleming Livers
William & Mary - School of Education

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**A CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL
CONFLICT, MANAGEMENT STYLES, AND BURNOUT AMONG
DIRECTORS
OF SPECIAL EDUCATION IN VIRGINIA**

**A Dissertation
Presented to**

**The Faculty of the School of Education
The College of William & Mary in Virginia**

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

By

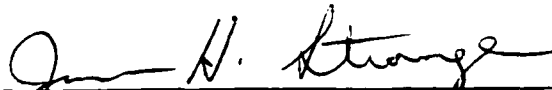
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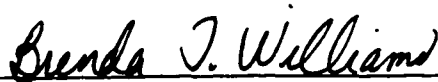
April 2003


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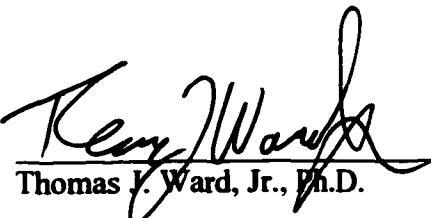
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those special people who have supported and encouraged me through the years. To my mother who never finished high school, and my father who never finished college, but in spite of this, (or perhaps because of it), instilled in me a thirst for learning and a desire to “be the best at whatever I decide to do.” To my wife, Charlene, who dealt with the challenges of raising a family and running a household on a very limited income, with an absentee husband, while I whiled away the evenings and weekends at the computer, or presented at yet another of those “educational conferences”. To my three young sons, Trey, Christopher and Ethan, who were never consulted before embarking on this program of studies, and never told of the sacrifices they too would have to make, but now proudly tell their friends “our dad’s going to be a doctor, but not the kind who helps anyone.” Most importantly, I give praise and thanks to my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace who resolves all conflict and relieves all stress, without whose support and strength I would have never made it this far.

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**A CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL
CONFLICT, MANAGEMENT STYLES AND BURNOUT AMONG
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if there are significant relationships among how directors of special education programs manage organizational conflict, where they experience this conflict, and the rate and intensity of burnout factors among those directors. Directors of special education programs in Virginia (N=139) were asked to complete the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) and the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventories (ROCI-I & II). Findings indicate that 69% of Virginia special education program administrators are either at risk of, or already suffering from, Emotional Exhaustion. However, they also report low levels of Depersonalization, and enjoy high levels of Personal Accomplishment. Overall, survey respondents experienced lower levels of conflict in all three dimensions examined (Intrapersonal, Intragroup and Intergroup) than did those in the norm reference group. Additionally, the conflict management style of Avoiding was found to correlate significantly across all three dimensions of Burnout as well as the Intergroup and Intrapersonal dimensions of conflict.

ALLAN FLEMING LIVERS, JR.

PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL POLICY, PLANNING AND LEADERSHIP

THE COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY IN VIRGINIA

**A CORRELATIONAL STUDY OF DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL
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Chapter 1: The Problem

Introduction

Conflict is inevitable. From the beginnings of recorded history, poets, philosophers and pundits alike have commented on the inevitability and the importance of conflict. Conflict is everywhere, and it can be a source for our greatest growth. Conflict exists wherever there is social interaction. It emerges as an outcome of interdependencies and interactions between and among people.

“I exhort you also to take part in the great combat, which is the combat of life, and greater than every other earthly conflict.” *Plato*

“The fibers of all things have their tension and are strained like the strings of an instrument.” *Henry David Thoreau*

“Humankind has understood history as a series of battles because, to this day, it regards conflict as the central facet of life.” *Chekhov*

“Perhaps no mightier conflict of mind occurs ever again in a lifetime than that first decision to unseat one's own tooth.” *Gene Fowler*

Although conflict of one sort or another is inevitable in organizations and in schools, it need not follow that organizational conflict leads to burnout. In some cases, however, conflict in organizations *may* lead to high levels of stress and resulting burnout.

The challenges facing those who have committed themselves to improving the education and lifelong success of children with special needs have never been greater. In the past decade, 49 states have adopted rigorous curriculum standards, resulting in a significant impact on special education policy and practice (Giacobbi, Livers,

Thayer-Smith, & Walther-Thomas, 2001). In this era of standards-based reform and high-stakes testing, the potential for conflict between special educators and parents, students, staff and other administrators, has greatly increased. Paramount among those making demands for improvement are the educators themselves. When faced with extreme stress, the basic physiological response has generally been one of “fight-or-flight.” Unfortunately, for most of civilized society, neither of these options is socially acceptable, forcing us to develop other coping mechanisms. Grossman (2001) identified two additional responses to extreme stress – “feed” (an unusual and sudden desire to eat) or “mate.” It is this last response that is customarily assumed to account for an increased birth rate following natural or manmade disasters (Grossman, 2001). Regardless of which response we chose, the nature of the coping strategies will determine, to a degree, whether or not the conflict leads to systemic improvement or to debilitating stress and burnout.

Conflict in Organizations

Conflict can be a product of social interaction in organizations. For example, various factions compete in seeking control over the allotment of limited resources, power and status. Additionally, conflict may result over matters of beliefs, preferences and desires. Goals in conflict run the gamut from simply seeking advantage over an opponent to the extreme case of eliminating an opponent (Rahim, 2000). The Bible tells a story in Genesis 4:3-8 about the oldest recorded incident of conflict leading to the elimination of one of the parties:

³And ... Cain brought an offering ... to the Lord. ⁴Abel also brought [an offering]. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering, ⁵but He did not

respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry and his countenance fell ... ⁸Now Cain talked with his brother Abel, and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against his brother and killed him (Holy Bible, 1995).

Conflict must be properly managed in organizations if the benefits are to be realized and to prevent the conflict from becoming dysfunctional i.e., conflict that hinders group performance, and destructive in nature to all parties involved. Conflict can be interpersonal or can stem from the structural characteristics of the organization. Sources of conflict include win-or-lose situations that reduce cooperation by fostering competition, incompatibility among the goals of organizational subunits, and concerns about status and authority. Reactions to conflict can include avoidance, limiting discussion to areas of agreement, forcing compliance with authoritative decisions, compromising, and collaboration. Strategies that can be employed in resolving conflict include increasing intergroup contacts, developing superordinate goals, and restructuring the organization (New Mexico Research and Study Council, 1983). The next section examines how burnout resulting from conflict can impact issues pertaining to school administrator retention.

Role of Burnout in Retention of Special Education Administrators

Often, the perception of an individual suffering from burnout is of one who was not very productive in the first place. Thus, the common misconception is that those who burn out were never fully vested in the profession of education. But research supports a different conclusion. Burnout is often the result of failing to meet unrealistically high goals educators have set for personal and student development.

That is, those who develop elaborate behavioral intervention plans and extensive classroom management schemes are most likely to suffer the effects of burnout caused by excessive stress (Dedrick & Raschke, 1990; Soy, 2002).

The term “burned-out administrator” may conjure up different images for different people. Some may see it as a special education administrator who has remained on the job in name only, well past his or her time of useful service. To others, it may describe somebody who simply drags through the day, oblivious of his or her surroundings, with little motivation or enthusiasm. For still others, the burned-out administrator is one who disparages every new idea, every effort to improve instruction, and every new personnel policy or classroom practice, as a complete waste of time (Dedrick & Raschke, 1990).

Much has been written on stress and burnout as these affect educators. Thus, a large body of literature addresses the stressors unique to those involved with special education, in particular teachers, and to a lesser extent, special education administrators. In their paper, *Burnout among special educators: A meta analysis*, Edmonson and Thompson (2000) noted: “Of the 470 primary studies initially identified by the search procedure, 230 were classified as actually addressing special educator burnout. Of these only 123 presented quantitative findings, and only 46 studies contained sufficient data for further quantitative synthesis [through meta-analysis]” (p. 14). In the next section we will review some of the prevailing theories of conflict that may impact burnout among special education administrators.

Theoretical Rationale for Conflict

There are several theories concerning the antecedents and maintaining circumstances for intergroup conflict. Three theories that have been most closely related to burnout and conflict in education include Realistic Conflict Theory, Social Identity Theory, and Contact Hypothesis (Craig, 2002).

Realistic Conflict Theory

Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT) is one of the oldest theories discussed in the intergroup conflict literature. According to RCT, conflict is due to the presence of incompatible goals between groups (Brown, Condor, Mathews, Wade, & Williams, 1986; Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998; Irvine & Baker, 1995; Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Sherif, 1966). Realistic conflict can be based on real competition for scarce resources (Bornstein, 1992; Esses et al., 1998), based on real threat between groups (Kinzel & Fisher, 1993), or be formally institutionalized by the organization (presented as being a competition) (Tajfel, 1982). Conflict is thought to increase as the competition for resources increases and there is more to gain from succeeding (Esses et al., 1998). The idea that as one group obtains more resources less is available for the other group is termed zero-sum beliefs (Esses et al., 1998). Of particular importance is that *actual* competition for resources does not need to exist for realistic conflict to arise, only *perceived* competition (Esses et al., 1998). Realistic conflict is thought to intensify in-group bias and out-group hostility, with the behaviors of the in-group towards the out-group becoming more uniform and variations in the behavior of the out-group being perceived less frequently (Alexander

& Levin, 1998; Brown et al., 1986; Tajfel, 1982). Kinzel and Fisher (1993) provided support for competition over scarce resources being the source of intergroup conflict.

Social Identity Theory

The Social Identity Theory (SIT) is based on the idea that people as individuals have a personal identity and as group members have a social identity (Irvine & Baker, 1995; Tajfel, 1982). The more people identify with a given group, the more likely they are to assume the characteristics of the group (be they favorable or unfavorable) as they develop a sense of who they are (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brown et al., 1986; Brown & Abrams, 1986; Irvine & Baker, 1995). Identifying with the group gives members a positive distinctiveness that leads to in-group bias and cohesion (Brown et al., 1986; Brown & Abrams, 1986; Irvine & Baker, 1995), and is also thought to enhance self-esteem (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). All of this can occur even in the absence of strong leadership or cohesion (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). That is, simply assigning someone to a group is enough to foster group identification (Alexander & Levin, 1998; Tajfel, 1982). During competition, the in-group bias grows stronger and differences with the out-group are emphasized (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Additionally, in-group bias is stronger if the two groups are similar (Ashforth & Mael, 1989; Brown & Abrams, 1986).

It is important to note that SIT was not developed as a theory to replace RCT, but to add to its explanation of intergroup conflict (Brown & Williams, 1984; Irvine & Baker, 1995). It is thought that the factors outlined under RCT exacerbate the naturally occurring situation outlined by SIT (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Van de Vliert

(1995) found support for this theory when case-study research revealed that group members' individual identities reflected the group identities.

Contact Hypothesis

Contact Hypothesis is the third major theory related to intergroup conflict. According to this theory, contact, or interaction, between members of different groups should lead to positive feelings about one another, which will in turn reduce conflict (Allport, 1954; Irvine & Baker, 1995; Nelson, 1989). Interaction between the groups is also thought to maintain the permeability of the boundaries between the groups and provide networks for conflict resolution (Nelson, 1989). In support of this theory, Nelson (1989) found low levels of conflict in organizations whose members had strong ties to members of other groups; however, the contacts generally needed to be purposeful and not random in order to be most effective. Contacts helped reduce conflict when a dominant group provided the channels of contact between other groups or if the contacts were arranged hierarchically. Similarly, the research team of Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe and Ropp (1997) found that cross-group friendships and the mere observation of cross-group friendships reduced in-group bias. Brown et al. (1986), however, found only a weak and inconsistent relationship between contact and differentiation with the out-group. The Contact Hypothesis is used to support many conflict-reduction programs (Alexander & Levin, 1998).

Statement of the Problem

Purposes of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine if a relationship exists between the way special education departments of local school districts deal with organizational

conflict and the prevalence of burnout experienced by the directors of special education programs in those districts. Specific research questions dealt with the general problem of special education administrator burnout and organizational conflict. The categories of burnout used in the research questions come from the works of Maslach and Jackson (1982). The dimensions of conflict and the styles of managing conflict were identified by Alphazhar Rahim (1983). The following section includes research questions and a research hypothesis that were addressed in the data analysis to be discussed later.

Research questions. Existence and prevalence of organizational conflict and burnout among special education administrators

1. To what degree does burnout exist among directors of special education programs in Virginia as measured by the variables of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA)?
2. How prevalent are the dimensions of Intrapersonal (IP), Intragroup (IG) and Intergroup (NG) conflict in the lives of directors of special education programs in Virginia?
3. To what degree do directors of special education programs in Virginia handle interpersonal conflict by Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV) or Compromising (CO) styles?
4. What is the relationship between the dimensions of conflict (IG, IP, NG) and the dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?

5. **What is the relationship between interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) and dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?**
6. **What is the relationship between interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) and dimensions of conflict (IG, NG, IP) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?**
7. **What is the relationship between dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA), the dimensions of conflict (IG, IP, NG), and interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?**

Research hypothesis. There is a significant correlation ($p < .05$) between the way directors of special education programs manage organizational conflict, the dimensions in which they experience conflict, and the rate and intensity of burnout factors among those directors.

The research questions were selected to address the correlations between the three main constructs of burnout, conflict management styles, and dimensions of conflict. The specific areas addressed by each of the research questions are displayed in Figure 1. The independent variables are associated with the conflict constructs, whereas the dependent variables are associated with burnout.

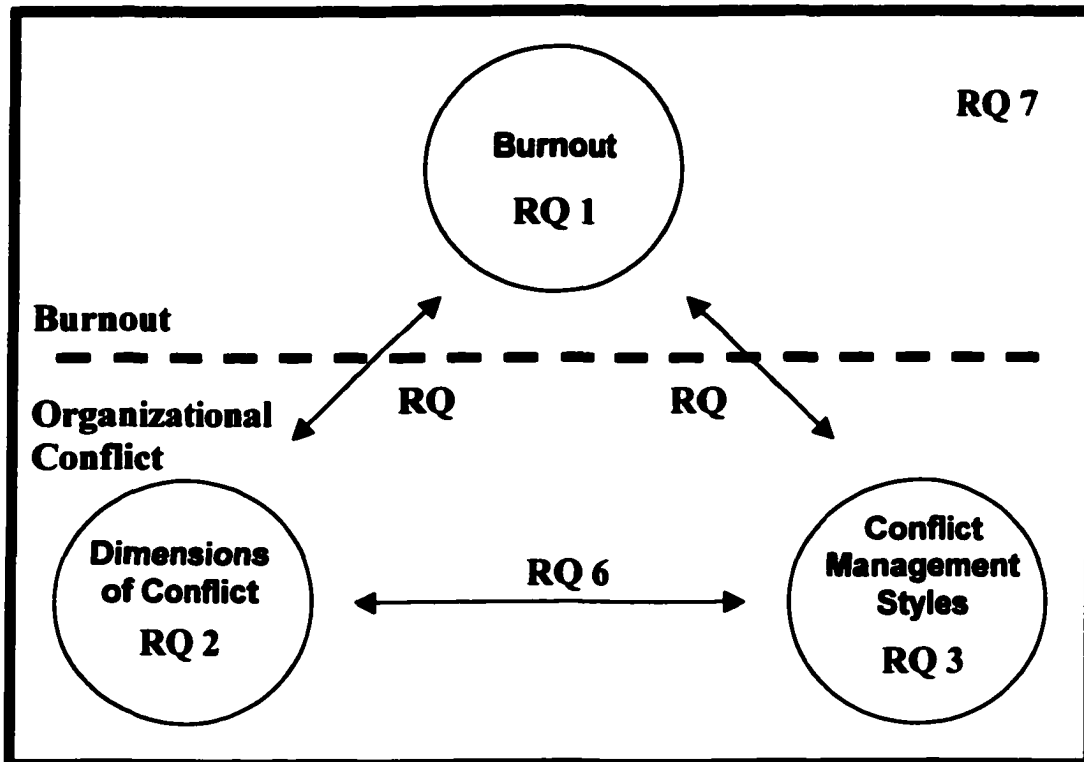


Figure 1. Operational constructs and research questions (RQ).

Significance of the Study

Possible implications of this study would be that if (a) improvements are made in the way special education administrators manage organizational conflict, then (b) the incidence of damaging stress and burnout in special education would be reduced, making a career in special education administration more attractive, thereby (c) aiding recruitment and retention efforts in the field of special education administration.

The connection, if it exists, between conflict and burnout, is in need of serious academic scrutiny. While few studies have aimed at identifying the exact relationship between conflict and burnout, it appears to be generally accepted that the two might be related. Some authors have chosen to address conflict and burnout in their writings (Rahim, 2000; Sharifzadeh, 2002; Soy, 2002) without quantifying the relationship

between the two. Additionally, courses taught at major universities around the world include both conflict and burnout in published course syllabi (see Table 1). While the fact that both burnout and organizational conflict are addressed in these courses does not, in and of itself, quantify any relationship between the two, it does suggest there may be a relationship here worthy of further study.

Table 1

College Course Syllabi That Address Conflict and Burnout

Course Title	School
Social Psychology ¹	The University of Wales, Swansea
Human Resources and Administrative Effectiveness ²	City University of New York
Communication in Organizations ³	University of Akron, Ohio
Organizational Behavior ⁴	Calif. State University, Pomona
Micro Organizational Communication Theory and Research ⁵	University of Texas, Austin

Other researchers have also suggested a relationship between organizational conflict and burnout (see, for example, Chemiss, 1980; Soy, 2002; Vigoda, 2000). Indeed, many corporations use Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) to identify employee personal and behaviorally linked health problems that have had or, if unaddressed, will have an adverse effect on the employer (Purnell-Bond, 2002) based

¹ <http://www.swan.ac.uk>

² web.jjay.cuny.edu/~pub-mgt/courses/pad706.html

³ <http://www3.uakron.edu/sch1comm/Rosenfeld/review.html>

⁴ <http://www.csupomona.edu/~msharifzadeh/mhr318/conflict.htm>

⁵ <http://www.gslis.utexas.edu/~ssoy/pubs/micro-communication/2micro.htm>

on the assumption that health problems can be exacerbated by organizational conflict and high stress, which may lead to burnout. Purnell-Bond (2002) also noted that companies are often under the assumption that organizational conflict and employee stress are simply characteristics of corporations, and must be accepted as a part of doing business in today's world.

As mentioned, little research has been designed to quantify the correlation if any, between organizational conflict and burnout. Edmonson and Thompson (2000) conducted one of the few studies attempting to quantify the relationship between indices of conflict and indices of burnout. Using meta-analysis techniques, these researchers found some limited correlation between the two constructs. This current study was designed to quantifiably describe the relationship between indices of Organizational Conflict and indices of Burnout in an effort to fill the research void in this area.

Definitions of Related Terms

Burnout-Related Terms

Burnout. For the purposes of this study, burnout is defined as a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, a way of life, or a relationship that failed to produce the expected reward. For the purposes of this study, burnout will be categorized as one of three syndromes – Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA), as identified by the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1982).

Depersonalization (DP). For the purposes of this study, depersonalization is identified as a syndrome of burnout on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)

reflecting how often the respondent treats students and colleagues in an unfeeling and impersonal manner. Higher scores on the depersonalization scale are associated with higher levels of burnout.

Emotional exhaustion (EE). For the purposes of this study, **emotional exhaustion** is a syndrome of burnout identified on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) that quantifies how often a respondent feels emotionally overextended by the demands of work. Higher scores in the area of emotional exhaustion are associated with a higher level of burnout.

Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI). This survey instrument was designed to assess the three aspects of the burnout syndrome: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP) and lack of Personal Accomplishment (PA). Higher scores on the EE and DP syndromes, and lower scores on the PA syndrome indicate burnout.

Personal accomplishment (PA). For the purposes of this study, **personal accomplishment** is a burnout syndrome identified on the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), reflecting how frequently the individual experiences feelings of personal competence and success through work. Lower scores on the Personal Accomplishment scale are associated with higher levels of burnout.

Organizational Conflict Terms

Avoiding (AV). For the purposes of this study, **avoiding** is defined as a conflict management score on the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II). This conflict management style is associated with withdrawal, “passing the buck”, or sidestepping situations. It may take the form of postponing an issue or

simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. An avoiding person fails to satisfy his or her own concerns as well as those of the other party.

Compromising. For the purposes of this study, **compromising** is defined as a conflict management score on the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II). This conflict management style is intermediate in both concern for self and for others. It involves sharing, whereby both parties give up something to make a mutually acceptable decision. It may mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a middle-ground position.

Conflict. For the purposes of this study, **conflict** is defined as an interactive process that is manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities, (i.e., individual, group organization, etc.) (Rahim, Antonioni, Krumov, Krum, & Ilieza, 2000). “Conflict (lack of agreement on alternatives) occurs in degrees, rather than being dichotomous. Parties may be in real conflict, may be in perceived conflict, or may agree” (Guy, 1981, p. 19).

Dominating (DO). For the purposes of this study, **dominating** is defined as a conflict management score on the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II). This conflict management style is identified by a win-lose orientation or forcing behavior to win one’s position. A dominating or competing person goes to any length to win his or her objective and, as a result, often ignores the needs and expectations of the other party.

Integrating (IN). For the purposes of this study, **integrating** is defined as a conflict management score on the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II). This conflict style involves the exchange of information and examination

of differences to reach a solution acceptable to both parties. It is associated with problem solving that may lead to creative solutions.

Intergroup conflict (NG). For the purposes of this study, **intergroup conflict** is a measure on the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-I (ROCI-I) that quantifies how conflict between different groups is addressed. This type of conflict refers to disagreements or inconsistencies between the members or their representatives or leaders of two or more groups. Intergroup conflict has been found between hierarchical groups (such as special education teachers and special education administrators) (Lawrence & Lorsh, 1967). Conflict between teachers and administrators, administrators and parents, special education administrators and school administrators, or general and special educators are further examples of this type of conflict. For this study of special education administrators, the “other group” with whom they were most likely to experience conflict was defined as “parents”. Nonetheless, the principles of intergroup conflict could be applied equally to special education and school administrators.

Intragroup conflict (IG). For the purposes of this study, **intragroup conflict** is a measure on the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-I (ROCI-I) that quantifies how conflict within a given group is managed. Intragroup conflict has been found within a bureaucratic level of individuals (Fielder, 1967). This refers to conflict among members of a group, or between two or more subgroups within a group. Such a conflict may also occur as a result of disagreements or inconsistencies between some or all the members of a group and its leader. Participants in this research were

asked to evaluate how they responded in conflict situations involving their immediate supervisors.

Intrapersonal conflict (IP). For the purposes of this study, **intrapersonal conflict** is a measure on the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-I (ROCI-I) that quantifies how individual group members deal with conflict within themselves. This occurs when an individual is required to perform certain tasks, activities or roles that do not match his or her expertise, interests, goals, and values.

Obliging (OB). For the purposes of this study, **obliging** is defined as a conflict management score on the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II). This conflict management style attempts to downplay differences and emphasize commonalities to satisfy the other party. An obliging person neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other party.

Organizational conflict. “Specifically stated, intra-organizational conflict is that point at which different preference orderings among interdependent units are manifested by a lack of agreement over means, ends or both,” (Guy, 1981, p. 22).

Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-I (ROCI-I). This survey instrument was designed to measure three independent dimensions of organizational conflict: Intrapersonal Conflict (IP), Intragroup Conflict (IG), and Intergroup Conflict (NG).

Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II). This survey instrument was designed to measure five independent dimensions of handling interpersonal conflict: Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV), and Compromising (CO).

Statistical Analysis Terms

Bivariate correlation. A correlation of two scores from the same subject.

Canonical correlation. Canonical correlation is a type of multiple-regression analysis involving the use of two or more measured variables to predict a composite index of several criterion variables.

Path analysis. Path analysis is a statistical method for testing the validity of a theory about causal links between three or more measured variables. Path analysis is an extension of multiple-regression. In multiple regression, the purpose is to predict a single dependent variable, whereas in path analysis there is more than one dependent variable. Concerned with the predictive ordering of variables, path analysis allows one to test a theory of causal order among a set of variables.

Director of special education programs. For the purposes of this study, director of special education programs refers to the individual assigned the primary responsibility for administering and monitoring the special education program within a school district. The actual job title may vary from district to district, alternately being called director, coordinator, lead teacher, special education assistant, or some other locally adopted term. The Virginia Department of Education website lists these key special education personnel for each school district.

Major Assumptions/Limitations of the Study

Listed below are the major assumptions or limitations underlying the study:

1. A sufficient number of directors of special education programs will return both of the assessment instruments to allow meaningful conclusions to be drawn from the data.

2. **Directors of special education programs will accurately report how organizational conflict is handled in organizations for which they may be accountable.**
3. **Both questionnaires reflect opinion-based responses as opposed to factually based responses.**
4. **Administrator burnout may be due to factors not measured on the Maslach Burnout Inventory.**
5. **Organizational conflict may best be measured by factors not identified on the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventories.**

Delimitations of the Study

Listed below are factors that were purposefully not addressed in this study.

1. **It was not the intent of this research study to evaluate the effectiveness of different methods for preventing or ameliorating the effects of burnout.**
2. **It is recognized that different situations may call for different conflict management styles, and that there may be times when all five styles explored here can be used effectively. Nonetheless, this study was designed to evaluate the preferred conflict management styles of the surveyed population.**
3. **It was not the purpose of this research to validate the survey instruments used. It was assumed that all instruments used are of adequate validity and reliability to prove useful in this research.**

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

This chapter presents a review of the literature on organizational conflict and special education administrator burnout. The review consists of nine sections that address the various aspects of the topics, including five sections dealing with conflict and four sections dealing with burnout. The sections are:

- 1) Conflict in organizations – including a description of the nature of conflict, how it is manifested, and its impact on special education administrators
- 2) Historical views on conflict management – to include the traditional, human relations, and interactionist paradigms of thought
- 3) Consequences of conflict – discussion on both the positive and negative impact of functional versus dysfunctional conflict
- 4) Types of conflict in organizations – to include the categories of cognitive versus affective conflict, as well as the differing levels on which conflict may take place i.e.) Interpersonal, Interorganizational, or Intraorganizational
- 5) Approaches to managing conflict, to include discussions on the five basic styles of conflict management – Dominating, Integrating, Avoiding, Obliging or Compromising
- 6) Burnout in organizations – to include a discussion on the meaning and description of burnout, the scope of the problem, and the impact of burnout in special and general education administration
- 7) Factors that either contribute to or reduce burnout – including organizational structure, administrative bureaucracy, and the impact of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (I.D.E.A.)

8) Schema for describing burnout – including the indices of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment, as well as the components of role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload.

9) Approaches to managing burnout – addressing the use of stress management workshops, peer collaboration programs, and exercising “detached concern”.

A closing section summarizes this review of the literature.

Conflict in Organizations

Introduction to Conflict

Conflict may be described as an interactive process, manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (i.e., individual, group organization, etc.) (Rahim et al., 2000). In general, conflict tends to evolve when two or more individuals, groups, or organizations believe that their interests are incompatible with each other and when attempts to resolve such dissension are undertaken (Milstein, Lusthaus, & Lusthaus, 1980).

Meaning and Description

Conflict has been described in several different ways. Summarizing the prevailing thoughts on conflict reveals that, among other things, conflict is viewed as a state of mind. Further, conflict must be perceived by the parties involved (Jaya, 2002; Sharifzadeh, 2002). That is, if no one is aware of a conflict, it is generally agreed that no conflict exists. Conflict begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that the first party cares about (Sharifzadeh, 2002). Additionally, conflict may occur as a result of incompatibility of goals or values (Jaya, 2002; Milstein et al., 1980; Sharifzadeh,

2002). Frustration results in conflict when it is caused by one person or organization deliberately blocking the attainment of another's goals or the furthering of special interests. Disturbances in an existing balance of power can result in conflict (Jaya, 2002). Conflict may be also be defined as a situation in which individuals express manifest or latent differences in satisfying needs, and these differences interfere with goal achievement (Jaya, 2002).

In the job of "conflict manager" school and special education administrators often feel pulled in opposite directions by the requirements to balance compliance and control issues. On the one hand, compliance with federal special education law and control requirements of standardization and formalization call for *elimination of conflict*. On the other hand, management models that advocate collaboration, teamwork, and employee involvement in decision making actually *generate* conflict. Thus, "administrators who are overly concerned with harmony within the school are likely to be missing, and perhaps preventing, the leadership initiatives necessary to produce healthy organizational change" (DiPaola & Hoy, 2001, p 243).

Conflict is a by-product of growth, change, or innovation. Like change itself, it is practically inevitable and, when handled properly, can provide better communication, guarantee results and improve employee morale and productivity (Jaya, 2002). The larger the organization, the more likely there will be conflict (DiPaola & Hoy, 2001). In schools in which there is little conflict, there is no sense of urgency, no necessity to look for alternatives, and no incentives for conciliatory overtures. Despite the general acceptance of the idea that disagreements are essential to the health and maintenance of an organization, a preponderance of literature

highlights the detriments of disputes (DiPaola & Hoy, 2001; Sharifzadeh, 2002). School administrators must become students of conflict, as it is most unlikely to disappear from the workplace anytime soon, nor should it. Administrators must recognize that conflict in and of itself is neither good nor bad. Moreover, the impact of conflict on an organization depends on three factors – the kind of conflict (cognitive or affective), the kind of formalization (enabling or coercive), and the way conflict is handled.

Historical Views of Conflict Management

Conflict management has long been considered an essential aspect of organizational life. Robbins (1974) identified three philosophies that reflect prevailing attitudes toward conflict in organizations and the management thereof: traditional, human relations/behavioral, and interactional. Each are described in greater detail in the following sections.

Traditional View

Conflict was seen as something to be avoided at all costs. Viewed negatively, the term was used synonymously with *violence*, *destruction*, and *irrationality* to reinforce its negative connotation (Dipaola & Hoy, 2001; Jaya, 2002; Robbins, 1974; Sharifzadeh, 2002). In the 1930s and 40s, the traditional view held that all conflict was bad because of its destructive tendencies and therefore had to be eliminated, since it was considered completely divisive and at odds with progress toward the organizational goals. This view was strongly inculcated in years past through three primary institutions – home, school, and the church. At home, parents were seen as the final arbitrators of all conflict. Regardless of whether it was sibling conflict or

child – parent conflict, it was something to be dealt with swiftly and decisively. Likewise, in the schools, teachers were seen as the font of all knowledge, and any student who brought conflict into the classroom was to be dealt with swiftly and certainly with all manner of discipline techniques that met with varying levels of success. Finally, the church has taught that conflict is to be avoided, and that conflict, if it exists, is usually a conflict between good and evil. Given the magnitude of the influence these three institutions have in our lives, it is easy to see why the traditionalist viewpoint of conflict as something to be eliminated is so deeply rooted in the American psyche.

The traditional view held that conflict was seen as a dysfunctional outcome resulting from poor communication, a lack of openness and trust between people, and the failure of managers to be responsive to the needs and aspirations of their employees (Jaya, 2002; Sharifzadeh, 2002). This theory fell from grace with the rise of the human relations school of thought in the area of business management.

Human Relations/Behavioral View

The human relations/behavioral view dominated conflict theory from the late 1940s through the mid-1970s. The human relations position argued that conflict was a natural occurrence in all groups and organizations. Since conflict was inevitable, the human relations school advocated acceptance of conflict. Proponents rationalized its existence: It cannot be eliminated, and there are even times when conflict may benefit a group's performance. This school of thought believed that even though conflict is inevitable and will lead to creativity in problem solving and hence beneficial to

organization, it should still be resolved once it arises as it is harmful and detrimental to organizations (Jaya, 2002; Robbins, 1974).

Interactionist View

While behaviorists believed that conflict is inevitable and must be accepted, interactionists argued that conflict is not only acceptable but should be encouraged. Indeed recently, conflict has been considered important for organizational development (Jaya, 2002; Robbins, 1974; Valentine, 1995). Guy (1981) noted that conflict, in and of itself, is not necessarily an undesirable result of differing preferences, "Rather, because people differ among themselves according to their preferences, and because people work together in organizations or other kinds of groups, conflict is the natural outgrowth of interpersonal communication" (p. 16). She goes on to state that a certain amount of conflict is inevitable and provides a forum where divergent views are presented and decisions are made. The interactionist approach encourages conflict on the grounds that a harmonious, peaceful, tranquil, and cooperative group is prone to becoming static, apathetic, and nonresponsive to needs for change and innovation (Jaya, 2002; Sharifzadeh, 2002). When an organizational structure creates and supports a positive atmosphere for debating the various preferences and for seeking functional resolutions, the organization is well served, as are its members. However, when the organization structure does not provide such a forum, needs remain unmet and resolution is likely to be dysfunctional, if it occurs at all (Guy, 1981).

Consequences of Conflict

Whether a conflict is inherently good or bad depends on the type of conflict. Specifically, it is necessary to differentiate between functional and dysfunctional conflicts. Functional conflicts support the goals of the group and improve its performance, whereas dysfunctional conflicts hinder group performance. Burns (1978) observed that “the potential for conflict permeates the relations of humankind, and that potential is a force for health and growth as well as for destruction and barbarism” (p. 37). Burns proceeded to note that conflict is as critical as consensus. The key to whether conflict is a force for positive change or a force for destruction lies in the way it is handled. Conflicts handled in a cooperative problem-solving manner are most likely to have positive outcomes as people generate new solutions, gain insight and perspective, and grow and strengthen emotionally. Enabling formalization (i.e., a system with rules that encourage two-way communication and promote trust) welcomes cognitive conflict and uses it as a springboard for change and improvement (Hoy & Sweetland, 2002)

Guy (1981) noted that: “Conflict (lack of agreement on alternatives) occurs in degrees, rather than being dichotomous. Parties may be in real conflict, may be in perceived conflict, or may agree” (p. 19). Guy (1981) proceeded to explain:

It behooves the student of conflict to understand the difference between conflict itself and the result of, or rather resolution of, the conflict. The two general forms of resolution that are relevant to organizations are the *functional* route consisting of debate, bargaining, compromise, conciliation, and so forth,

versus the *dysfunctional* route of open hostility, breakdown of communication, sabotage, et cetera. (p. 17)

In the following sections we will take a closer look at both functional and dysfunctional conflict.

Functional Conflict

Conflict is functional when it improves the quality of decisions, stimulates creativity and innovation, encourages interest and curiosity among group members, provides the medium through which problems can be aired and tensions released, and fosters an environment of self-evaluation and change (DiPaola & Hoy, 2001; Jaya, 2002; Sharifzadeh, 2002; Uline, Tschannen-Moran, & Perez, 2001). Functional conflict can have several beneficial consequences. In addition to motivating individuals to work harder, it can cause members to reveal hidden talents, make constructive use of aggressive urges, strengthen intra-group relationships, and add variety to organizational life.

Dysfunctional Conflict

The destructive consequences of conflict upon a group or organization's performance are generally well known. In brief, uncontrolled opposition breeds discontent, which acts to dissolve common ties, and eventually leads to the destruction of the group. People may promote self-interests over interests of the organization. Additionally, intense conflicts over a prolonged period affect individuals emotionally and physically and give rise to psychosomatic disorders (Jaya, 2002). A substantial body of literature has documented how dysfunctional conflict can reduce group effectiveness (Jaya, 2002; New Mexico Research and Study

Council, 1983; Sharifzadeh, 2002). Resolving dysfunctional conflict requires expenditure of time and resources that could be better spent furthering the aims of the organization.

Types of Conflict

There are different ways to categorize conflict. DiPaola and Hoy (2001) saw conflict as falling into one of two types – cognitive and affective. *Cognitive* issues tend to be task related, focus on roles, policies, resources, and enhance group performance. *Affective* issues, in contrast, are social-emotional, with a focus on norms and values, reducing performance and satisfaction. Unfortunately, cognitive debates can easily evoke affective issues. Administrators in schools with coercive formalization, for example, have little hope of reaping the fruits of cognitive conflict. The restrictive rules, policies and/or procedures require control and afford little latitude to “sanction” conflict by recognizing it and attempting to work through it (DiPaola & Hoy, 2001).

On the organizational level, conflict may be *inter-organizational* (between organizations) or *intra-organizational* (within organizations) (Rahim, 1983). Interorganizational conflict refers conflict that exists between members or leaders of two or more groups. The differences between hierarchical groups of special education administrators and special education teachers may result in interorganizational conflict, for example. Intraorganizational conflict, on the other hand, has been defined as “that point at which different preference orderings among interdependent units are manifested by a lack of agreement over means, ends or both” (Guy, 1981, p. 22). Intragroup conflict has been found within a bureaucratic level of individuals

(Fielder, 1967). Intraorganizational conflict refers to conflict among members of a group, or between two or more subgroups within a group. Disagreements or inconsistencies between some or all the members of a group and its leader are also an example of this type of conflict.

Approaches to Managing Conflict

Conflict should be managed rather than resolved. Conflict must be addressed in order to manage it. This is often difficult because most people are unaccustomed to confronting conflict, tending instead to avoid uncomfortable situations. Yet, suppressing conflict can lead to escalation and even more damaging repercussions than would have occurred through proper conflict management. Conflicts handled in a cooperative, problem-solving manner are more likely to yield positive outcomes because they generate solutions, promote insight, and help individuals to grow and strengthen emotionally. Conflicts handled in a competitive way, however, usually result in the disputants moving further apart and investing more energy in perpetuating the conflict (DiPaola & Hoy, 2001). Strategies that can be employed in managing conflict include increasing intergroup contacts, developing superordinate goals, and restructuring (New Mexico Research and Study Council, 1983).

The nature and causes of the conflict in question should be key factors in deciding how to manage a given conflict. Intra-organizational conflict must be managed to maximize its useful aspects while minimizing those that are dysfunctional. For example, conflict can be interpersonal or it can stem from the structural characteristics of the organization. Sources of conflict include win-or-lose situations that reduce cooperation by fostering competition, incompatibility among

the goals of organizational subunits, and concerns about status and authority. Reactions to conflict can include avoidance, limiting discussion to areas of agreement, forcing compliance with authoritative decisions, compromising, and collaboration. Paltridge (1971) observed that the greater amount of control that can be exerted in conflict situations, the greater the expectation of rationality in conflict resolution. He proposes a systems analysis approach to conflict management to provide a means for rational decision-making.

Looking at conflict from a somewhat different perspective, Litwak (1961) observed that complex organizations can be described as approximating one of three models – Weberian (formalized with written rules, regulations, procedures and instructions), human relations (heavily concerned with the individuals wants and desires, and professional (one that allows for a blend of the two previous models). In dealing with uniform events and traditional areas of knowledge, the Weberian model may prove most useful. When dealing with interpersonal issues and nonuniform events, the human relations model may be best. The majority of organizations today use a mixture of uniform and non-uniform events, and are therefore best approximated by the professional model. It is this last model that permits mutually antagonistic social forms to peacefully coexist in a given organization.

Figures 2 and 3 show two examples of conflict management styles. The research teams of Rahim and Bonoma (1979) and later, Hoy and Miskel (2000), identified five basic styles of conflict management. Both teams identified the styles of Avoiding and Compromising, with close alignment between the styles of Obliging/Accommodating, Integrating/Collaborating, and Dominating/ Competing.

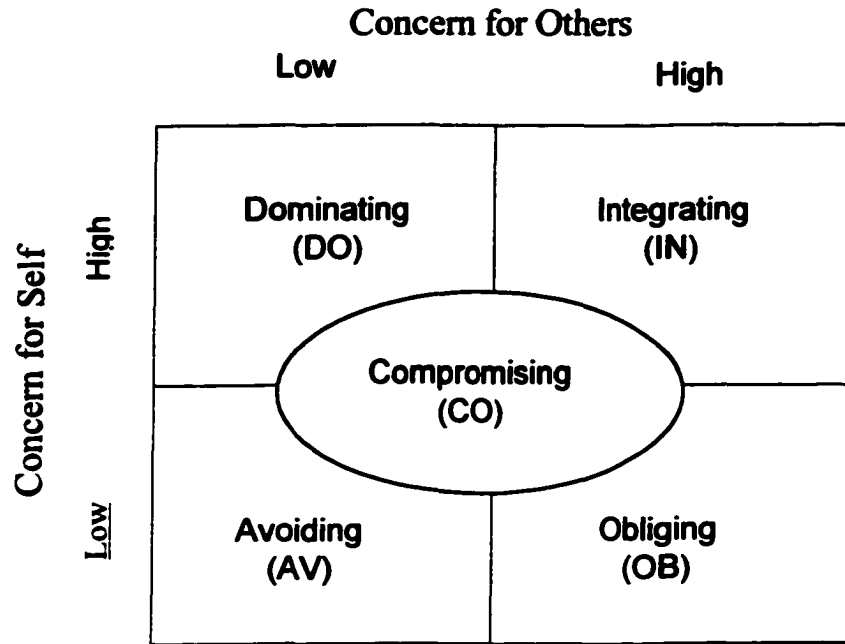


Figure 2. Conflict management styles according to Rahim and Bonoma (1979).

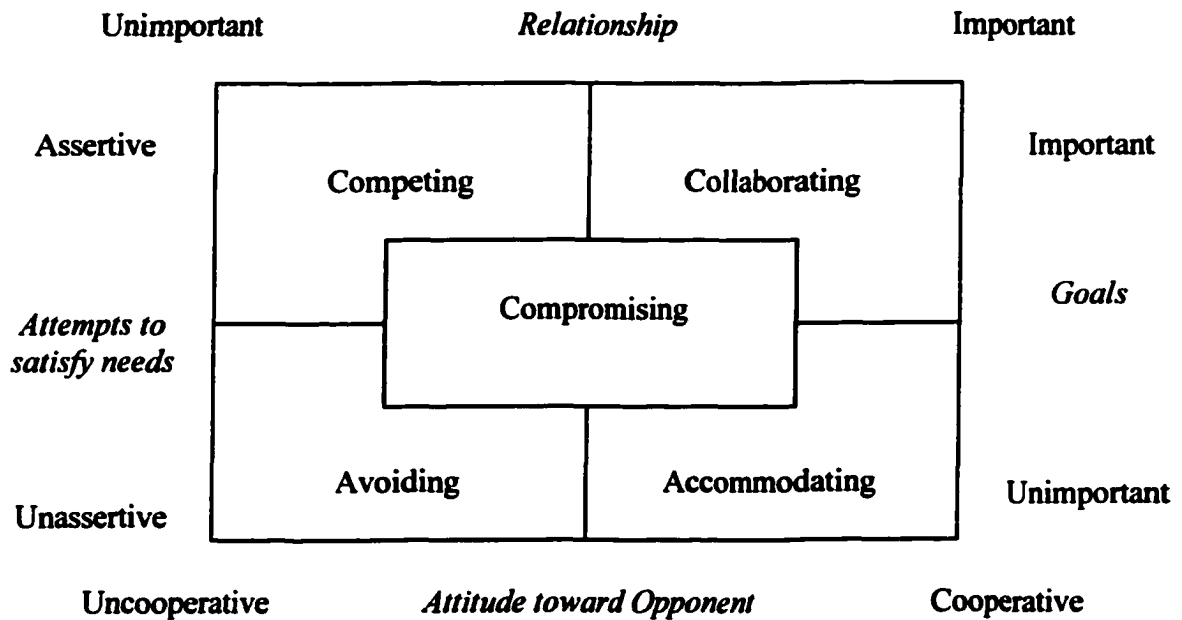


Figure 3. Conflict management styles according to Hoy and Miskel (2000).

Blake and Mouton (1964) developed five styles of handling interpersonal conflicts: forcing, withdrawing, smoothing, sharing, and problem solving (see Table 2). Thomas (1976) refined this scheme by separating conflict from the behaviors that people used for handling it. He developed five conflict management strategies using two dimensions – assertiveness (satisfying one’s own concerns) and cooperativeness (attempting to satisfy another’s concerns) (Valentine, 1995).

Table 2

Five Styles of Handling Interpersonal Conflict

Author	Style 1	Style 2	Style 3	Style 4	Style 5
Rahim, 1979	Obliging	Integrating	Dominating	Avoiding	Compromising
Hoy & Miskel, 2000	Accommodating	Collaborating	Competing	Avoiding	Compromising
Blake & Mouton, 1964	Smoothing	Problem solving	Forcing	Withdrawing	Sharing

After reviewing the literature in connection with the development and use of the ROCI-II, Weider-Hatfield (1988) concluded, “although the conflict literature has historically embraced the ‘five-style’ paradigm, recent evidence indicates that individuals might select among three, not five, distinct conflict styles” (p. 364). Similarly, Hocker and Wilmot (1991) concluded after a literature review that “conflict styles cluster similarly to conflict tactics—into three types: (1) avoidance, (2) competitive (distributive) and (3) collaborative (integrative)” (p. 119). Others have classified conflict styles into two or four types. Table 3 presents is a summary of the taxonomies of conflict styles proposed by different scholars.

Table 3

Proponents of Various Styles of Conflict Management

Number of Conflict Styles	Types of Styles	Proponents of Theory
Two styles	Cooperation Competition	Deutsch (1949, 1990) Tjosvold (1990)
Three styles	Nonconfrontation Solution-Orientation Control	Putnam & Wilson (1982) Hocker and Wilmot (1991) Weider-Hatfield (1988)
Four styles	Yielding Problem Solving Inaction Contending	Pruitt (1983)
Five styles	Integrating Obliging Dominating Avoiding Compromising	Blake & Mouton (1964) Follett (1926/1940) Rahim & Bonoma (1979) Thomas (1976) Hoy & Miskel (2000)

Good leaders, regardless of their profession, must not only engage in conflict, they must also *manage* the conflict and *control* the scope and intensity of the conflict (DiPaola & Hoy, 2001). In determining how individuals manage conflict, self-reporting by the managers themselves may not be the most accurate method. For example, a study comparing managers' reports of handling conflict and their subordinates' ratings, McIntyre (1997) noted that managers reported themselves as being more Integrating and Dominating whereas their subordinates rated them as more Avoiding and less Compromising.

“Two private-sector models of organizational conflict that are appropriate and adaptable to the public sector are the bargaining and bureaucratic models. While the bargaining model covers conflicts among interest groups in competition for scarce

resources, the bureaucratic model covers superior-subordinate conflicts” (Caldwell & Daywalt, 1983, Abstract section, para. 2).

Gender Differences in Conflict Management

Research has shown there are gender differences in the way people handle conflict. For example, Valentine (1995) noted:

In the past, the research literature on organizations has been mainly carried out on industrial and political organizations and has largely been investigated by male investigators, in male-dominated organizations, using males as the subjects, and generalizing the findings to both women and men. (Positive Functions section, ¶ 5)

These studies found that women and nurses tend to handle conflict using compromise and avoidance, with competition used the least often. Nurse managers used compromise as their major strategy for handling conflict, while the staff nurses used avoidance (Valentine, 1995).

Some research suggests why women prefer less confrontational methods of dealing with conflict. For example, studies on the socialization of females (Bardwick, 1971) have shown that women have a different orientation to other people than men do; women tend to derive their identities from personal relationships that are affiliative rather than from the impersonal world. Because women have been socialized to depend on others to meet their emotional needs and to value support, they see conflict as a distancing behavior that may result in rejection and/or abandonment (Hagen, 1983).

By way of example, in a recent study at a teaching hospital in Canada, the way the teaching teams tried to avoid dealing with conflict was to “hold a social event, which usually included home-baked food, and hope that this would ameliorate the conflict” (Valentine, 1995, Handling Conflict section, ¶ 2). As a result of this affiliative orientation, women manage conflict by using a more interdependent criterion based on internal obligations, while men use a more independent one based on rights (Miller, 1991; Valentine, 1995).

Neff (1986) conducted a study in which he reviewed the conflict management styles of female professors. Using disagreements with superiors, Neff studied the conflict management styles of 182 women from three levels of administration in 12 Ohio state universities to determine if the behavior characteristics of women in higher education administration deviated from those identified as the most effective and productive in good male managers. Using the ROCI-II (Rahim, 1983) to measure five styles of conflict management, Neff’s found that, when in conflict with their superiors, academic women utilized the compromising style significantly more often than men (Valentine, 1995).

These less confrontational styles of compromise and avoidance tend to be dominant in educational circles in general and special education administration in particular. Although women account for only about 12 % of superintendents, they make up 75 % of the teaching workforce and 57 % of the central office administrators nationwide (National Association of State Boards of Education, 2002). In Virginia, 71% of the directors of special education programs are female (Virginia Department of Education, 2002). As a group they may tend toward less confrontational methods

of managing conflict, preferring styles that embrace compromise and avoidance versus competition.

Burnout

The Problem of Burnout

Webster's Dictionary defines burnout as “exhaustion of physical or emotional strength or motivation usually as a result of prolonged stress or frustration” (Merriam-Webster, 1993). Academics have defined it as “a state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, a way of life, or a relationship that failed to produce the expected reward,” (Freudenberger, 1977). The term burnout was first used to describe the physical and emotional exhaustion Freudenberger observed in staff members of alternative health care facilities. Since then, investigation into the manifestation of this phenomenon in other work settings, such as public schools, has mushroomed (Berg, 1994). Later researchers incorporated the idea that burnout was a result of negative response to work-related stress, or a classroom teacher who is less sympathetic toward students, emotionally or physically exhausted, and a much lower tolerance for frustration (Dedrick & Raschke, 1990).

Donna Strickland (1998), in her article *Balancing Life's Choices*, describes the scope of the problem of burnout by noting:

A plethora of speakers, consultants, personal coaches, and management gurus all talk about similar issues: Oprah Winfrey talks about how to Make the Connection, Stephen Covey preaches about The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, and Richard Swenson encourages us to develop more “margin” in our lives. This is no accident. The problem of stress, burnout,

consumerism and the loss of focus on personal missions are so rampant that people everywhere are looking for help. (Strickland, 1998, Smell the Roses section, ¶. 2)

Most authors agree that burnout refers to an extreme form of job stress. In fact, some researchers go so far as to make the two terms, job stress and burnout, synonymous. Christina Maslach (1982), perhaps the most widely accepted authority on burnout, described this condition as “a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings, particularly when they are troubled or having problems” (p. 3).

Burnout is most prominent among those who are “highly motivated, hard-working, and idealistic in the workplace. The failure of this idealism brings about the feelings most often associated with burnout” (Edmonson & Thompson, 2000, p. 3). As such, burnout is a problem born of good intentions. It happens when people try to reach unrealistic goals and end up depleting their energy and losing touch with themselves and others. The irony of burnout is that it happens to the individual who was highly enthusiastic and brimming over with energy and new ideas when first involved in a job or a new situation (Worterklaerungen, 2002).

Schema for Describing Burnout

Worterklaerungen (2002) reported three basic components of burnout: role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload. The first, *role conflict* refers to a person who has conflicting responsibilities. This individual will begin to feel pulled in many directions and will try to do everything equally well without setting priorities. The result will be the feelings of fatigue or frustration associated with burnout. In *role*

ambiguity, the individual does not know what is expected of her. She knows what is expected of a good career person but is not quite sure how to accomplish it because she has no models or guidelines to follow. The result is a feeling of a lack of worthwhile accomplishment. Finally, in the case of *role overload*, the individual cannot say no and keeps on taking on more responsibility than he can handle until he finally burns out. Sample burnout indices as noted by Maslach and Worterklaerungen are shown in Table 4.

Table 4

Indices of Burnout

Author	Indicia 1	Indicia 2	Indicia 3
Maslach (1982)	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Worterklaerungen (2002)	Role Conflict	Role Ambiguity	Role Overload

In another schema for describing burnout among educators, Dedrick and Raschke (1990) noted “disenchantment with teaching can be plotted through four stages which address the progression from enthusiastic beginner to disheartened burnout” (p. 17). Stage one, *Invigorated Good Shepherd*, is best characterized by those who have just completed training, are full of idealism, and have grandiose vision of helping those with a history of failure. Work is of primary importance at this stage. The next stage is *Mundane Repetitious Soldier*. Here one begins to question the initial, buoying idealism as excitement over new behavioral plans dwindles. Additionally, feelings of isolation emerge, there is increased concern over salary and professional growth, and in the case of special educators, they may note increased

hostility from general educators. The third stage, *Disgusted Thwarted Rebel*, is characterized by feelings of helplessness as the reality of teaching special needs students is not as it was anticipated. One may begin to question the value of the career choice, as other professions begin to look increasingly attractive. Finally, if burnout is allowed to continue unchecked, the individual arrives at *Apathetic Unresponsive Robot*. In this stage the individual feels chronically frustrated, overwhelmed, and powerless to effect significant change. At this point, an individual may just go through the motions of teaching, while believing she has no impact on helping students improve.

Another, though less well-known instrument for measuring burnout, is the Burnout Assessment Inventory (BAI) (Clouse, 1982). The BAI is designed to assess the areas of enthusiasm, frustration, and alienation, which Clouse (1982) used to characterize the three stages of burnout. A study by Dobbs (1997) of Georgia directors of special education indicated that 86.4% of respondents were in the three most severe BAI categories (confused, scorched, burned out). The majority (65%) fell in the Confused category. Research on the stages of burnout is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5

Stages of Burnout

Author	Stages of Burnout				
	Early	→		Late	
Dedrick & Raschke (1990)	Invigorated Good Shepherd	Mundane Repetitious Soldier	Disgusted Thwarted Rebel	Apathetic Unresponsive Robot	
Clouse (1982)	Enthusiasm	Frustration	Alienation		
Dobbs (1997)			Confused	Scorched	Burned Out

In summary, researchers generally agree that burnout is not so much a discrete, binary condition (i.e., burned out versus not burned out). Rather, it is best measured on a continuum (Clouse, 1982; Dedrick & Raschke, 1990; Dobbs, 1997). Left unchecked, a person can move from left to right on the burnout scale in Table 6. The later the stage of the burnout, the more severe the condition, and the more serious the consequences.

People differ widely in terms of the number and intensity of stressors with which they can cope. Golembiewski, Boudreau, Sun, and Luo (1998) noted that “not only are there differences [in acceptable stress levels] between people at any one time, but also at different points in time for any one person. Moreover, one stressor can energize some people, while it herniates others” (p. 59). High stress levels need not reach the status of burnout to make a significant impact on the lives of those involved. For example, high levels of stress in mothers-to-be at the time of conception have even been correlated with an increased probability of giving birth to a girl (Bowen, 1999).

Burnout is not unique to the United States. Golembiewski, et. al., (1998) found burnout to exist in both the public and private sectors worldwide. They noted: "Burnout appears high almost everywhere. Burnout in the U.S. Public sector is not appreciably worse than in business, but attains serious proportions in both arenas" (p. 59). They went on to point out that "so many people fall in advanced phases of burnout that the term pandemic seems no overstatement. The advanced stages of burnout contain 41.8 percent of all respondents in public-sector work sites in Canada, 44.1 percent in the U.S. sites, and 60.0 percent in the 10 available global public-sector work sites" (Golembiewski et. al., 1998, p. 63).

Burnout can be a significant problem in the human services professions. In his advice to members of the medical profession, Musick (1997) reported an increasing number of physicians suffering from burnout since they must spend more time dealing with patients who are angry and confused about changes in the health care system. Research by Strickland (1998) added further to the body of knowledge about burnout among medical care providers, noting that saving lives, supporting people's health, confronting extreme danger, and patching people back together demands an enormous amount of physical and emotional energy that can lead to burnout.

Pastors and clergy also report suffering from stress and are prone to burnout. Often, those who have made it to the highest levels of church leadership suffer from stress and burnout. Unfortunately, at that level they may feel as if they have no acceptable way out of their troubles. Resignation is not an option, as that would be tantamount to admitting defeat and stating God is insufficient. As a result, these men and women may commit major indiscretions so their positions of authority will be

stripped from them by others, thereby relieving them of their over burdensome responsibilities (W. J. Holcomb, senior pastor, personal communication, November 9, 2001). Those who do best in long-term pastorates are those who have developed a few close friends in whom they can confide and to whom they can be held accountable.

Personnel in other professions report suffering from burnout as well. For example, Sullivan (1998) reports on the difficulty of finding and retaining good computer systems administrators and computer security professionals, pointing out that the job is likely to lead to burnout.

Burnout in Education Administration

Several major studies have documented the connection between stress and burnout in education based on examinations of teachers, principals, administrators, superintendents and special education teachers and administrators. Several researchers have noted high levels of burnout and potential for burnout among special administrators (Begley, 1982; Bluhm, 1998; Dannemiller, 1992; Riffel, 1986; Shumate, 1999; Smith, 1982).

Ogden (1992) compared feelings of burnout among four groups of education administration personnel: elementary principals, middle school/junior high principals, secondary principals, and special education administrators. Special education administrators perceived higher levels of administrative stress and were suffering from higher levels of emotional exhaustion than the other groups.

Despite such evidence, little research has specifically addressed burnout among special education administrators. In a meta-analysis of 46 primary studies

addressing stress and burnout, only five, or 10.87%, presented findings for special education directors. Edmonson and Thompson (2000) noted: "The study of burnout among special education administrators should be of primary concern for future research studies, so that a greater understanding of this facet of educational administration can occur" (p. 25).

Not all that is seen as burnout truly is. Milstein (1992) noted: "The manifestations of plateauing may be perceived as stress, but it is a different problem. Rather than being highly stressed, educators experiencing plateauing lose their sense of professional growth and challenge. This is not burnout. This is rustout" (p. 13).

Factors That Contribute to Burnout Among Special Educators

The causes of burnout among special education personnel have been well documented. According to Cooley (1995), "Many factors contribute to burnout and turnover among special educators including low salaries, excessive caseloads and paperwork, challenging student characteristics, and a sense of isolation stemming from a lack of collegial and administrative support" (p. 3). Among the student characteristics noted, student personality problems seem to have the greatest impact on teacher stress levels (Huang, 1999).

Organizational Structure

Organizational structure has also been cited as a source of stress for special educators. There may be a tendency to blame staff rather than look for solutions when crisis or problem occurs, contributing to burnout (Caliber Associates, 1999).

Additionally, the bureaucratic structure of special education itself may contribute to burnout. Schambier (1981) noted that burnout is caused in part by working in a

bureaucratic structure in which all or most decisions are made by administrators and are carried out by the professionals, rather than being made by the professionals or in collaboration. The hierarchical pyramid should be replaced with a structure wherein professionals and administrators work for co-joined system and individual goals (Schambier, 1981).

Other studies have found that burnout and depersonalization of feelings increased with the number of supervisory requirements. For example, in her study of special education administrators, Dannemiller (1992) noted, “as a supervisor is responsible for more and more people or programs the more difficult it is to adequately provide and receive appropriate feedback and the more extreme burnout becomes” (p. 113). Thus, organizational structure is a key factor in special education administrator burnout.

Administrative Bureaucracy

Administrative bureaucracy was also found to be a contributing factor to special education administrator burnout. Riffel (1986) observed:

It would appear that [special education] directors serving in local education organizations are more prone to burnout than many of their counterparts. This may be due, in part, to the stratification of administrative bureaucracy within larger organizations, which results in adjustment patterns that are laced with feelings of frequent and intense depersonalization toward the population that they serve. The suspected feelings of exhaustion and depersonalization, in turn, do not allow this population to use their creative resources in a productive manner. (p. 59)

Many of the problems that confront special education administrators also impact special education teachers. Due to the commonalities between special education administrators and special education teachers, (i.e., a desire to promote the education of students with disabilities, the governing regulations of IDEA-97, etc.) research done on special education teachers may also apply to special education administrators. In a recent survey by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) (2000), paperwork ranked as the number one barrier to teaching. While the special education teachers recognized the importance of the individualized education programs (IEPs), they commented that too often “procedural compliance is stressed over thoughtful decision-making, and the amount of clerical work IEPs require is prohibitive” (CEC, 2000, p. 5). In a more recent CEC study (CEC, 2001a), *Bright Futures for Exceptional Learners: An Agenda to Achieve Quality Conditions for Teaching and Learning*, special education teachers reported feeling “overwhelmed by paperwork, high caseloads, lack of administrative support, and a lack of resources” (CEC, 2001b, p. 1). Other researchers support that these same conclusions apply to special education administrators as well (Careb, 1984; Cooper, 1986; *Special Education*, 2001).

A similar sentiment regarding the challenges faced by special educators was noted a year earlier by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC, 2000), when they reported:

Current special education teaching conditions have pushed the field into crisis, with students with disabilities sometimes receiving less than adequate instruction and special education teachers leaving the profession in record

numbers... The problem rests not with the special education teachers but with a system that requires them to complete overwhelming amounts of paperwork and carry high caseloads among other problems, all with too little support. (p.

1)

In a CEC member survey (CEC Digest, 1989), “60% of the respondents rated work-related stress between 7 and 9 on a 10-point scale. Major causes of stress included too much paperwork, lack of time, attitudes of others, and student behavior” (p. 2). Cooper (1986) found in his study of New York special education administrators that “though a small percentage of individuals may be considered burned out (13.5%), the sizable percentage of special education administrators in potential danger of burnout (39.6%) should cause special education administrators to consider their at risk potential for job-related burnout” (p. 97).

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA-97)

Congress enacted legislation (P.L. 94-142) designed to support the public education of students with disabilities that interfered with their academic success. Despite the best of intentions and significant progress made in the education of all children, special education programs suffer from several fundamental flaws that may contribute to burnout. The Thomas B. Fordham Foundation (2001), a conservative think tank, recently noted:

Twenty-five years after President Ford signed the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, we are not educating many disabled children to a satisfactory level of skills and knowledge. Too often we are frustrating their parents, distracting their teachers, hobbling their schools, and making it harder

to keep order in their classrooms, all this despite the best of intentions and the most earnest of efforts by families, educators and policymakers (p. 336).

Additionally, because of IDEA's legalistic orientation, Thomas B. Fordham Foundation (2001) reports, "some parents (often egged on by eager attorneys) opt for the adversarial procedures of due process hearings and litigation rather than conferring with their child's teachers and school administrators" (p. 340). These adversarial legal conflicts may contribute to burnout, making this a quintessential example of the relationship between conflict and burnout.

Burnout Among Special Education Administrators

A review of the literature on burnout shows that seven general factors have been found that contribute to burnout among special education administrators. These factors are summarized in Table 6.

Depersonalization – the feeling that one's subordinates or students really have no feelings and don't matter much anyway – was the most frequently cited contributor to burnout. Another contributor, Emotional Exhaustion – the feeling of being emotionally overextended by the demands of work – was particularly prevalent. The third item, Personal Accomplishment, has to do with how important a contribution one is making toward achieving a goal. A small victory in an important struggle can result in an improved sense of Personal Accomplishment. A small defeat in an important struggle can result in a low sense of Personal Accomplishment. A low sense of Personal Accomplishment is generally associated with higher burnout. Student characteristics have been identified as a source of burnout for some. Their dress, their speech and mannerisms all may prove to be sources of stress for certain

educators. A perceived lack of Administrative support may also prove overly burdensome. For example, a constant struggle to acquire resources and personnel, or a refusal to accept recommendations from subordinates, if it is perceived as stemming from a lack of support from superiors, may contribute to burnout. Resource shortages have always been a potential source of debilitating stress for educators, who are constantly pressed to “do more and more with less and less”. Finally, the requirements of the job may make the profession of special education administration inherently stressful for many.

Table 6

Factors That Contribute to Burnout Among Special Education Administrators

Research Studies	Factors That Contribute to Burnout						
	Emotional Exhaustion	Low Personal Accomplishment	Depersonalization	Student Characteristics	Lack of Admin. Support	Resource Shortages	Job Requirements
Berg (1994)	*	*	*				
Brouwers, Evers, & Tomic (1999)	*	*	*				
Caliber Associates (1999)	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Careb (1984)	*	*	*				
CEC (2000)					*	*	*
CEC (2001b)					*	*	*
Cooley (1995)				*	*	*	*
Cooper (1986)	*	*	*		*	*	*
Dannemiller (1992)	*	*	*				*
Davis (1985)					*	*	*
Dedrick & Raschke (1990)				*	*		
Dobbs (1997)							*
Edmonson & Thompson (2000)	*	*	*				
Golembiewski et al. (1998)	*	*	*				
Hersom (1993)					*		*
Huang (1999)	*	*	*	*			
Logue (1992)			*	*	*		*
Riffel (1986)	*	*	*				
Schambier (1981)					*		
Smith (1985)	*	*	*				

Approaches to Managing Burnout

Not all stress is bad, nor does all stress necessarily lead to burnout. When properly managed, stress can serve as a key to successful job performance. There is a link between pressure and performance in schools, and it is important to recognize stress as both a facilitator and debilitator of effective performance. There are factors that may influence the degree to which special education administrators are affected by stress resulting from pressure to improve student achievement. Studies by Dannemiller (1992) and Edmonson and Thompson (2000) found a relationship between seniority on the job and debilitating stress and burnout among special education administrators. That is, as individuals grow older and more experienced, their perspective on stressful events and activities changes and/or their coping mechanisms improve.

Several approaches to managing excessive stress and reducing burnout among special educators have been advanced. Methods of dealing with stress include stress management workshops and peer collaboration programs (Cooley, 1995). Standardized mediation classes have been shown to significantly reduce teachers' perceived stress even when used only 2-5 times per week (Anderson, Levinson, Barker, & Kiewra, 1999). Maslach (1982) suggested that special education directors who are experiencing feelings of intense depersonalization should strive for "detached concern". According to Maslach, "Detached concern is that ideal blend of compassion and objectivity that many people workers strive for. The provider is genuinely concerned about people's well-being but has some psychological distance from their problems" (1982, p. 147). Burdon (1982) identified three stages of teacher

development, based on years in the profession. How school administrators help teachers meet job-induced stress varies by developmental stage. Berg (1994), in studying the recommendations of school staff noted that when asked to identify organizational interventions to reduce burnout in staff, over half of the respondents in his study cited the following: (a) involving staff in decision making, (b) involving staff in program development, and (c) involving staff in goal setting.

Perhaps surprisingly, some educators respond to stress by increasing the effort they expend on the job. Principals in one study identified their own personal preferences for coping with stress on the job to prevent burnout. Workaholic activities were the coping strategy preferred by these principals dealing with stress. Workaholic activities include taking work home and working on the weekends (Shumate, 1999). Interventions that have proven effective, to varying degrees, in dealing with burnout among special education administrators are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7

Interventions in Special Education Administrator Burnout

Research Studies	Factors That Help Resolve Burnout									
	Collaborative Peer Relations	Detached Concern	Balanced Life	Working Conditions	Better Training	Participatory Decisions	Accountability	Meditation	Job Flexibility	Physical Activity
AACTE (2001)							*			
Anderson et al. (1999)								*		
Berg (1994)	*		*	*	*	*			*	
Brouwers (1999)	*									
Caliber Associates (1999)	*		*		*					
CEC (1989)			*		*					
CEC (2000)	*				*	*	*			
Cooley (1995)	*				*					
Cooper (1986)	*		*						*	*
Logue (1992)	*		*	*	*				*	
Maslach (1982)		*								
Schambier (1981)	*					*				
Worterklaerungen (2002)			*							*

Summary

As illustrated in this chapter, a review of the literature shows that few studies address the area of organizational conflict as it applies solely to education. With the exception of the studies by Neff (1986) and DiPaola and Hoy (2001), most of the literature addresses conflict in other than academic-specific situations, drawing heavily on business and other human service provider applications. Conflict is an

interactive process, occurring when two or more groups with incompatible interests vie for common resources. Historically, response to conflict has run the gamut from being identified as a destructive force and something to be avoided at all costs, through a period of general acceptance, and finally to one of being embraced as a precursor to growth. Whether a conflict is functional or dysfunctional, or cognitive or affective is critical in determining its long-term impact. Conflict is something to be managed, rather than resolved, and the various models of conflict management embody from two to five basic management styles. Finally, the gender of the manager may influence choice of management style, with women tending toward compromise and avoiding styles, and men tending toward a more dominating style.

While a body of research was found on conflict in education, much more has been written on burnout as it effects education. A large body of literature addresses the stressors unique to those involved with special education in particular, primarily involving teachers, and to a lesser extent, special education administrators. The small number of research studies specifically addressing burnout among special education administrators was noted in *Burnout Among Special Educators: A Meta Analysis*, by Edmonson and Thompson (2000). The researchers stated: "Of the 470 primary [burnout research] studies initially identified by the search procedure, 230 were classified as actually addressing special educator burnout. Of these, only 123 presented quantitative findings, and only 46 studies contained sufficient data for further quantitative synthesis [through meta-analysis]" (p. 14).

Burnout refers to an extreme form of job stress, "a response to the chronic emotional strain of dealing extensively with other human beings, particularly when

they are troubled or having problems” (Maslach, 1982, p. 3). Burnout is best plotted as being on a continuum, traveling through various stages, rather than a discrete condition. Contributing factors among special education administrators include the nature of the organizational structure, administrative bureaucracy, and the federal, state and local regulations governing special education programs. In addition to addressing these causal factors, burnout may be reduced or eliminated through the use of stress management workshops and peer collaboration programs.

According to Edmonson and Thompson (2002), the only relationship between conflict and burnout specified quantitatively in the literature was the relationship between role conflict and emotional exhaustion, one of the indices of burnout according to Maslach (1982). This correlation was seen to have a medium effect size of .380. Additionally, a medium-sized effect of -.330 was noted between the indices of role expectations conflict and personal accomplishment. This negative value indicates an inverse relationship, wherein personal accomplishment decreases as role expectation conflict increases.

Despite this rather inconclusive connection in the literature, or perhaps because of the lack of an obvious relationship between the two, there is merit in studying the relationship, if any, between the way special education administrators deal with organizational conflict and their perceptions of stress and burnout. If such a connection can be made, further research should be encouraged to see if changing the way we handle organizational conflict in special education will prove effective in reducing stress and burnout. If stress and burnout can be reduced, will people then be

more inclined to seek, and remain in, special education administrative and professorate positions?

The next chapter will discuss the specific methodology used in this research study to quantify the relationship between conflict and burnout. Once this relationship has been quantifiably described, measured, and reported, recommended actions and a summary section will follow.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if the methods of managing organizational conflict within Virginia school district special education programs are significantly related to the perceptions of burnout among directors of special education programs in those districts. One hundred thirty-nine special education directors were surveyed in order to ascertain their perceptions in two areas: (a) how prevalent is conflict in their organizations and how do they manage it; and (b) what are their perceptions of burnout as it applies to the position of director of special education programs.

Two data collection procedures were used, employing Likert-scale assessment instruments designed to measure attitudes surrounding organizational conflict and burnout. The assessment instruments were analyzed in accordance with the publisher's guidelines for these instruments, yielding quantitative results.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

Research Questions Seven research questions addressed the existence and prevalence of organizational conflict and burnout among special education administrators.

1. To what degree does burnout exist among directors of special education programs in Virginia as measured by the variables of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA)?

2. **How prevalent are the dimensions of Intrapersonal (IP), Intragroup (IG), and Intergroup (NG) conflict in the lives of directors of special education programs in Virginia?**
3. **To what degree do directors of special education programs in Virginia handle interpersonal conflict by Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV) or Compromising (CO) styles?**
4. **What is the relationship between the dimensions of conflict (IG, IP, NG) and the dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?**
5. **What is the relationship between interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) and dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?**
6. **What is the relationship between interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) and dimensions of conflict (IG, NG, IP) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?**
7. **What is the relationship between dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA), the dimensions of conflict (IG, IP, NG), and interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?**

Research Hypothesis– The following hypothesis was developed to address the correlation between organizational conflict and burnout

1. **There is a significant correlation ($p < .05$) between the way directors of special education programs manage organizational conflict, the dimensions in**

which they experience conflict, and the rate and intensity of burnout factors among those directors.

Variables

Independent Variables

The scores generated using the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory, Part I and Part II (ROCI-I and II), determined the independent variables in this study. The relationship between these variables is shown in Figure 4. The ROCI-I provided:

Intrapersonal Conflict (IP) – How individual group members handle conflict within themselves.

Intergroup Conflict (IG) – How conflict between different groups is handled.

Intragroup Conflict (NG) – How conflict within a given group is handled.

From ROCI-II came the styles of dealing with interpersonal conflict.

Integrating (IN) – Exchanging information and examining differences of opinion to reach a solution acceptable to both parties.

Obliging (OB) – Attempting to play down differences and emphasize commonalities to satisfy the concern of the other party.

Dominating (DO) – A win-lose orientation, forcing behavior to win one's position.

Avoiding (AV) – Withdrawal, “passing-the-buck”, postponing decisions, fails to satisfy concerns of either party.

Compromising (CO) – Intermediate in concern for both self and others, seeking middle-ground solutions.

Additionally, other information from the basic demographic data, to include age data, sex, and seniority, were assigned as independent variables.

Dependent Variables

The scores generated using the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) determined the dependent variables in this study.

Emotional Exhaustion (EE) – How often a respondent feels emotionally overextended by the demands of work.

Depersonalization (DP) – How often the respondent treats students and colleagues in an unfeeling and impersonal manner.

Personal Accomplishment (PA) – How frequently the individual experiences feelings of personal competence and success through work.

The relationship between the variables is shown in Figure 4.

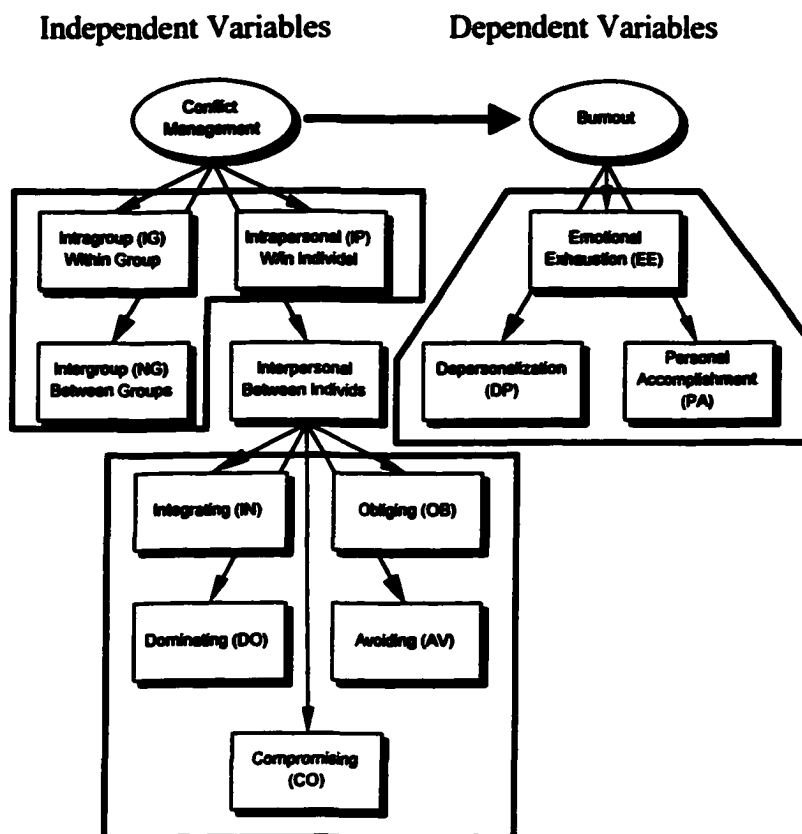


Figure 4. Independent and dependent variables.

Population of Interest

The population for this study consisted of the directors of special education programs in the 132 public school districts in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Several of the smaller school districts do not employ an individual with the title of director of special education, instead assigning those responsibilities to positions named specialist for special education, special programs director, special education coordinator, and the like. Regardless of the titles listed on the individual school district websites, the sample population included those individuals in the district who had overall responsibility for administering special education programs. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) website includes a special education administrator

listing that identifies these key individuals in each school district. On the VDOE website these individuals are simply identified as “directors of special education”. The researcher used this listing to identify the population of interest. The minimum sample size needed to conduct the desired statistical procedures with a medium effect size and 95% confidence factor ($p < 0.5$) was 96 (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). A 72% response rate was required in order to meet the 96-response minimum.

Generalizability

While the federal government mandates for providing special education services are uniform across the nation, states are given latitude in how they interpret those directives in formulating individual state regulations. The state regulations help define the requirements of the job special education administrators must perform. As Virginia regulations differ from those in other states, particularly in the areas of mediation and conflict resolution, the results of this study may be generalized only to special education directors in Virginia. The absence of collective bargaining, due to Virginia’s nonunion status, further impacts the area of conflict resolution. Several studies have been conducted in other states on special education administrator burnout (Carib, 1984; Cooper, 1986; Dannemiller, 1992; Ogden, 1992; Shumate, 1999). Inasmuch as Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) surveys in these other states may or may not resemble the scores in Virginia, some limited generalization to other states may be possible.

Instrumentation

Two commercially available survey instruments were used to conduct the study: The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory and The Maslach Burnout Inventory.

The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory

The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI) was developed to provide a comprehensive measure of how conflict is managed at the organizational level and to provide suggestions for resolution. When measuring organizational conflict, four factors should be examined: (a) the amount of conflict at the individual, group, and intergroup levels; (b) the styles of handling conflict of the organizational members with superior(s), subordinates, and peers; (c) the sources of (a) and (b); and (d) individual, group, and organizational effectiveness (Rahim, 1985, p. 86).

The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-I (ROCI-I) is a 21-item instrument designed to measure three independent dimensions of organizational conflict: Intrapersonal (IP), Intergroup (IG), and Intragroup (NG). These three types of conflict are measured by seven, eight and six statements, respectively, selected on the basis of factor and item analysis. An organizational member responds to each statement on a 5-point Likert-type scale, with a higher score representing a greater amount of conflict: strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4), and strongly agree (5). The survey takes approximately 6 minutes to complete. Despite the short administration time, it yields reliable measures of the three components of group conflict.

The device has good psychometric data to support validity and reliability. The ROCI-I scales show internal consistency in the high .70s and .80s; test-retest correlations range from .74 to .85 over a one-week period. The correlations among the three scales are .27, .37 and .32. The scales do not correlate significantly with age, experience, or two measures of response bias (social desirability and “lie” scale). The validity evidence is equally supportive. In addition to the factor-analytic results, the scales correlate negatively with measures of organization climate, job satisfaction, and perceptions of organizational effectiveness. Detailed norms are presented for managerial and for collegiate groups. Within the managerial groups, separate means and standard deviations are presented for respondents at different organizational levels, functional areas, and educational levels (Mental Measurements Yearbook, 1989).

The Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) is designed to measure five independent dimensions that represent styles of handling interpersonal conflict: Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV), and Compromising (CO). Forms A, B and C measure how an organizational member handles conflict with his or her boss, subordinates, and peers, respectively. The five styles of conflict are measured by seven, six, five, six, and four statements, respectively, selected on the basis of repeated factor and item analysis. A subject responds to each item on a 5-point Likert scale. The higher the score, the more frequent the use of a given conflict style. The ROCI-II consists of 28 questions and can be administered in just 8 minutes, yet the scales have adequate reliability and validity.

The information gathered from ROCI-I and ROCI-II can be used to address the needs of work groups and teams and to solve workplace conflict (Rahim, 1983). According to the Mental Measurements Yearbook (1989), both of these models are based on sound theory and rationale, have been developed through extensive empirical methods, and have been proven useful in research and practice.

The ROCI-I and the ROCI-II both begin by collecting demographic data on the individual completing the instrument. This information is only collected once per participant, further shortening the assessment administration time. The instruments are self-administered. The directions for completing them are on the questionnaire booklets and corresponding answer sheets. There is no time limit, and omissions are permissible, though not encouraged.

Maslach Burnout Inventory

A widely used and accepted theoretical model of burnout is the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1982). This inventory was the most frequently occurring burnout measure appearing in 43 of the 46-synthesis population primary studies (93.5%) of the Edmonson and Thompson meta-analysis (Edmonson & Thompson, 2000). Table 8 identifies a number of studies where the MBI was the primary burnout assessment instrument. The MBI yields a separate numerical score for each of its three scales. According to the MBI technical manual, each score may be categorized as falling in the low, moderate, or high range of burnout, depending on the third of the normative distribution in which it falls. For interpretive purposes, Maslach recommends that the scores for each scale be considered separately rather than summed to generate a total burnout score (Berg, 1994).

Created by Christine Maslach, the MBI is a 22-item self-assessment tool that measures the three elements central to Maslach's model of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). Maslach defines Emotional Exhaustion as "the tired and fatigued feeling that develops as emotional energies are drained" (Maslach, Jackson, & Leiter, 1996, p. 28). When these feelings become chronic, educators can no longer give of themselves to students. The Emotional Exhaustion scale measures how often a respondent feels emotionally overextended by the demands of work. Educators who no longer have positive feelings about their students are experiencing the second component of burnout, Depersonalization. The Depersonalization scale evaluates how often the respondent treats students and colleagues in an unfeeling and impersonal manner. The third aspect, a feeling of low Personal Accomplishment from the job, is particularly crucial for educators. Most educators enter the profession to help students learn and grow. When they feel they are no longer contributing to students' development, they are vulnerable to experiencing profound disappointment. The Personal Accomplishment scale assesses how frequently an individual experiences feelings of personal competence and success through work (Berg, 1994). Burnout is indicated by higher scores on the Depersonalization and Emotional Exhaustion scales and by lower scores on the Personal Accomplishment scale.

Normative data for the MBI were developed from sample populations that included: k-12 teachers ($N = 4,163$), postsecondary educators ($N = 635$), social service ($N = 1,538$), medicine ($N = 1,104$), mental health ($N = 730$), and other ($N = 2,897$). The reliability of the test is adequately demonstrated in the manual, with

subscale coefficients ranging from .71 to .90 ($N=1,316$). Subscale standards errors of measurement ranged from 3.16 to 3.80. Reported test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from .60 to .82 after 2 to 4 weeks ($N=53$) and .54 to .60 ($N=248$) after 2 years. For the Emotional Exhaustion scale, the alpha coefficient was .90, and a stability coefficient over a 2-week period was .82. For the Depersonalization scale, the alpha coefficient was .79 and the stability coefficient was .60; for the Personal Accomplishment scale, the alpha coefficient was .71 and the stability coefficient was .80. Reliability coefficients were based on samples not used in item selection. Reliability data are reported to be consistent, with a Cronbach alpha estimates ranging from .76 to .90 ($N=469$) and .72 to .88 ($N=462$) (Mental Measurements Yearbook, 1993).

Table 8

Assessment Instruments Used in Burnout Studies

Author	Assessment Instrument	Sample Population	Location of Sampled Population
Begley (1982)	MBI ¹	Special Ed Admin	IL
Berg (1994)	MBI	Special Ed Admin	WA
Careb (1984)	MBI	Special Ed Admin	CT
Cooper (1986)	MBI	Special Ed Admin	NY
Dannemiller (1992)	MBI	Special Ed Admin	WI
Davis (1985)	ASI ²	Education Admin	TN
Dobbs (1997)	BAI ³	Special Ed Admin	GA
Edmonson & Thompson (2000)	MBI	Special Ed Admin	Nationwide
Golembiewski et al. (1998)	MBI	Managers	Worldwide
Huang (1999)	MBI	Special Ed Admin	MN
Napier (1996)		Special Ed Admin	IL
Ogden (1992)	MBI	Special Ed Admin	GA
Riffel (1986)	MBI	Special Ed Admin	KS
Schumate (1999)	MBI	Special Ed Admin	WA
Selaty (1988)		Special Ed Admin	IN
Smith (1982)	MBI	Special Ed Admin	Southeast U.S.
Stouffer (1992)		Special Ed Admin	IA

¹ MBI = Maslach Burnout Inventory.

² ASI = Administrative Stress Index.

³ BAI = Burnout Assessment Inventory.

Changes in Methodology Following Pilot Study

Prior to distributing the surveys to the full study population, these instruments were tested in a pilot study. The researcher had originally sought permission from the publisher to administer the surveys on-line, but permission was

denied, citing possible infringements on copyrights. A transmittal letter and copies of both the ROCI and MBI were hand-delivered to each of the 12 special education coordinators at the Virginia Beach City Public Schools, Office of Programs for Exceptional Children. Following return of the questionnaires, the researcher analyzed the data as described in Appendix F. In addition to the standard questionnaires, ideas were solicited for how to improve the data collection process. The pilot-study surveys were all hand-scored, with results entered into a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) database. Grading the pilot study submissions and entering them into the database took 15 minutes per survey. In an effort to streamline this process and reduce the chances of calculation error, the database and method of entry was modified to more fully utilize the capabilities of the SPSS software, reducing data scoring and entry time to 2 minutes per survey.

Originally, the time required to complete all three surveys was estimated to be 20 minutes. However, the pilot study participants indicated the combined surveys took only 15 minutes to complete. The transmittal letter to the full survey participants was modified to reflect the shorter response time.

The method of contacting study participants in the pilot study differed from that used in the full study. Instead of personally delivering and collecting the surveys from the participants as was done in the pilot study, surveys were distributed via U.S. Postal Service for the full study. This resulted in greater delays in transferring both the surveys and the response cards. Additionally, while the response rate to the pilot study was 100%, this was achieved in large measure due to the researcher's personal

rapport with the study participants. The personal rapport was not a factor in the full study, as the researcher knew very few of the full-study participants personally.

The pilot study data were not subjected to all the statistical analysis techniques used in the full study. Due to the small size of the pilot study, analysis was limited to determining descriptive data and measures of central tendency. The results of the pilot study are displayed in Appendix F.

Procedures

Following completion of the pilot study, a transmittal letter and a copy of both the ROCI-I &II and MBI were mailed to the 139 school district directors of special education (or equivalents) in Virginia. The transmittal letter explained the purpose and significance of the study and assured participants that all information would be held in the strictest confidence. A self-addressed return envelope was provided for return of the surveys. Additionally, a separate stamped, self-addressed post card was enclosed for respondents to return separately from the survey to indicate its completion and request copies of the results of the study. As an added incentive to participate in the study, the researcher attached a \$2.00 bill to each survey as a way of thanking participants in advance for their cooperation.

Up to two follow-up mailings were planned. The first mailing, a reminder postcard, was sent to nonrespondents 10 days after the mailing the initial survey. Ten days later a second follow-up mailing containing another copy of the surveys and response cards (minus the \$2.00 bill) was sent.

Data Analysis

Data gleaned from the returned surveys was analyzed in four ways: Pearson correlation, multiple regression, canonical discriminant analysis, and path analysis. These analyses were used to find evidence to support the hypothesis that measures of organizational conflict correlate significantly with the dimensions of burnout. The analysis was designed to show not only whether the variables correlate in a statistically significant manner, but to also reveal the magnitude of that relationship.

Multiple regression is a statistical process involving the prediction of a variable, given several predictor variables. For the purposes of this research, the multiple dimensions of organizational conflict (IP, IG, NG) and the methods of conflict management (IN, OB, DO, AV, CO) were used to predict the dimensions of burnout (EE, PD, PA).

Canonical discriminant analysis is an extension of multiple regression, the primary difference being that in multiple regression, continuous predictor variables are used to predict a *continuous* criterion variable, whereas in canonical discriminant analysis continuous predictor variables are used to predict a *categorical* variable. In this process, the variables are first compared to each other within the larger groups of organizational conflict and burnout. The variables are distilled into factors that describe the parent sets. These factors are then compared to each other to determine if any significant correlations exist between the larger groups.

Finally, path analysis was used to identify the relationships and patterns among a number of variables. An extension of the multiple regression, path analysis can be used to test the strength of a proposed model showing the relationship between

multiple variables. Path analysis allows a theory to be tested for the existence of causal order among a set of variables.

Each of these analyses yielded progressively more refined information about the relationships between the independent and dependant variables. The first three research questions were descriptive in nature, and were answered directly from the survey instruments. The last four questions were answered using a combination of canonical discriminant analysis, path analysis, and stepwise Regression.

In answering the research questions, the researcher used the results of the analyses described above. The instruments and data analysis planned for each of the research questions are summarized in Table 9. Specifically, the answer to Research Question 1, *"To what degree does burnout affect directors of special education programs in Virginia as measured by the variables of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA)?"*, was taken from scores from the Maslach Burnout Inventory, which yields measures for Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

Question 2, *"How prevalent are the dimensions of Intrapersonal (IP), Intragroup (IG) and Intergroup (NG) conflict in the lives of special education administrators in Virginia?"*, was answered by examining the scores from the ROCI-I. This assessment instrument gives scores for the dimensions of Intrapersonal Conflict (IP), Intragroup Conflict (IG), and Intergroup Conflict (NG).

The third question, *"To what degree do directors of special education handle interpersonal conflict by Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV) or Compromising (CO) styles?"*, was answered based on the results

from the ROCI-II, which measured the degree to which special education administrators use the five conflict management styles of Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV) or Compromising (CO).

The fourth research question, “*What is the correlation between the dimensions of conflict (IG, IP, NG) and the dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?*,” was answered using a combination of statistical and analytical processes. Data generated from the MBI and the ROCI-I were subjected to both a canonical discriminant analysis and a path analysis, in order to determine correlation between the two sets of dimensions.

In the canonical discriminant analysis, the dimensions of organizational conflict and the dimensions of burnout were compared against each other to determine possible correlations. Additionally, these two sets of measures were distilled into two summation factors, which were then compared to each other to determine significant correlation between these factors. (See Figure 5.)

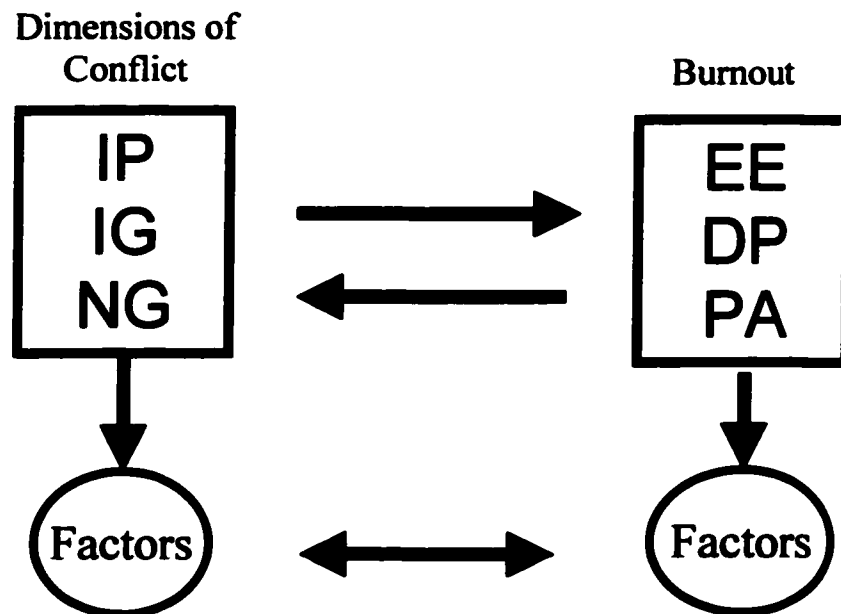


Figure 5. Canonical discriminant analysis for question 4.

Next, the path analysis model analyzed any existing correlation between the burnout and organizational conflict constructs by examining the respective measures of burnout, and the measures of the dimensions of organizational conflict (Figure 6).

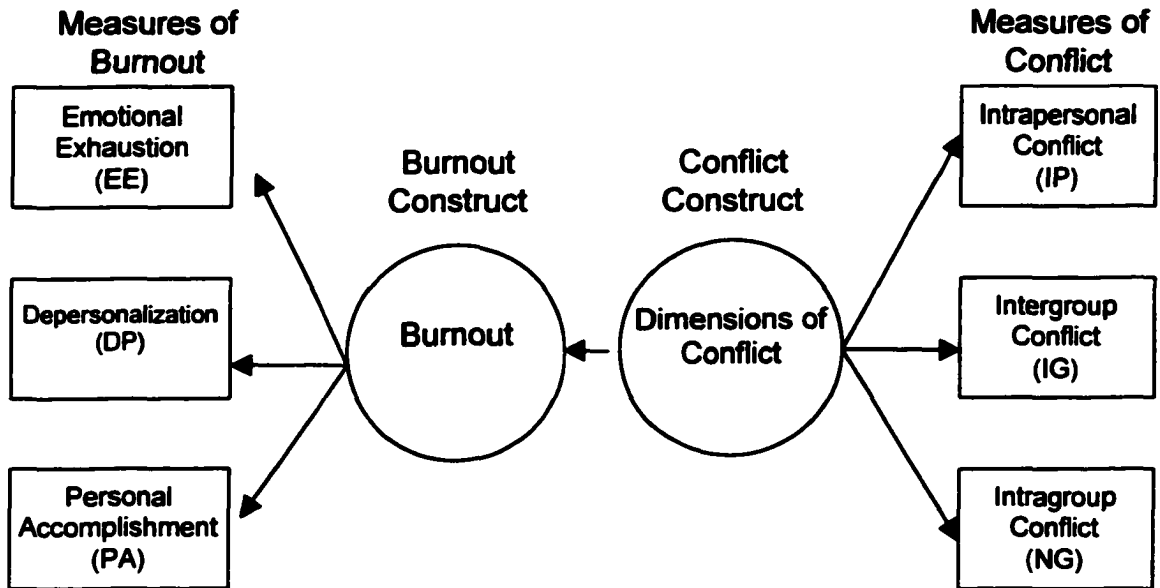


Figure 6. Path analysis for question 4.

The fifth research question, *“What is the correlation between interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) and dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?”* was also answered using a combination of statistical and analytical processes. Once again, both the canonical discriminant analysis and the path analysis were used to analyze data collected from the MBI and the ROCI-II (See Figures 5 and 6). This helped determine the correlation between the scores on the two instruments.

In the canonical discriminant analysis, the organizational conflict management styles and the dimensions of burnout were compared to determine possible

correlations. Additionally, these two sets of measures were distilled into two summation factors, which were then compared to determine significant correlation between these factors (see Figure 7).

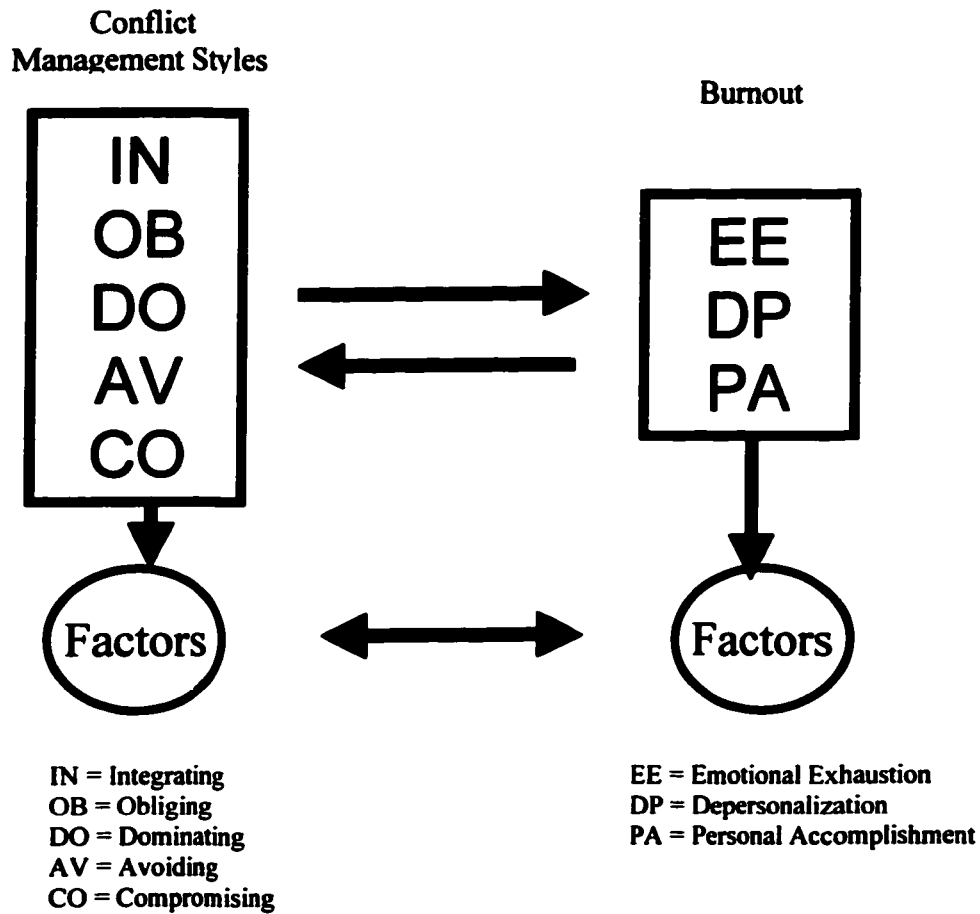


Figure 7. Canonical discriminant analysis for question 5.

As in the previous example, the path analysis was used to determine any existing correlation between the burnout and organizational conflict management styles constructs by examining the respective measures of burnout and the measures of the organizational conflict management styles (see Figure 8).

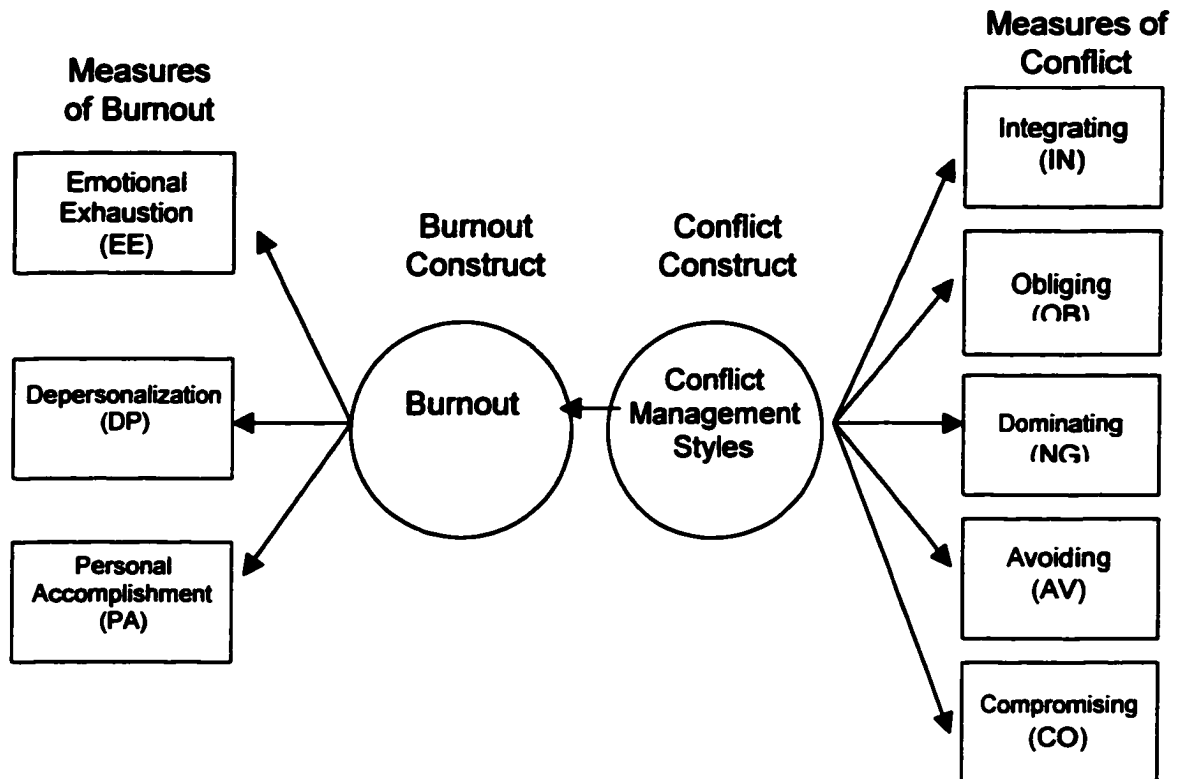


Figure 8. Path analysis for question 5.

The sixth research question, “*What is the relationship between interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) and dimensions of conflict (IG, NG, IP) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?*,” was also answered using a combination of statistical and analytical processes. Once again, both the canonical discriminant analysis and the path analysis were used to analyze data collected from the ROCI-I and the ROCI-II (see Figures 9 and 10). This helped determine the correlation between the scores on the two instruments.

In the canonical discriminant analysis, the organizational conflict management styles and the dimensions of conflict were compared to determine possible correlations. Additionally, these two sets of measures were distilled into two

summation factors, which were then compared to determine significant correlation between these factors (see Figure 9).

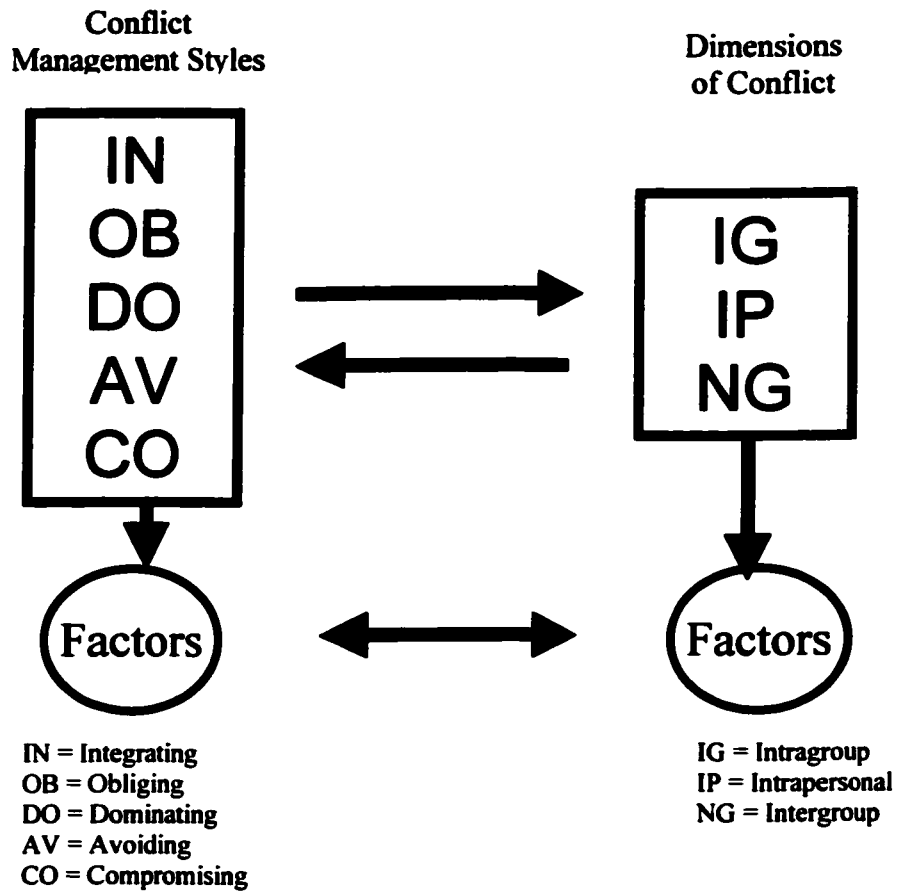


Figure 9. Canonical discriminant analysis for question 6.

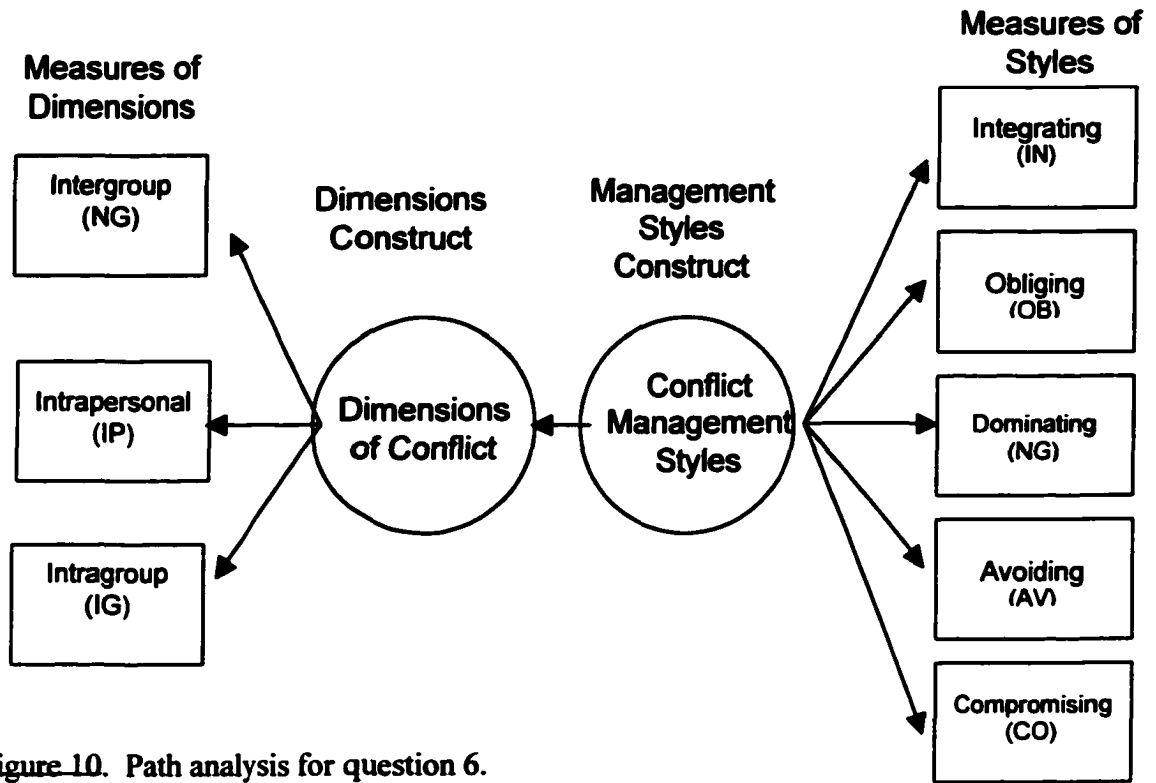


Figure 10. Path analysis for question 6.

For the seventh and final research question, *“What are the correlations between dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA), the dimensions of conflict (IG, IP, NG), and interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?”* a combination of path analysis and multiple regression with blocks was used. The goal of this final question was to determine correlations between all three sets of variables: dimensions of burnout, dimensions of conflict and conflict management styles. The first path analysis allowed us to determine both the direct relationship between organizational conflict management styles and burnout, and the indirect relationship of management styles as affected by the dimensions of conflict, on burnout. This path analysis is illustrated in Figure 11.

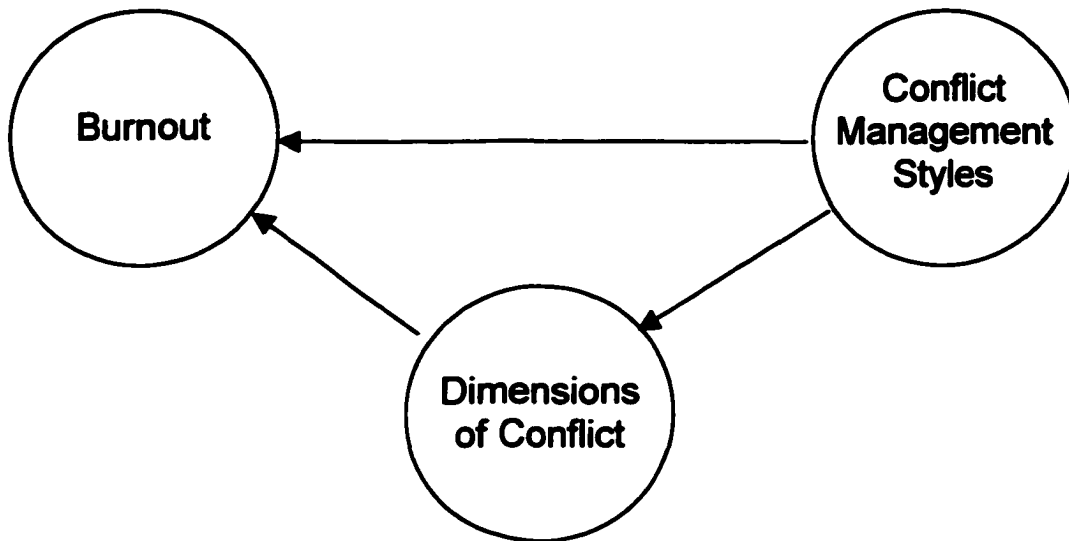


Figure 11. Path analysis for question 7 – management styles, direct and indirect.

The corollary path allowed us to determine both the direct relationship between dimensions of conflict and burnout and the indirect relationship of dimensions as affected by the organizational conflict management styles on burnout. This path analysis is illustrated in Figure 12.

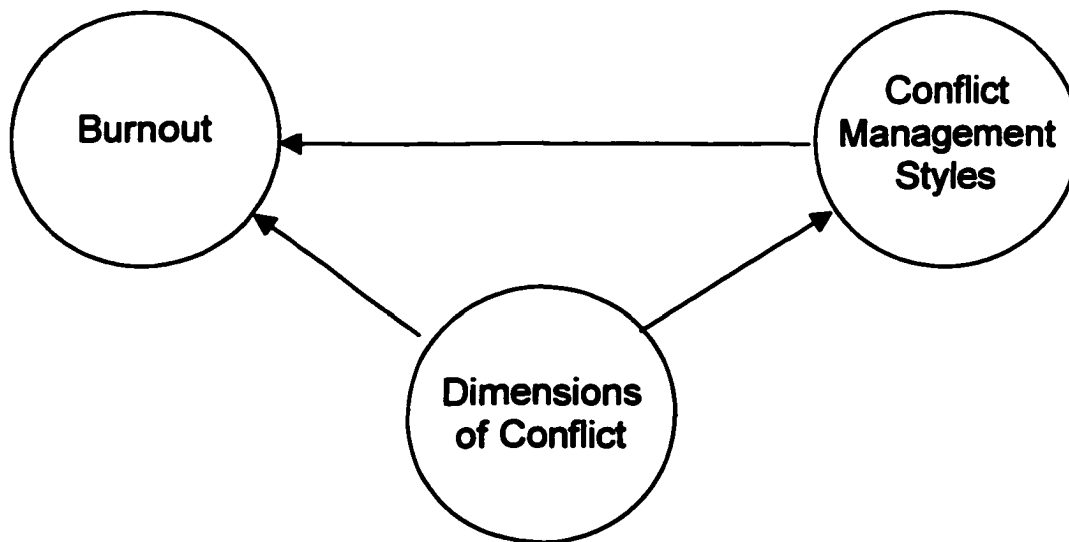


Figure 12. Alternate Path analysis for question 7 – dimensions of conflict, direct and indirect.

A statistically significant relationship between the organizational conflict and the burnout variables on the questionnaires would mean support for the research hypothesis, *“There is a significant relationship ($p < .05$) between the way directors of special education manage organizational conflict, and the rate and intensity of burnout factors among those directors.”*

Table 9 displays all seven research questions, along with the corresponding assessment instrument and methods of data analysis used. The questions move from being simply descriptive in nature, through more sophisticated analytical techniques, ending with an analysis of all three constructs using three statistical processes.

Table 9

Research Questions, Instruments, and Data Analysis

Number	Research Question	Instrument	Data Analysis
1.	To what degree does burnout affect directors of special education programs in Virginia as measured by the variables of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA)?	Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI)	Descriptive
2.	How prevalent are the dimensions of Intrapersonal (IP), Intragroup (IG) and Intergroup (NG) conflict in the lives of directors of special education programs in Virginia?	Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-I (ROCI-I)	Descriptive
3.	To what degree do directors of special education programs in Virginia handle interpersonal conflict by Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV) or Compromising (CO) styles?	Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II)	Descriptive
4.	What is the correlation between the dimensions of conflict (IG, IP, NG) and the dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?	(ROCI-I) and (MBI)	Canonical & path analysis
5.	What is the correlation between interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) and dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?	(ROCI-II) and (MBI)	Canonical & path analysis
6.	What is the relationship between interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) and dimensions of conflict (IG, NG, IP) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?	(ROCI-I) and (ROCI-II)	Canonical & path analysis
7.	What are the correlations between dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA), the dimensions of conflict (IG, IP, NG), and interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO)?	(MBI) and (ROCI-I) and (ROCI-II)	Canonical & path analysis & stepwise multiple regression

Ethical Safeguards

The study was conducted in a manner that protected the anonymity of the participating directors of special education programs. To protect the confidentiality of those involved in the study, only the participant's identification number was indicated on the questionnaires, not the administrator's name or school district. The administrators were asked to return post cards, included in the survey packages, to indicate they had completed the survey and whether they want a copy of the results. The post card was used to check off participation of specific school districts for the purposes of documenting the study's generalizability and determining the need for follow-up with administrators who do not respond to the initial mailing.

In the letter of transmittal, the researcher made a commitment to protect the confidentiality of the participating administrators and their school districts. The research proposal was approved by the Human Subjects Committee of The College of William & Mary, and the study was conducted in accordance with acceptable research practices. The results of this study were mailed to all participants who requested a copy.

Chapter 4: Analysis of the Results

The primary purpose of this study was to determine if the methods of managing organizational conflict within Virginia school district special education programs were significantly related to the perceptions of burnout among directors of special education programs in those districts. While the survey was prepared and ready to mail the first week of December, rather than risk being misplaced during the preholiday activities, the survey packages were mailed to participants on January 6, to arrive shortly after the start of the new year. In accordance with the research plan, 139 directors of special education programs, as identified by the Virginia Department of Education, received three mailed survey instruments. The population included the 132 school district directors as well as seven directors of state-operated facilities that serve students with disabilities.

The population of special education directors was surveyed to ascertain their perceptions in three areas: (a) how do they manage conflict in their organizations; (b) in what domain is this conflict most prevalent; and (c) what are their perceptions of burnout as it applies to the position of director of special education programs? The data collection procedure employed Likert-scale assessment instruments designed to measure attitudes surrounding organizational conflict and burnout, and a short fill-in-the-blanks demographic section. The assessment instruments were analyzed and scored in accordance with the publisher's guidelines for these instruments, yielding quantitative results.

Return Rate

Within the first 10 days of mailing the 139 questionnaires and cover letters, 87 responses (63%) had been returned. A letter reminder was sent out to 56 nonrespondents, resulting in an additional 19 responses in the following 10 days. A third and final reminder with another copy of the survey was sent to 33 nonrespondents, yielding an additional 23 responses. These added up to an overall response rate of 92.8% ($N = 129$). Of these, two responses were unusable in some respect due to significant omissions of data. One respondent did not answer the demographics portion of the survey. Another failed to complete the third survey on dimensions of conflict. A third respondent returned the postcard, declining to participate in the survey.

In 22 cases, individual questionnaires were missing responses to only a few items. In these cases, arithmetic means were entered in place of the missing data, and the analysis continued. Seventy-six participants (60% of respondents) requested a summary of the results following completion of the research project.

Demographic Information

The survey included eight questions to provide background information on the respondents. Appendix B contains the demographic survey used in this research. Respondents were asked to provide age (five-year groupings from 25 to 66+), years in education, years in education administration, years in special education administration, their sex and their bosses' sex, highest educational level achieved, and their position in the school district. Additionally, the researcher added total student population for each of the districts as found on the Virginia Department of Education

website. Means and standard deviations for the numerical information are summarized in Table 10.

Table 10

Means and Standard Deviations for Age, Years of Teaching Experience, Years of Administrative Experience, Years of Special Education Administrative Experience

Factor	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	Range
Age in years	47.2	6.4	31-65
Years in education	24.9	6.4	4 - 38
Years of administrative experience	11.5	7.4	1 - 32
Years of special education administrative experience	10.4	7.7	1 - 33

Educational Level

A multiple-choice question was asked about the level of education of the evaluatee. Respondents were asked to indicate if their highest level of education was bachelor's degree, some graduate work, master's degree, some postgraduate work, or postgraduate degree. A majority of the respondents (39%) had completed some postgraduate work, with 30% holding master's degrees and 31% holding postgraduate degrees. Frequency counts and percentages for respondents' education levels are presented in Table 11.

Table 11

Highest Educational Level of Respondents

Education Level	Frequency Count	Percentage
Bachelor's degree	0	0
Some graduate work	0	0
Master's degree	36	30
Some postgraduate work	47	39
Postgraduate degree	37	31
Total	120	100%

Sex of Respondents and Supervisors

Respondents were asked to identify their sex and the sex of their bosses. The sex of the respondent may have an impact on the preferred style of conflict management. Additionally, respondents with same-sex bosses may relate differently in conflict situations from individuals with bosses of the opposite sex. (See Appendix E for a more in-depth analysis of these issues.) The frequency counts and percentages of respondent and bosses' sex are presented in Table 12.

Table 12

Sex of Respondents and Bosses

	Number	Percentage
Total male respondents	31	26%
Total female respondents	89	74%
Male bosses	76	63%
Female bosses	44	37%
Males with male boss	23	19%
Males with female boss	8	7%
Females with male boss	53	44%
Females with female boss	36	30%

The Virginia Department of Education website identifies 103 (74 %) of the directors of special education programs as female and 36 (26%) as male. Of the total number who responded to the survey, 89 (74%) were female and 31 (26%) were male. These individuals generally reported directly to the school district superintendent, who tended to be predominantly male 76 (63%). Two respondents neglected to identify their bosses' sex, either by design or oversight. This missing information was obtained from school district websites and entered into the database.

Organizational Level

Respondents were asked to identify their organizational level. Possible responses included special education director, other director, special education coordinator, other school district administrator, special education teacher, or general

education teacher. Since this study was designed to evaluate the responses of administrators responsible for special education programs, any respondents who identified themselves as either special education teacher or general education teacher would have been excluded from the analysis. The frequency counts and percentages of respondents reported by organizational level are listed in Table 13.

Table 13

Organizational Level of Respondents

Organizational Level	N	Percentage
Special education director	92	77%
Director, other	20	17%
Special education coordinator	5	4%
School district administrator, other	3	2%
Special education teacher	0	0
General education teacher	0	0
Total	120	100%

These survey respondents were identified by the Virginia Department of Education as the individuals responsible for administering the special education programs in the local school districts. Accordingly, 92 of the respondents (77%) identified themselves as special education director.

Survey Response

The first responses arrived within 48 hours of initial mailing. Responses peaked on day 5, with a total of 21 surveys (15%) being received on that day. Most of

the surveys returned after the second follow-up letter were the original survey, not the copy sent with the second letter, making it difficult to determine if these responses were triggered by the second letter, or if they would have been anyway. By the end of the data collection phase, 129 surveys (93%) had been returned.

A Pearson correlation was run on the full database to determine if there was a significant relationship between the size of the school district and whether or not the director in that district responded to the survey. The presence or absence of a survey response was entered into the database as either a 1 or 2 respectively. The correlation of .236 is significant at the .01 level. The results of this correlation are displayed in Table 14.

Table 14

Correlation Between School District Population and Survey Completion Rate

		DIVPOP	RESPONSE
DIVPOP	Pearson correlation	1	.236**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.006
	<u>N</u>	134	134
RESPONSE	Pearson correlation	.236**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.006	.
	<u>N</u>	134	139

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This analysis revealed that the completion rate of the survey corresponded inversely to the size of the school district. Eighty-eight percent of school districts with less than 10,000 students responded to the survey. Only 78% of those with more than 10,000 students responded. Additionally, of the 20 smallest districts in the state, 19 responded (95%). In contrast, of the 20 largest districts in the state, only 13 responded (65%). Further information on the research process actually used, including data on when responses were received, is displayed in Appendix C.

Additional Observations

Although this was to be strictly a quantitative survey, many of the respondents added handwritten notes on the margins of the pages. Usually only a few words in length, these notes addressed a wide range of comments. Many were notes of personal encouragement to the researcher. Others included comments about specific statements in the survey. Several respondents commented on the \$2 dollar bill included with each survey as an inducement to participate. Surprisingly, 15 respondents (11%) returned the \$2 dollars. One respondent felt inclined to return the cash, but was apparently struck by the novelty of a \$2 bill, so in place of the original \$2 bill, this person returned two single dollar bills. Another reported feeling uncomfortable keeping the \$2.00, and donated it to the office coffee fund. Still others apologized for turning in their responses after the requested return date.

One respondent completely skipped the demographics info. Another skipped the dimensions of conflict survey. Twenty-two individuals skipped questions dealing with students on the burnout Inventory. The full texts of the comments are included in Appendix D.

Measures of Burnout

The first of the three surveys included in the survey packet was the Maslach Burnout Inventory. Designed to measure indices of burnout, this instrument consists of 22 questions with responses indicated on a 7-point Likert scale. Respondents were asked how often they experienced the listed condition, with answers ranging from 0 (Never) to 6 (Every Day). These responses were divided into three groups, yielding three indicators of burnout – Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP),

and Personal Accomplishment (PA). Burnout is generally indicated by higher scores on the EE and DP scales, and by lower scores on the PA scale.

Individual Survey Item Analysis on the Maslach Burnout Inventory

The survey questions were disaggregated to determine the three indices of burnout – Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. Participants were asked to note how often they agreed with the statements using a seven-point Likert scale as follows:

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Never	A few times a year or or less	Once a month or less	A few times a month	Once a week	A few times a week	Every day

Emotional Exhaustion is a measure that quantifies how often a respondent feels emotionally overextended by the demands of work. Higher levels of burnout are generally associated with higher measures of EE. Emotional Exhaustion was evaluated using nine indicator statements. These stems, as pulled from the actual instruments, along with the response means and standard deviations, are presented in Table 15.

Table 15

Emotional Exhaustion Indicators

Statement	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
I feel emotionally drained from my work	3.7	1.4
I feel used up at the end of the workday.	3.8	1.4
I feel fatigued when I get up in the morning and have to face another day on the job.	2.6	1.7
Working with people all day is really a strain for me	1.7	1.5
I feel burned out from my work.	2.2	1.5
I feel frustrated by my job.	3.2	1.6
I feel I'm working too hard on my job.	3.4	1.8
Working with people directly puts too much stress on me.	1.4	1.5
I feel like I'm at the end of my rope	1.3	1.4
Subtest Mean and Standard Deviation	2.6	1.5

Note: A summary of the Emotional Exhaustion scores is presented in Table 27.

Depersonalization is identified as a syndrome of burnout and is a measure of how often the respondent treats students and colleagues in an unfeeling and impersonal manner. Higher levels of burnout are generally associated with higher measures of DP. The index of Depersonalization (DP) was determined using five indicator statements. Indicator statements, means and standard deviations for DP are presented in Table 16.

Table 16

Depersonalization Indicators

Statement	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
I feel I treat some students as if they were impersonal objects.	0.4	0.7
I've become more callous toward other people since I took this job.	1.4	1.4
I worry that this job is hardening me emotionally.	1.5	1.6
I don't really care what happens to some students.	0.2	0.7
I feel my students blame me for some of their problems.	1.2	1.2
Subtest Mean and Standard Deviation	0.9	1.1

Personal Accomplishment is a measure of how frequently the individual experiences feelings of personal competence and success through work. Higher levels of burnout are generally associated with lower measures of PA. The index of Personal Accomplishment (PA) was determined using eight indicator statements. Indicator statements, means and standard deviations for PA are presented in Table 17.

Table 17

Personal Accomplishment Indicators

Statement	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
I can easily understand how my students feel about things.	5.1	1.3
I deal very effectively with the problems of my students.	5.3	1.0
I feel I'm positively influencing other people's lives through my work.	4.9	1.3
I feel very energetic.	4.6	1.3
I can easily create a relaxed atmosphere with my students.	5.0	1.3
I feel exhilarated after working closely with my students.	4.6	1.5
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in this job.	4.6	1.4
In my work, I deal with emotional problems very calmly.	5.3	0.9
Subtest Mean and Standard Deviation	4.91	1.3

Conflict Management Styles

Survey II dealt with issues of organizational conflict management, as identified using the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI)-II. In this survey, participants were presented with a series of statements and asked to rate their levels of agreement with the statements. Ratings fell along a 5-point Likert scale (as opposed to the 7-point scale used in the first survey instrument.) The level of agreement was rated as follows:

1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree

In scoring the instrument, the values were inverted prior to analysis, as instructed in the directions provided by the survey publisher. As a result, a score of “5” indicates strong agreement, whereas a score of “1” indicates strong disagreement. The values in the following tables have been inverted when needed to provide greater clarity and consistency in interpreting the data across both conflict instruments.

The Integrating style of conflict management involves the exchange of information and an examination of differences to reach a solution acceptable to both parties. It is associated with problem solving that may lead to creative solutions. The index of Integrating (IN) was determined using seven indicator statements. Indicator statements, means, and standard deviations for IN are presented in Table 18.

Table 18

Integrating (IN) Conflict Management Style

Statement	<u>M^a</u>	<u>SD</u>
I try to investigate an issue with my boss to find a solution that is acceptable to us.	1.5	0.8
I try to integrate my ideas with those of my boss to come up with a decision jointly.	1.7	0.8
I try to work with my boss to find solutions to a problem which will satisfy our expectations.	1.2	0.7
I exchange accurate information with my boss to solve a problem together.	1.4	0.6
I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.	1.6	0.6
I collaborate with my boss to come up with decisions that are acceptable to us.	1.6	0.6
I try to work with my boss for a proper understanding of the problem.	1.4	0.5
Subtest Mean and Standard Deviation	1.52	.47

^a Mean scores inverted for clarity and to maintain congruence with the Likert scale.

The Obliging conflict management style attempts to downplay differences and emphasize commonalities to satisfy the other party. Thus, an obliging person neglects his or her own concerns to satisfy the concerns of the other party. The index of Obliging (OB) was determined using six indicator statements. Indicator statements, means and standard deviations for OB are presented in Table 19.

Table 19

Obliging (OB) Conflict Management Style

Statement	<u>M</u> ^a	<u>SD</u>
I generally try to satisfy the needs of my boss.	1.9	1.0
I usually communicate the wishes of my boss.	2.0	0.8
I give in to the wishes of my boss.	3.0	1.0
I usually allow concessions to my boss.	2.5	1.0
I often go along with the suggestions of my boss	2.4	0.9
I try to satisfy the expectations of my boss.	1.8	0.7
Subtest Mean and Standard Deviation	2.27	.62

^a Mean scores inverted for clarity and to maintain congruence with the Likert scale.

The Dominating conflict management style is identified by a win-lose orientation or with forcing behavior to win one's position. A dominating or competing person goes to any measure to win his or her objective and, as a result, often ignores the needs and expectations of the other party. The index of Dominating (DO) was determined using five indicator statements. Indicator statements, means, and standard deviations for DO are presented in Table 20.

Table 20

Dominating Conflict Management Style

Statement	<u>M</u> ^A	<u>SD</u>
I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.	2.5	1.0
I use my authority to make a decision in my favor.	3.6	1.0
I use my expertise to make a decision in my favor.	2.5	1.0
I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue	2.4	1.1
I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation.	3.4	1.0
Subtest Mean and Standard Deviation	2.86	.66

^A Mean scores inverted for clarity and to maintain congruence with the Likert scale.

The Avoiding conflict management style is associated with withdrawal, passing the buck, or sidestepping situations. It may take the form of postponing an issue or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. An avoiding person fails to satisfy his or her own concerns as well as those of the other party. The index of Avoiding (AV) was determined using six indicator statements. Indicator statements, means, and standard deviations for AV are presented in Table 21.

Table 21

Avoiding Conflict Management Style

Statement	<u>M</u> ^a	<u>SD</u>
I attempt to avoid being “put on the spot” and try to keep my conflict with my boss to myself.	2.6	1.2
I usually avoid open discussions of my differences with my boss.	3.2	1.4
I try to stay away from disagreement with my boss.	2.7	1.1
I avoid an encounter with my boss.	3.7	1.1
I try to keep my disagreement with my boss to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.	2.8	1.1
I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my boss.	2.2	1.0
Subtest Mean and Standard Deviation	2.87	.81

^a Mean scores inverted for clarity and to maintain congruence with the Likert scale.

The **Compromising conflict management style is intermediate in both concerns for self and for others. It involves sharing, whereby both parties give up something to make a mutually acceptable decision. It may mean splitting the difference, exchanging concessions, or seeking a middle-ground position. The index of Compromising (CO) was determined using four indicator statements. Indicator statements, means, and standard deviations for CO are presented in Table 22.**

Table 22

Compromising (CO) Conflict Management Style

Statement	<u>M^a</u>	<u>SD</u>
I try to find a middle course to resolve an impasse.	2.0	0.8
I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.	2.1	0.7
I negotiate with my boss so that a compromise can be reached.	2.1	0.8
I use “give and take” so that a compromise can be made.	1.9	0.8
Subtest Mean and Standard Deviation	2.03	.60

^a Mean scores inverted for clarity and to maintain congruence with the Likert scale.

Dimensions of Organizational Conflict

The final survey participants were asked to complete was the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCI)-I. The ROCI-I is designed to measure three independent dimensions of organizational conflict: Intrapersonal (IP), Intragroup (IG), and Intergroup (NG). These three types of conflict are measured by seven, eight and six statements, respectively, selected on the basis of factor and item analysis. Survey participants responded on a 5-point Likert scale, as in the previous example.

Intrapersonal conflict is a measure that quantifies how individual group members deal with conflict within themselves. This occurs when an individual is required to perform certain tasks, activities or roles that do not match his or her expertise, interests, goals, and values. The index of Intrapersonal conflict (IP) was determined using seven indicator statements. Indicator statements, means, and standard deviations for IP are presented in Table 23.

Table 23

Measures of Intrapersonal (IP) Conflict

Statement	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
I like the tasks I perform relative to the other tasks that are performed by my organization.	1.9	0.8
There is "good" match between my needs and the needs of the organization.	2.0	0.8
If I accept a job in another school district, company, I would like to do the jobs that I am doing now.	2.6	1.2
My job is challenging.	1.3	0.6
There is good match between the tasks that I perform and my initial task preferences when I took this job.	2.3	1.1
I engage in work that is of little interest to me.	4.4	0.8
My skills are fully utilized on the job.	2.0	1.0
Subtest Mean and Standard Deviation	1.95	.51

Intragroup conflict is a measure that quantifies how conflict *within a given group* is managed. Intragroup conflict exists within a bureaucratic level of individuals. This refers to conflict among members of a group, or between two or more subgroups within a group. Such a conflict may also occur as a result of disagreements or inconsistencies between some or all the members of a group and its leader. The index of Intragroup conflict (IG) was determined using eight indicator statements. Indicator statements, means, and standard deviations for IG are presented in Table 24.

Table 24

Measures of Intragroup (IG) Conflict

Statement	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
There is harmony within my group.	1.9	0.7
In our group, we do lots of bickering over who should do what job.	4.4	0.7
There is difference of opinion among the members of my group.	3.0	1.1
There is dissension in my group.	3.8	1.0
The members of my group are supportive of each other's ideas.	1.9	0.8
There are clashes between subgroups within my group.	3.4	1.1
There is "we" feeling among the members of my group.	1.6	0.6
There is "we" feeling among the members of my group.	1.9	0.8
Subtest Mean and Standard Deviation	2.10	.59

Intergroup conflict is a measure that quantifies how conflict *between different groups* is addressed. This type of conflict refers to disagreements or inconsistencies between the members or their representatives or leaders of two or more groups.

Conflict between teachers and administrators, administrators and parents, or general and special educators are examples of this type of conflict. The index of Intergroup conflict (NG) was determined using six indicator statements. Indicator statements, means, and standard deviations for NG are presented in Table 25.

Table 25

Measures of Intergroup (NG) Conflict

Statement	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>
There is agreement between my group and the other group.	2.1	0.6
The other group withholds information necessary for the attainment of our group tasks.	3.8	0.9
The relationship between my group and the other group is harmonious in attaining the overall organizational goals.	2.2	0.7
There is lack of mutual assistance between ... and the other group.	3.7	0.9
There is cooperation between my group and the other group.	2.0	0.6
The other group creates problems for my group.	3.4	1.0
Subtest Mean and Standard Deviation	2.24	.51

Reliability Tests

The responses to individual statements on the surveys were grouped according to what they were designed to measure and checked for reliability. Checking for item reliability in this way allows us to more readily accept results that may indicate that

two variables are, indeed, not correlated. If the questions were not reliable, we might mistakenly reach a conclusion of no correlation when, in fact, they might have a significant correlation. By performing a reliability check, we know that any lack of significance is real, not simply the result of unreliable because measurement instrumentation. All measures were determined to be reliable, though there were variations in the level of reliability. The product of this analysis and the resulting Alpha values are displayed in Table 26.

Table 26

Alpha Values Achieved During Test for Reliability

Measure	Alpha Value ^a	Level of Reliability ^b
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	.8928	High
Depersonalization (DP)	.6410	Fair
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	.7769	Good
Integrating (IN)	.8357	High
Obliging (OB)	.7882	Good
Dominating (DO)	.6665	Fair
Avoiding (AV)	.7909	Good
Compromising (CO)	.7700	Good
Intergroup (NG)	.6926	Fair
Intragroup (IG)	.8298	High
Intrapersonal (IP)	.7391	Good

^a Alpha value of 1.0 represents perfect reliability.

^b Although these values are somewhat arbitrary, they fall within the generally accepted ranges as indicated

High = .8 and above, Good = .7 to .8, Fair = .6 to .7, Poor = less than .6.

Threats to Validity

Validity, or the question of whether or not the survey measures the constructs it is purported to measure, must be shown in order for a report to have credibility. The generally accepted threats to validity were considered for contributions they may have made to the overall study. The threats to internal validity are summarized and displayed in Appendix G. Most of the standard threats to internal validity do not apply to this particular research, as there is no control group/treatment group interaction being studied. The threats to external validity are also reported in Appendix G. Again, most of the threats to external validity do not apply, as there is no treatment component to this study. Factors that might apply are considered to have had minimal impact on the overall validity of this research.

Findings for Research Questions

Data for this study were collected over a 30-day period. The survey data were entered into SPSS, and analyzed using a variety of statistical processes described elsewhere in this document. The results are presented by individually addressing the corresponding research question.

Research Questions – Existence and prevalence of organizational conflict and burnout.

1. To what degree does burnout exist among directors of special education programs in Virginia as measured by the variables of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA)?

Indicators of burnout. The degree of burnout among the target population was determined using the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The responses were tabulated and scores computed for Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). Burnout is generally indicated by higher scores on the EE and DP scales, and by lower scores on the PA scale.

Cut-off points for high, moderate and low categories of EE, DP and PA, as determined by the survey publisher, are reported in Table 27, along with the frequency count, means, and standard deviations for each of the indices of burnout.

Table 27

Indices of Burnout by Frequency, Means, and Standard Deviation

Indicator	Burnout Level ^a	<u>M</u> ^b	<u>SD</u>	<u>N</u>	Pct ^c
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	High (27 +)			40	33%
	Moderate (17-26)	23.2	10.2	43	36%
	Low (0-16)			37	31%
Depersonalization (DP)	High (14 +)			1	1%
	Moderate (9-13)			22	18%
	Low (0-8)	4.7	3.8	97	81%
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	High (0-30)			12	10%
	Moderate (31-36)			17	14%
	Low (37 +)	39.3	6.3	91	76%

^a High, Moderate and Low levels of burnout are described by the publisher in the accompanying test manual based on nationwide norms.

^b This mean is of the population for this study, positioned near the corresponding level of burnout as identified by the publisher.

^c Percentages are of this particular study sample as they fell within the different ranges.

Survey data placed the mean scores of respondents as a group in the moderate burnout range for Emotional Exhaustion, and the low burnout range for Depersonalization and Personal Accomplishment. These findings suggest that although these administrators may find their jobs somewhat emotionally exhausting, they derive a great sense of personal accomplishment from their work.

2. How prevalent are the dimensions of Intrapersonal (IP), Intragroup (IG) and Intergroup (NG) conflict in the lives of directors of special education programs in Virginia?

Dimensions of conflict. Prevalence of the dimensions of conflict was determined using the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-I (ROCI-I). This instrument identified how frequently the respondents dealt with conflict in the Intrapersonal, Intragroup, and Intergroup dimensions with scores ranging from 1 to 5. A higher score represents a greater preference for a given dimension of conflict. Scores in the three dimensions were calculated and entered into the database, with results as detailed in Table 28. The results were also compared with the standardized norms provided by the instrument's publisher. Overall, directors of special education programs in Virginia experienced lower levels of conflict in all three dimensions (Intrapersonal, Intragroup and Intergroup) than did those in the norm reference group.

Table 28

Dimensions of Organizational Conflict – Means, Standard Deviations, and Comparisons to Reference Norms

Dimension	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Norm^a</u>	<u>Above</u> <u>Norm^b</u>	<u>Below</u> <u>Norm^c</u>
Intrapersonal (IP) – within the individual	1.95	.51	2.35	20%	80%
Intragroup (IG) – within groups	2.10	.59	2.31	34%	66%
Intergroup (NG) – between groups	2.24	.51	2.50	20%	80%

^a Test publisher reference group norm (208 managers with master's degree).

^b Percent of sample who scored above the reference norm.

^c Percent of sample who scored below the reference norm.

3. To what degree do directors of special education programs in Virginia handle interpersonal conflict by Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV), or Compromising (CO) styles?

Conflict management styles. The degree to which the target population used the different conflict management styles was assessed using the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II. Program directors were asked to evaluate their perceptions of the conflict management styles they employed when dealing with bosses and others in authority. The general order of these responses was similar, regardless of the sex of the respondent. Survey respondents scored higher than the reference group for all conflict management styles with one exception. “Dominating” was demonstrated less often among special education program directors than in the reference group. Analysis of these responses taken as a group is presented in Table 29. The results were also compared with the standardized norms provided by the instrument’s publisher.

Table 29

Interpersonal Conflict Management Styles Means, Standard Deviations, and Comparisons to Reference Norms

Management Style	M^a	SD	Norm^b	Above Norm^c	Below Norm^d
Integrating (IN)	4.48	.47	4.21	67%	33%
Compromising (CO)	3.97	.60	3.44	87%	13%
Obliging (OB)	3.73	.62	3.32	80%	20%
Dominating (DO)	3.14	.66	3.30	43%	57%
Avoiding (AV)	3.13	.81	2.67	73%	27%

^a 5= Strongly Agree and 1=Strongly Disagree.

^b Test publisher reference group norm (208 managers with master's degree)

^c Percent of sample who scored above the reference norm.

^d Percent of sample who scored below the reference norm.

4. What is the relationship between the dimensions of conflict (IG, IP, NG) and the dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?

Dimensions of conflict compared to burnout. To determine the relationship between the dimensions of conflict and the dimensions of burnout, the data collected for Research Questions 1 and 2 were subjected to statistical analysis using a bivariate correlation, designed to correlate two scores from the same subject. The bivariate correlation on the dimensions of conflict and burnout revealed several Pearson correlation coefficients that were statistically significant at the .05 or .01 level (two-tailed test). Sixty-six percent (six out of nine) of these correlations proved statistically significant. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 30.

Table 30

Bivariate Correlations Between Dimensions of Conflict and Dimensions of Burnout

	Intergroup	Intragroup	Intrapersonal
Emotional Exhaustion	.421**	.152	.395**
Depersonalization	.357**	.227*	.130
Personal Accomplishment	-.205*	-.073	-.345**

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Intergroup dimension of conflict was shown to have a statistically significant correlation across all three measures of burnout. That is, it accounted for 17.7% of the variance in Emotional Exhaustion, 12.7% of the variance in Depersonalization, and 4.2% of the variance in Personal Accomplishment. The Intergroup-Emotional Exhaustion relationship yielded the strongest Pearson correlation of the entire study. The Intrapersonal dimension was significantly correlated with two burnout measures, accounting for 15.6% of the variance in Emotional Exhaustion and 11.9% of the variance in Personal Accomplishment. Finally, the Intragroup dimension correlated with the Depersonalization burnout measure, accounting for 5.2% of the variance.

A canonical correlation was run on the measures of burnout and dimensions of conflict. Canonical correlation is a type of multiple-regression analysis that involves the use of two or more measured variables to predict a composite index of several criterion variables. This test established three additional correlations, two of which were statistically significant. The first correlated Emotional Exhaustion with a second factor consisting of an Intergroup/Intrapersonal interaction. The correlations resulting from the combined effects of variables were even stronger than when the variables

were correlated independently. The combined effect of Intergroup/ Intrapersonal accounted for 32.4% of the variance in Emotional Exhaustion. The second correlation was between factors consisting of a Depersonalization/Personal Accomplishment effect and an Intergroup/Intragroup/Interpersonal effect. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 31 and Figure 13.

Table 31

Canonical Correlation Between Measures of Burnout and Dimensions of Conflict

Canonical Correlation	Factor 1		Correlation Value	Factor 2	
	Measure	Weight ^a		Measure	Weight ^a
1	Emotional Exhaustion	(-.758)	.569	Intergroup	(-.700)
				Intrapersonal	(-.673)
2	Depersonalization	(-.961)	.302	Intergroup	(-.529)
	Personal Accomplishment	(-.627)		Intragroup	(-.657)
				Intrapersonal	(.822)

^a Weighting effects differentially based on the number of subjects. Weight is a measure of the degree of influence a variable has on the outcome. Weight effects range from 1.0 to -1.0. Positive or negative weights work either together or in opposition to each other.

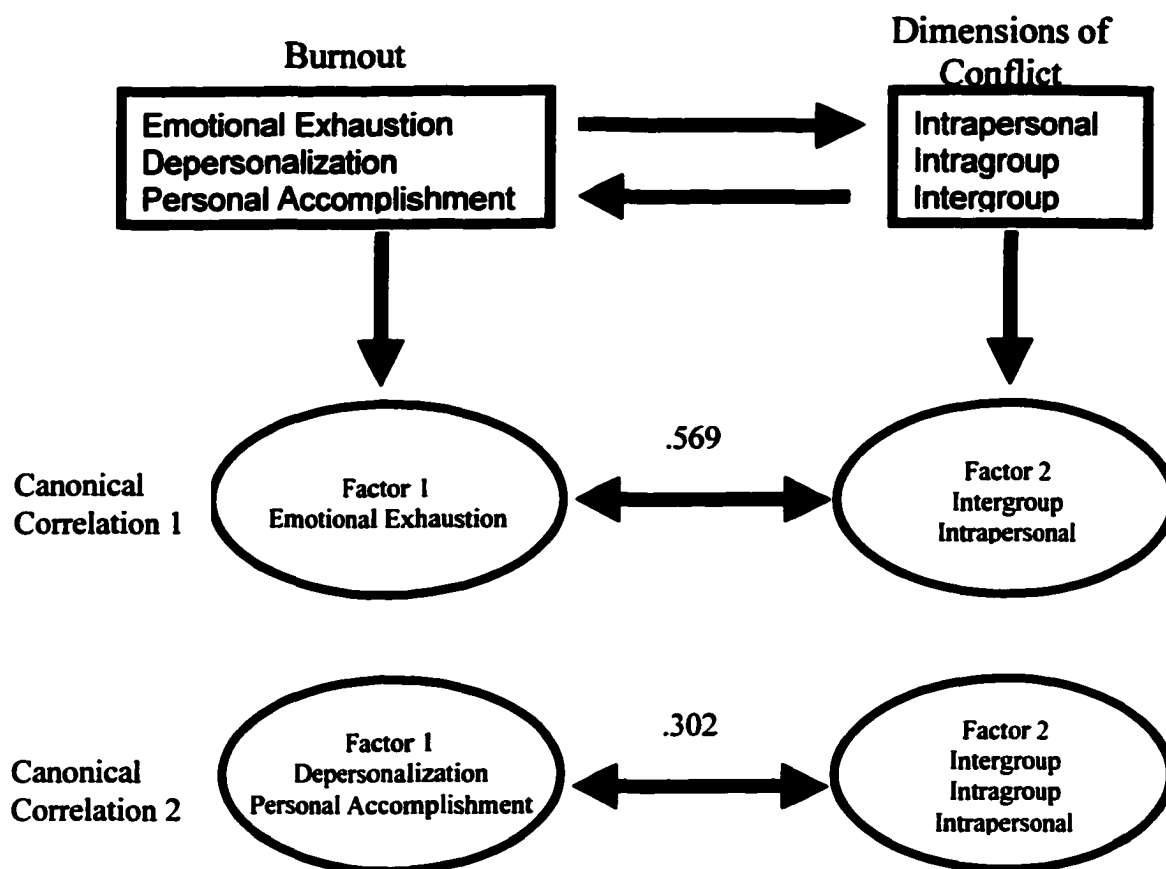


Figure 13. Canonical correlation between measures of burnout and dimensions of conflict.

Finally, a path analysis was run as another way to determine the relationship between measures of burnout and dimensions of conflict. Path analysis is a statistical method for testing the validity of a theory about causal links between three or more variables. Path analysis is an extension of multiple regression. In multiple regression, the purpose is to predict a single dependent variable, whereas in path analysis there is more than one dependent variable. Path analysis is concerned with the predictive ordering of variables. Path analysis allows one to test a theory of causal order among

a set of variables. The path analysis used in this case is shown in Figure 11. The results of this analysis and the indices of fit are shown in Table 32.

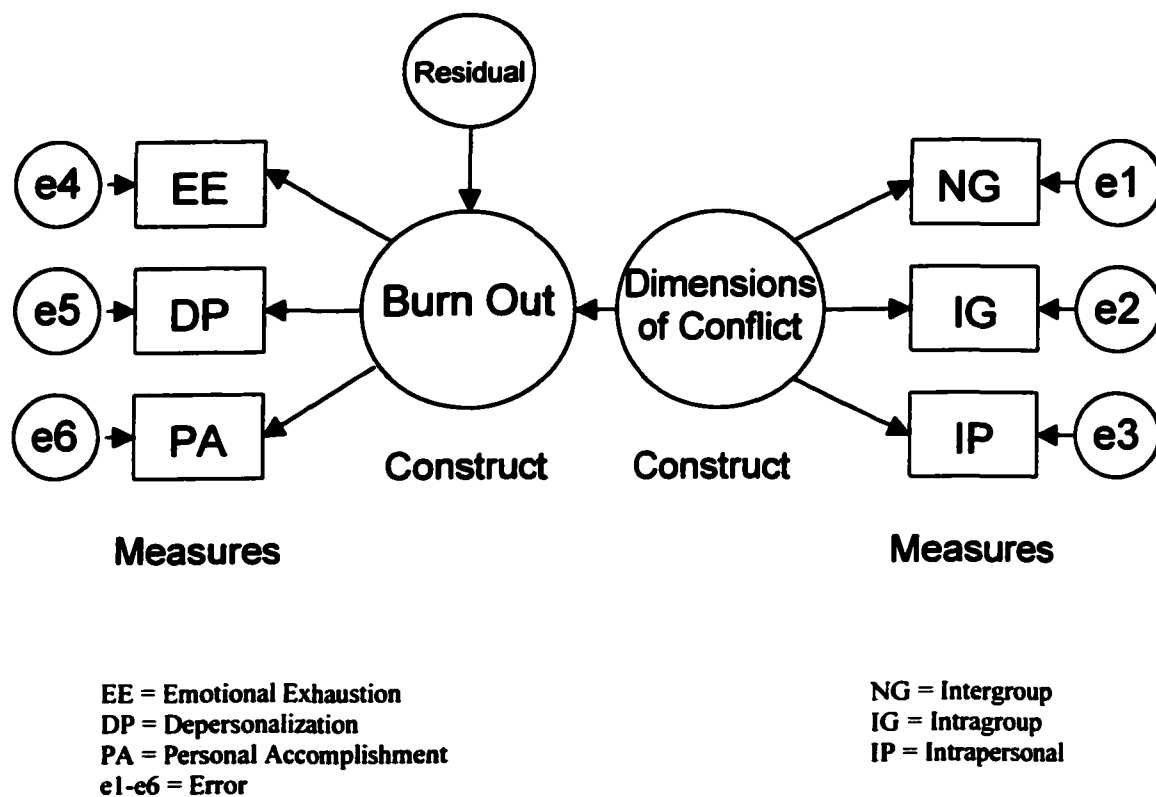


Figure 14. Path analysis for measures of burnout and dimensions of conflict.

Table 32

Path Analysis Indices of Fit for Burnout and Dimensions of Conflict

Indicator	Index	Quality
Goodness of fit index (GFI) ^a	.934	Good
Adjusted goodness of fit Index (AGFI) ^b	.826	Fair
Incremental fit index (IFI) ^c	.829	Fair
Comparative fit index (CFI) ^d	.819	Fair
Root mean square error of approximation (RMEAS) ^e	.148	Poor

^a GFI is between 1.0 and 0, where 1.0= perfect fit.

^b AGFI is adjusted for the degrees of freedom.

^c IFI is used to compare models.

^d CFI is in range 0-1. Value of 1.0 = very good fit.

^e RMEAS of <.05 is very good fit. >0.1 is not a good fit.

Based on the analysis, this path analysis is a plausible model and is consistent with the observed data. The dimensions of conflict construct, as determined by the measures of Intergroup, Intragroup and Intrapersonal conflict, can lead to the burnout construct, consisting of measures of Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment.

5. What is the relationship between interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) and dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?

Conflict management styles and burnout. The relationship between conflict management styles and burnout was determined using bivariate correlation analysis. A bivariate correlation correlates two scores from the same subject. The bivariate correlation comparing conflict management styles with the dimensions of burnout

yielded several statistically significant correlations at both the .05 and .01 level, as presented in Table 33.

Table 33

Bivariate Correlation Coefficients Between Measures of Burnout and Conflict

Management Styles

	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Integrating	-.127	-.081	.271**
Compromising	-.081	.073	.124
Obliging	.062	.101	-.206*
Dominating	.036	.089	-.006
Avoiding	.294**	.325**	-.226*

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Avoiding conflict management style correlated significantly across all three dimensions of burnout. While these correlations are low, they are still statistically significant, even though the practical significance of these values is marginal. Approximately 8.6% of the variance in Emotional Exhaustion, 10.6 % of the variance in Depersonalization, and 5.1% of the variance in Personal Accomplishment was due to Avoiding. Additionally, Personal Accomplishment correlated significantly to the Integrating and Obliging conflict management styles. The correlation with between Obliging and Personal Accomplishment is negative, meaning the more one Obliges in conflict situations, the lower the sense of Personal Accomplishment.

The measures of burnout and the measures of conflict management styles were analyzed using canonical correlation. This test established three additional correlations, one of which was significant. This correlation consisted of two parts. The canonical coefficients for the first part included a combined Depersonalization/Personal Accomplishment effect, whereas the canonical coefficient for the second part consisted of an Integrating/Avoiding effect. The results of this analysis are summarized in Table 34 and graphically displayed in Figure 15. The single canonical correlation resulting from a combination of variables is actually 34% larger than any correlation gleaned from single pairs of these same variables.

Table 34

Canonical Correlation Between Measures of Burnout and Measures of Conflict

Management Styles

Canonical Correlation	Factor 1		Correlation Value	Factor 2	
	Measure	Weight ^a		Measure	Weight ^a
1	Depersonalization	(-.431)	.437	Integrating	(.497)
	Personal Accomplishment	(.594)		Avoiding	(-.724)

^aWeighting effects differentially based on the number of subjects. Weight is a measure of the degree of influence a variable has on the outcome. Weight effects range from 1.0 to -1.0. Positive or negative weights work either together, or in opposition to each other.

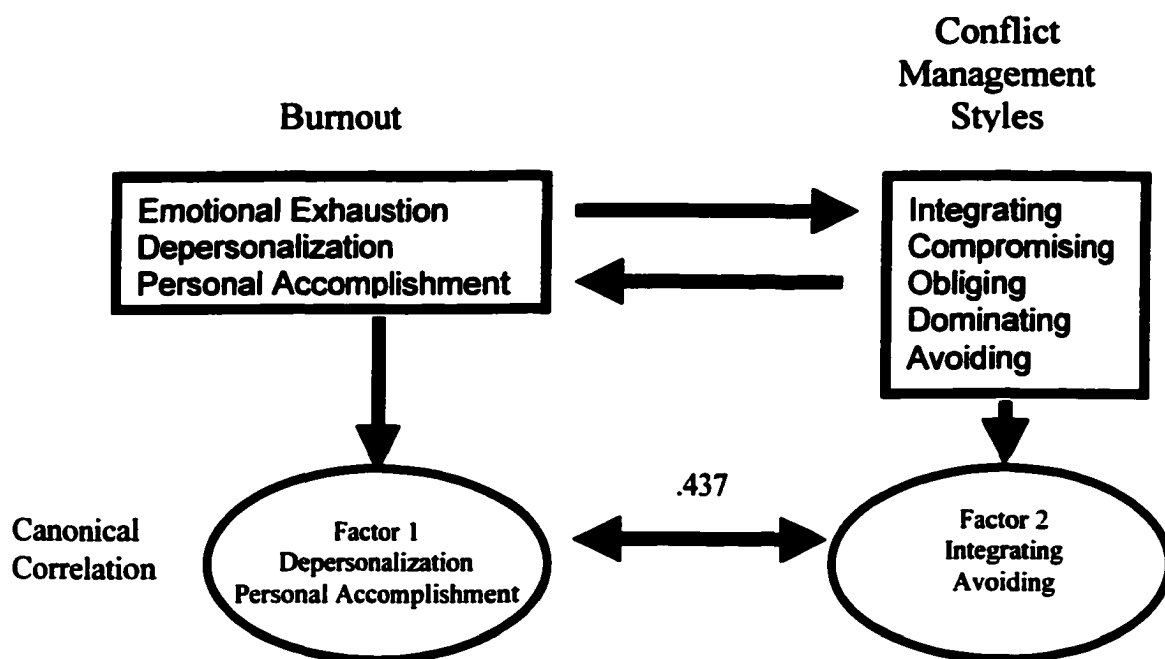


Figure 15. Canonical correlation between measures of burnout and conflict management styles.

Finally, the path analysis shown in Figure 16 was run to determine if the construct of conflict management styles – as determined by measures of Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV), or Compromising (CO) – could help define the construct of burnout, as measured by Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). The results of this path analysis and the indices of fit are shown in Table 35.

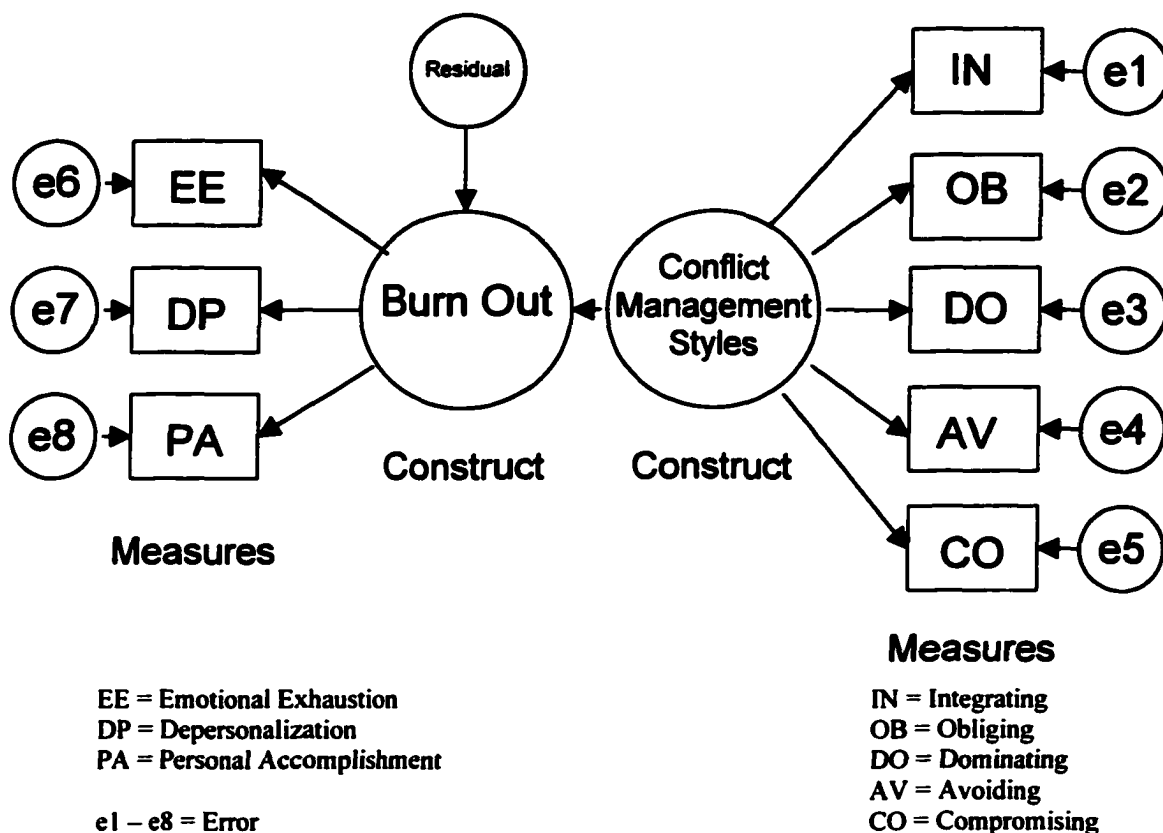


Figure 16. Path analysis for burnout and conflict management styles.

Table 35

Path analysis Indices of Fit for Burnout and Conflict Management Styles

Indicator	Index	Quality
Goodness of fit index (GFI) ^a	.879	Fair
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) ^b	.771	Fair
Incremental fit index (IFI) ^c	.546	Marginal
Comparative fit index (CFI) ^d	.508	Marginal
Root mean square error of approximation (RMEAS) ^e	.154	Poor

^a GFI is between 1.0 and 0, where 1.0= perfect fit.

^b AGFI is adjusted for the degrees of freedom.

^c IFI is used to compare models.

^d CFI is in range 0-1. Value of 1.0 = very good fit.

^e RMEAS of <.05 is very good fit. >0.1 is not a good fit.

Based on the analysis, the path analysis is a plausible model and is consistent with the observed data. The conflict management styles construct, as determined by the measures of Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV) or Compromising (CO), can affect the Burnout construct, consisting of measures of Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA).

6. What is the relationship between interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) and dimensions of conflict (IG, NG, IP) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?

Conflict management styles and conflict dimensions. The relationship between conflict management styles and dimensions of conflict was determined using a bivariate correlation analysis. This analysis yielded four statistically significant correlations at the .05 level. These data are displayed in Table 36.

Table 36

Bivariate Correlation Coefficients Between Conflict Management Styles and Dimensions of Conflict

	Intergroup	Intragroup	Intrapersonal
Integrating	-.008	-.180*	-.192*
Compromising	.029	-.051	-.074
Obliging	.147	.054	.118
Dominating	.086	.068	-.008
Avoiding	.218*	.171	.185*

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The Integrating management style showed small but significant correlations with the Intragroup and Intrapersonal conflict dimensions. The only other management style to show correlation was Avoiding, also yielding small but significant values for Intergroup and Intrapersonal conflict dimensions. Again, the percentage of the variances is so small as to be of little practical value.

A canonical correlation was run comparing the dimensions of conflict with conflict management styles. There were no significant correlations other than those already presented.

The path analysis shown in Figure 17 was run to determine if the construct of Conflict Management styles – as determined by measures of Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV), or Compromising (CO) – could help define the construct of conflict dimensions, as measured by Intrapersonal (IP), Intragroup (IG), and Intergroup (NG). The results of this path analysis and the indices of fit are shown in Table 37.

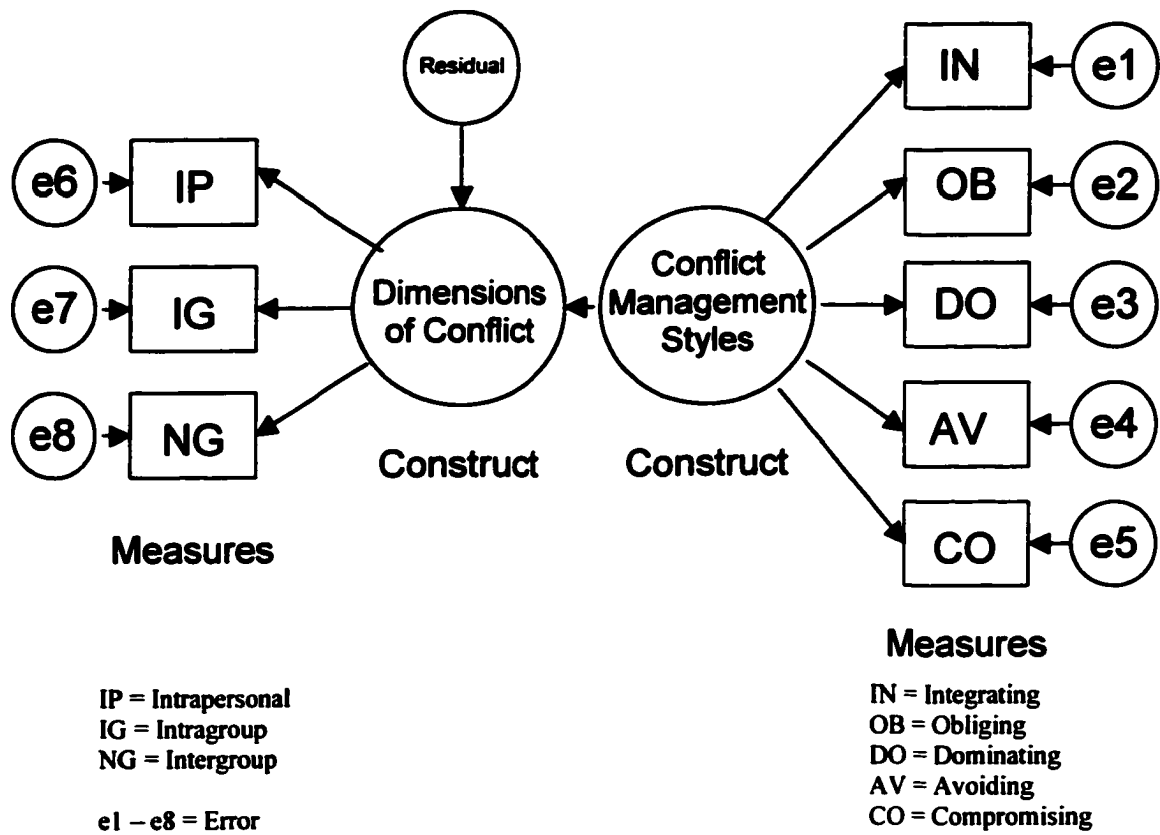


Figure 17. Path analysis of dimensions of conflict with management styles.

Table 37

Path analysis Indices of Fit for Conflict Management Styles and Dimensions of Conflict

Indicator	Index	Quality
Goodness of fit index (GFI) ^a	.906	Good
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) ^b	.821	Fair
Incremental fit index (IFI) ^c	.672	Marginal
Comparative fit index (CFI) ^d	.641	Marginal
Root mean square error of approximation (RMEAS) ^e	.112	Poor

^a GFI is between 1.0 and 0, where 1.0= perfect fit.

^b AGFI is adjusted for the degrees of freedom.

^c IFI is used to compare models.

^d CFI is in range 0-1. Value of 1.0 = very good fit.

^e RMEAS of <.05 is very good fit. >0.1 is not a good fit.

As determined by the analysis, this path analysis is a plausible model and is consistent with the observed data. The conflict management styles construct, as determined by the measures of Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV), or Compromising (CO), can affect the Dimensions of Conflict construct, determined by the measures of Intrapersonal (IP), Intragroup (IG), and Intergroup (NG) conflict.

7. What is the relationship between dimensions of burnout (EE, DP, PA), the dimensions of conflict (IG, IP, NG), and interpersonal conflict management styles (IN, OB, DO, AV, and CO) among directors of special education programs in Virginia?

Three-measure analysis. Finally, all three sets of measures were analyzed using canonical correlation to see if there were any additional correlations caused by the interactions of all three measures. Of the three additional canonical correlations that developed, two were significant. The first correlated Emotional Exhaustion with an Avoiding/Intergroup/Intrapersonal effect, accounting for nearly 40% of the variance in Emotional Exhaustion. The second correlated a Depersonalization/Personal Accomplishment factor with an Integrating/Obliging/Avoiding/Intragroup/Intrapersonal effect. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table 38.

Table 38

Canonical Correlation Between Measures of Burnout, Dimensions of Conflict, and Conflict Management Styles

Canonical Correlation	Factor 1		Correlation Value	Factor 2	
	Measure	Weight ^a		Measure	Weight ^a
1	Emotional Exhaustion	(-.644)	.631	Avoiding	(-.403)
				Intergroup	(-.588)
				Intrapersonal	(-.506)
2	Depersonalization	.751	.391	Integrating	.438
	Personal Accomplishment	.874		Obliging	(-.564)
				Avoiding	.425
				Intragroup	.469
				Intrapersonal	(-.531)

^a Weighting effects differentially based on the number of subjects. Weight is a measure of the degree of influence a variable has on the outcome. Weight effects range from 1.0 to -1.0. Positive or negative weights work either together, or in opposition to each other.

Path analysis A two-way path analysis was designed in order to determine a plausible model that would explain the interaction of all three constructs. The first design was to see if the path goes directly from the conflict management styles to burnout, or if it detours first through the dimensions of conflict, then to burnout. The second design tested whether the path goes directly from dimensions of conflict to burnout, or if it first detours through conflict management styles, then to burnout. The two paths are displayed as Figures 18 and 19, respectively. The only difference between the two path analysis models is the direction of the arrow between the constructs of dimensions of conflict and conflict management styles. Path analysis plausibility of model and fitness indices for the two paths are displayed Table 39 and Table 40, respectively.

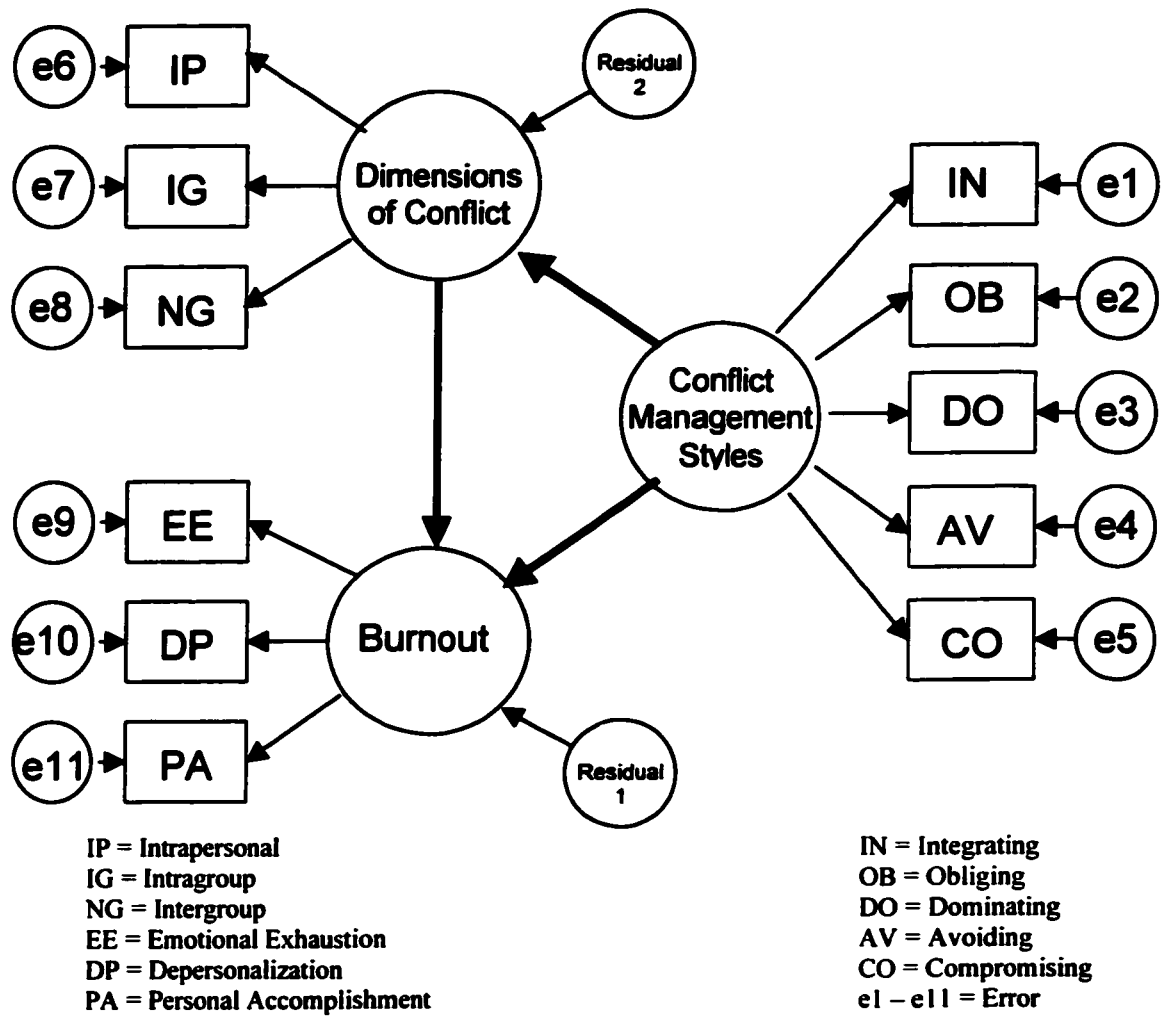


Figure 18. Path 1 – management styles directly, or indirectly to burnout.

Table 39

Path Analysis 1 – Indices of Fit for Conflict Management Styles, Dimensions of Conflict, and Burnout

Indicator	Index	Quality
Goodness of fit index (GFI) ^a	.822	Fair
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) ^b	.720	Fair
Incremental fit index (IFI) ^c	.485	Marginal
Comparative fit index (CFI) ^d	.449	Marginal
Root mean square error of approximation (RMEAS) ^e	.144	Poor

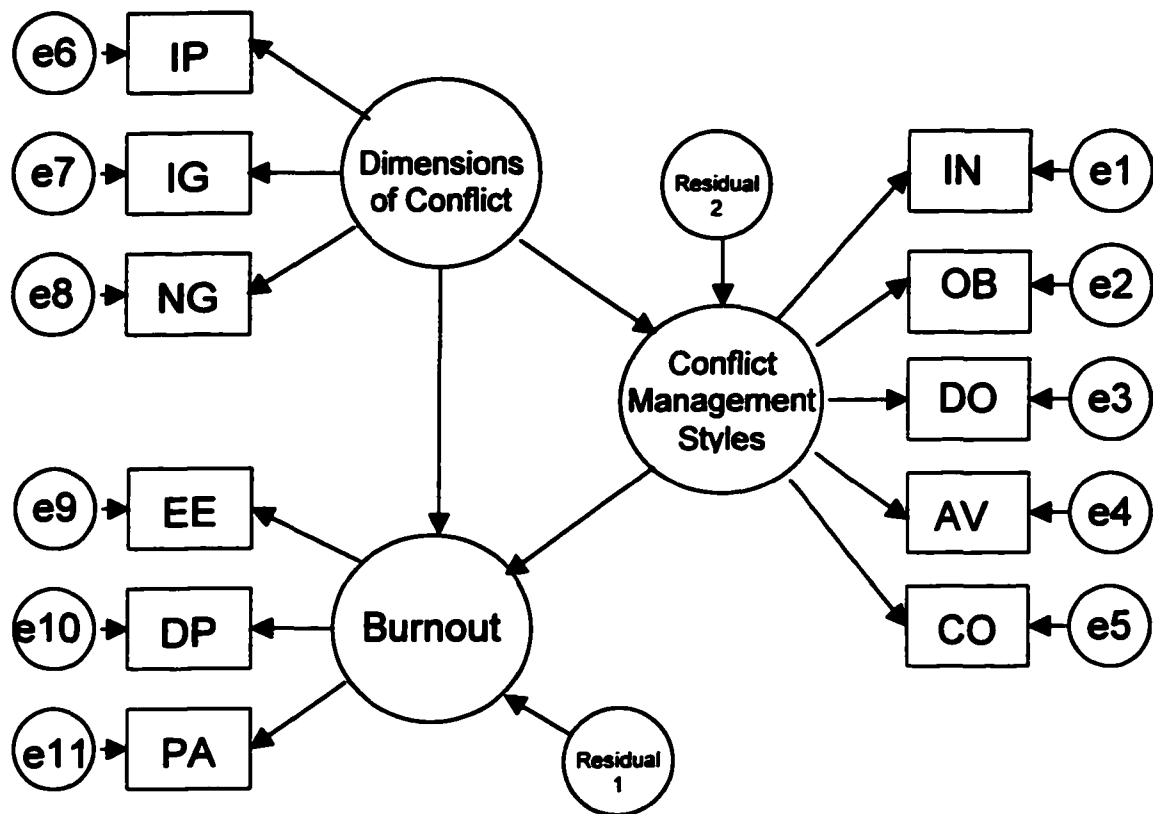
^a GFI is between 1.0 and 0, where 1.0= perfect fit.

^b AGFI is adjusted for the degrees of freedom.

^c IFI is used to compare models.

^d CFI is in range 0-1. Value of 1.0 = very good fit.

^e RMEAS of <.05 is very good fit. >0.1 is not a good fit.



IP = Intrapersonal
 IG = Intragroup
 NG = Intergroup
 EE = Emotional Exhaustion
 DP = Depersonalization
 PA = Personal Accomplishment

IN = Integrating
 OB = Obliging
 DO = Dominating
 AV = Avoiding
 CO = Compromising
 e1 - e11 = Error

Figure 19. Path 2 – dimensions of conflict direct or indirect to burnout.

Table 40

Path analysis 2 – Indices of Fit for Dimensions of Conflict, Conflict Management Styles, and Burnout

Indicator	Index	Quality
Goodness of fit index (GFI) ^a	.881	Good
Adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) ^b	.810	Good
Incremental fit index (IFI) ^c	.735	Fair
Comparative fit index (CFI) ^d	.717	Fair
Root mean square error of approximation (RMEAS) ^e	.103	Poor

^a GFI is between 1.0 and 0, where 1.0= perfect fit.

^b AGFI is adjusted for the degrees of freedom.

^c IFI is used to compare models.

^d CFI is in range 0-1. Value of 1.0 = very good fit.

^e RMEAS of <.05 is very good fit. >0.1 is not a good fit.

In comparing these two path analysis models (see Figures 19 and 20), we find that the model represented in Figure 19 is a more plausible model and more consistent with the observed data. While neither model is exceptionally strong, this model has somewhat better indices of fit in general and the RMEAS comes closer to the minimum acceptable value of 0.1 than in the other model. This adds further support to the finding that the construct of dimensions of conflict contributes more to burnout than does the construct of conflict management styles.

Findings for Research Hypothesis

Research Hypothesis: Correlation Between Organizational Conflict and Burnout

Analysis of data for research hypothesis: There is a significant relationship ($p < .05$) between the way directors of special education programs manage organizational conflict, and the rate and intensity of burnout factors among those directors.

The relationship between organizational conflict management and measures of burnout was determined using Pearson correlation, canonical correlation, and path analysis techniques. Specifically, these methods were used to show which of the predictor variables, conflict management styles, and dimensions of conflict best predicted the criterion variables, the measures of burnout. Using multiple-regression analysis, the eight predictor variables were broken into two groups. The first consisted of five measures dealing with conflict management styles: Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV), and Compromising (CO). The second set of predictor variables consisted of the dimensions in which conflict takes place: Intrapersonal (IP), Intragroup (IG), and Intergroup (NG). Finally, the criterion variables were three measures of burnout: Emotional Exhaustion (EE), Depersonalization (DP), and Personal Accomplishment (PA). Figure 20 diagrams the relationship between these sets of predictor and criterion variables.

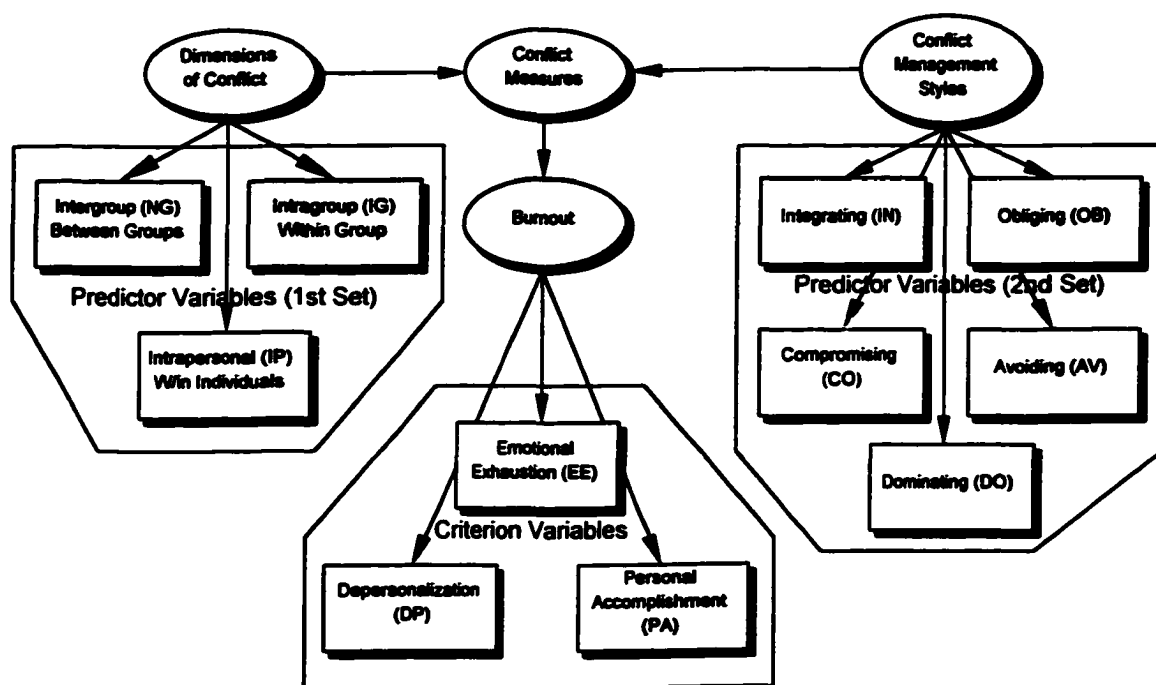


Figure 20. Predictor and criterion variable sets.

Emotional Exhaustion. The burnout measure of Emotional Exhaustion correlated with three conflict measures in three different models: Intergroup, Intergroup/Intrapersonal, and Intergroup/Intrapersonal/Avoiding measures, respectively. In this first stepwise regression, the target variable, Emotional Exhaustion, was indicated by three predictor variables – Intergroup, Intrapersonal, and Avoiding, which yielded a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .545 ($F=16.348$). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was .297, meaning that 29.7% of the variance in the Emotional Exhaustion can be predicted from a combination of the variables Intergroup, Intrapersonal, and Avoiding. Table 41 summarizes the results of this first multiple regression.

Table 41

Stepwise Multiple Regression of Conflict Measures on Emotional Exhaustion**Variables Entered^a**

Model	Predictor Variables	Method
1	Intergroup (NG)	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter \leq .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove \geq .100).
2	Intrapersonal (IP)	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter \leq .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove \geq .100).
3	Avoiding (AV)	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter \leq .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove \geq .100).

^aTarget variable: Emotional Exhaustion (EE).**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
3	.545 ^a	.297	.279	8.67715

^aPredictors: (Constant), Intergroup (NG), Intrapersonal (IP), Avoiding (AV).**ANOVA^b**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
3	Regression	3692.723	3	1230.908	16.348	.000 ^a
	Residual	8733.977	116	75.293		
	Total	12426.700	119			

^aPredictors: (Constant), Intergroup (NG), Intrapersonal (IP), Avoiding (AV).^bTarget variable: Emotional Exhaustion (EE).**Coefficients^a**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
3	(Constant)	-7.820	4.594		-1.702	.091
	Intergroup (NG)	6.348	1.645	.315	3.860	.000
	Intrapersonal (IP)	5.153	1.445	.289	3.567	.001
	Avoiding (AV)	2.160	1.012	.172	2.134	.035

^aTarget Variable: Emotional Exhaustion (EE).

Depersonalization. The burnout measure of Depersonalization correlated with two conflict measures in two different models: Intergroup, and Intergroup/Avoiding,

respectively. In this stepwise linear regression, the target variable, Depersonalization, was indicated by two predictor variables, Intergroup and Avoiding, yielding multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .438 ($F=13.877$) Significant .000. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was .192, meaning that 19.2% of the variance in the Depersonalization can be predicted from a combination of the variables Intergroup and Avoiding. While statistically significant, it is not a particularly strong relationship. Table 32 summarizes the results of this second multiple regression.

Table 42

Stepwise Multiple Regression of the Conflict Measures on Depersonalization

Variables Entered^a

Model	Predictor Variables	Method
1	Intergroup (NG)	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter \leq .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove \geq .100).
2	Avoiding (AV)	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter \leq .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove \geq .100).

^a Dependent Variable: Depersonalization (DP).

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
2	.438 ^a	.192	.178	3.41396

^a Predictors: (Constant), Intergroup (NG), Avoiding (AV).

ANOVA^b

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
2	Regression	323.467	2	161.734	13.877	.000 ^a
	Residual	1363.652	117	11.655		
	Total	1687.120	119			

^a Predictors: (Constant), Intergroup (NG), Avoiding (AV).

^b Target Variable: Depersonalization (DP).

Table 42 (continued)

Stepwise Multiple Regression of the Conflict Measures on Depersonalization**Coefficients^a**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
2	(Constant)	-4.017	1.692		-2.375	.019
	Intergroup (NG)	2.236	.633	.301	3.532	.001
	Avoiding (AV)	1.199	.394	.259	3.043	.003

^aDependent Variable: Depersonalization (DP).

Personal Accomplishment. The burnout measure of Personal Accomplishment correlated with three conflict measures in three different models: Intrapersonal, Intrapersonal/Integrating, and Intrapersonal/Integrating/Obliging, respectively. In this stepwise linear regression, the target variable, Personal Accomplishment, was indicated by three predictor variables, Intrapersonal, Integrating, and Obliging, yielding a multiple correlation coefficient (R) of .459 ($F= 10.330$) Significant .000. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was .211, meaning that 21.1% of the variance in the Depersonalization can be predicted from a combination of the variables Intrapersonal, Integrating, and Obliging. Table 43 summarizes the results of this third multiple regression.

Table 43

Stepwise Multiple Regression of the Conflict Measures on Personal Accomplishment**Variables Entered^a**

Model	Predictor Variables	Method
1	Intrapersonal (IP)	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove >= .100).
2	Integrating (IN)	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove >= .100).
3	Obliging (OB)	Stepwise (Criteria: Probability-of-F-to-enter <= .050, Probability-of-F-to-remove >= .100).

^a Target Variable: Personal Accomplishment (PA).**Model Summary**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
3	.459 ^a	.211	.190	5.66251

^a Predictors: (Constant), Intrapersonal (IP), Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB).**ANOVA^b**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
3	Regression	993.695	3	331.232	10.330	.000 ^a
	Residual	3719.430	116	32.064		
	Total	4713.125	119			

^a Predictors: (Constant), Intrapersonal (IP), Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB).^b Target Variable: Personal Accomplishment (PA).**Coefficients^a**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
3	(Constant)	37.687	5.945		6.340	.000
	Intrapersonal (IP)	-2.929	.936	-.267	-3.128	.002
	Integrating (IN)	3.561	1.156	.266	3.079	.003
	Obliging (OB)	-2.309	.863	-.229	-2.677	.009

^a Target Variable: Personal Accomplishment (PA).

The research hypothesis, “there is a significant relationship ($p < .05$) between the way directors of special education programs manage organizational conflict, and the rate and intensity of burnout factors among those directors,” was accepted. Statistically significant relationships were found between the measures of conflict and the measures of burnout. The strongest predictor of overall Emotional Exhaustion was the presence of Intergroup conflict. A Beta (β) weight of .32 indicated that it contributed most heavily to the predictive value of the multiple regression equation. The second and third strongest predictors were Intrapersonal ($\beta = .29$) and Avoiding ($\beta = .17$). The strongest predictor of overall Depersonalization was also the presence of Intergroup conflict, with a Beta weight of .30. Avoiding ($\beta = .26$) was the other predictor of Depersonalization. Finally, the strongest predictor of Personal Accomplishment was the presence of Intrapersonal Conflict. A Beta weight of $-.27$ shows that this is inversely related, that is, the lower the presence of Intrapersonal Conflict, the higher the Personal Accomplishment. Other predictor variables for Personal Accomplishment included Integrating ($\beta = .27$) and Obliging ($\beta = -.23$) – also an inverse relationship.

The measures of burnout can be predicted from a combination of five of the eight conflict measures (Intergroup, Intrapersonal, Avoiding, Integrating, and Obliging). While these predictor variables may be statistically significant, the percentage of shared variance, as shown by the R values, is not very high, making the models plausible but not terribly strong. The remaining three conflict measures – Dominating, Compromising and Intragroup – were not shown to have significant predictive value for any of the measures of Burnout.

Chapter 5: Summary, Discussion, and Recommendations

This chapter contains a summary of the research findings. Additionally, the discussion will focus on how the findings relate to the larger body of research on conflict management and special education administrator burnout. Finally, the implications of the research and recommendations for further study will close out this chapter.

Summary of Findings

Burnout seems to occur widely among human service providers in general, and educators in particular. It involves feelings of physical, emotional, and attitudinal exhaustion, and can significantly impact job performance for these individuals who are unable to cope with the stressors. Several studies have examined the effects of burnout on teachers and on general education administrators. But relatively little research has been conducted on special education administrators and burnout, and even less on the correlation between organizational conflict and burnout among administrators of special education programs. This study was designed to address the possible correlations between organizational conflict and burnout among special education administrators.

The population of the study was limited to directors of special education programs in the Commonwealth of Virginia. Specifically, this population was comprised of those individuals identified on the Virginia Department of Education website as having primary responsibility for administering special education programs in the organization, to include the local school districts and state operated hospitals or treatment centers for persons with disabilities. The entire population of

school district special education directors (132) within the commonwealth, along with directors of state facilities (7), were asked to respond to three survey instruments and complete a demographic questionnaire.

The first survey was the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), which is designed to gain insight into three measures of burnout – Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment. Respondents were asked to evaluate 22 statements on a 0 – 6 (Never – Every Day) Likert scale. The scores for these three measures were computed and used as the dependent variables for this research.

The second instrument, the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-I, is designed to evaluate the various dimensions in which conflict can occur – Intergroup, Intragroup, and Intrapersonal. Participants rated their levels of agreement with 21 statements, and their responses were recorded on a 1 – 5 (Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree) Likert scale. These three dimensions were used as independent variables in this study.

The third instrument, the Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II, is designed to measure the use of five different styles of conflict management – Integrating, Obliging, Dominating, Avoiding, and Compromising. Participants indicated levels of agreement with 28 statements, and again responses were recorded on a 1 – 5 (Strongly Agree – Strongly Disagree) Likert scale. These scores were compiled in accordance with the publisher's directions and used as an additional five independent variables.

The results of these surveys were analyzed using various techniques. Nearly 10,000 data points were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 11.5) along with the add-on package AMOS-4, designed specifically for path analysis.

The findings are summarized as follows:

1. Special education administrators, as a group, experienced moderate levels of Emotional Exhaustion, low levels of Depersonalization, and enjoyed high levels of Personal Accomplishment.
2. Overall, directors of special education programs in Virginia experienced lower levels of conflict in all three dimensions (Intrapersonal, Intragroup and Intergroup) than did those in the norm reference group.
3. The Intergroup dimension of conflict had a statistically significant correlation across all three measures of burnout. Intergroup correlated positively with Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization, and a negatively with Personal Accomplishment.
4. The Intrapersonal dimension of conflict was significantly correlated with two burnout measures – Emotional Exhaustion and Personal Accomplishment.
5. The Intragroup dimension correlated with the Depersonalization burnout measure.
6. It is interesting to note there was no significant correlation between Intragroup and Personal Accomplishment. This may indicate that, despite the presence of conflict between members of a given group, this has relatively little impact on an individual's sense of Personal Accomplishment. The level of Personal

Accomplishment experienced is independent of any existing Intragroup conflict

- 7. The conflict management style of Avoiding was shown to correlate significantly across all three dimensions of burnout. Avoiding correlated positively with Emotional Exhaustion and Depersonalization, and negatively with Personal Accomplishment. This research suggests that while of the five management styles, Avoiding has the highest correlation with burnout, it is, to the credit of the study participants, the least used conflict management style.**
- 8. Personal Accomplishment significantly correlated with the Integrating and Obliging conflict management styles**
- 9. The Integrating management style showed small but significant correlations with the Intragroup and Intrapersonal conflict dimensions.**
- 10. The Avoiding management style showed small but significant correlational values for Intergroup and Intrapersonal conflict dimensions. These correlations are so low as to be of marginal practical significance. In comparing path analysis models, models that proceed from dimensions of conflict to burnout were found to be generally more plausible and more consistent with the data than models that went from management styles to Burnout.**

The data were subjected to three statistical analysis processes – Pearson correlation, canonical correlation, and multiple regression. All three dependent variables, the measures of Burnout, correlated significantly with the Intergroup conflict dimension and the Avoiding conflict management style in almost all

cases. The single exception was with the multiple regression correlates to Personal Accomplishment. Of the nine possible combinations of three measures of burnout (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment) and three statistical processes (Pearson correlation, canonical correlation, and multiple regression), several correlations were deemed statistically significant. The most frequently occurring variables with proven significance were Intergroup and Avoiding, each appearing eight times out of nine possible. Intrapersonal was shown to be significant in seven cases. Obliging and Integrating were each found to be significant four times, and Intragroup three times. The independent variables of Dominating and Compromising never showed any significant correlation with the dependent variables. A summary of these statistical relationships, and the strength of the significance, is displayed in Table 44.

Table 44

Summary of Statistical Relationships Between Dependent and Independent Variables

Dependent Variables	Independent Variables		
	Pearson Correlation	Canonical Correlation	Multiple Regression ^a
Burnout Measure			
Emotional Exhaustion	Intergroup**	Intergroup**	Intergroup**
	Avoiding**	Avoiding**	Avoiding*
	Intrapersonal**	Intrapersonal**	Intrapersonal**
Depersonalization	Intergroup**	Intergroup*	Intergroup**
	Avoiding**	Avoiding*	Avoiding**
	Intragroup*	Intragroup*	
		Intrapersonal*	
		Integrating*	
		Obliging*	
Personal Accomplishment	Intrapersonal**	Intrapersonal*	Intrapersonal**
	Integrating**	Integrating*	Integrating**
	Obliging*	Obliging*	Obliging**
	Intergroup*	Intergroup*	
	Avoiding*	Avoiding*	
		Intragroup*	

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

^a Predictor variables for the designated target variable.

Discussion of Findings

In research used in developing the MBI, Maslach and Jackson (1982) indicated that demographic background variables could help explain aggregate scores of the three measures of burnout (Emotional Exhaustion, Depersonalization, and Personal Accomplishment.) Specifically, Maslach noted that patterns of burnout

were different based on variables of age, sex, administrative experience, level of education and student program enrollment. In the current study, however, multiple-regression analysis indicated that, with one small exception, none of these predictors explained a significant amount of variation in the dependent variables. The only exception was a minor prediction between the independent variable sex and the dependent variable Personal Accomplishment. However, the correlation was not statistically significant.

Additionally, previous research (Freudenberger, 1977) suggested that the independent variables of years of administrative experience, age, and student program enrollment would correlate with the levels of burnout experienced by administrators. This was not the case in this research, as no significant correlation was found involving these background variables. There does not seem to be any significant correlation between age and burnout indicators. Earlier research suggested that more mature individuals developed coping mechanisms to deal with stress, including “detached concern”(Maslach, 1982). None of the chronological indicators correlated with burnout. The only correlation to chronology was with Avoiding (.197), a weak correlation at that.

It is possible that the most stressed individuals failed to participate in this study. However, since only 7% failed to submit completed surveys, it is doubtful that the input from these individuals would have significantly impacted the results.

In the current study, the mean scores of special education administrators (36%) fell in the moderate burnout level for Emotional Exhaustion. Coupled with the 33% who fell in the high level, this suggests that 69% of Virginia special education

program administrators are either at risk of, or already suffering from, Emotional Exhaustion. Additionally, 19% are at risk of, or suffer from, Depersonalization and 24% are at risk or suffer from a low sense of Personal Accomplishment.

On the other hand, 31% are at low risk of Emotional Exhaustion, 81% at low risk of Depersonalization, and fully 76% of the survey population has high levels of Personal Accomplishment. Even though the work may be seen as Emotionally Exhausting, the reward in terms of Personal Accomplishment remains high. In other words, participants were found to be committed to their work and to derive great satisfaction from the job, despite the heavy emotional demands.

Using the Maslach Burnout Inventory, various levels of the different burnout measures have been identified for the states of Kansas, Connecticut, New York, and Wisconsin. The results from the current study suggest Virginia administrators are actually better off, suffering from less burnout than their counterparts in other locations. Burnout levels in other states may have been exacerbated by regulatory controls in effect at the time the survey data were collected. Some of the results from these other states are summarized in Table 45.

Table 45

States with Burnout Ranking of Moderate or Higher, by Area

	Emotional Exhaustion	Depersonalization	Personal Accomplishment
Kansas (Riffel, 1986).	*	*	*
Connecticut (Careb, 1984)	*	*	
Wisconsin (Dannemiller, 1992)	*	*	
New York (Cooper, 1986)	*	*	
Virginia (current study)	*		

Research has suggested that women are more relationship-oriented and deal with conflict differently than do men, preferring a less confrontational style. As a result, one would expect that in female-dominated professions, the styles of conflict management would lean toward *Compromise* or *Avoidance* (Valentine, 1995). If this is true, the profession of special education administration, being generally female-dominated, should have a similar proclivity toward *Compromise* and *Avoidance*. This is not supported by the data, however. While *Compromising* was rated as the second most frequently used conflict management technique, *Avoiding* as a conflict management technique was rated as the least likely method used. Thus, it appears that special education administrators seldom back down in a conflict situation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the present study, the following recommendations may be advanced for practice and future research.

Recommendations for Practice

- 1. Promote programs designed to reduce Emotional Exhaustion among special education administrative personnel. The Virginia Department of Education could address problems leading to Emotional Exhaustion and promote coping strategies.**
- 2. Professional organizations like the Council for Exceptional Children, Council of Administrators of Special Education, or the Virginia Council for Administrators of Special Education should promote burnout management programs and organizational conflict presentations at regular intervals.**
- 3. Directors of special education should be given self-evaluation tools to help identify sources of excessive stress and promote coping or elimination strategies.**
- 4. Special education administrator training programs should develop and incorporate into the curriculum lessons dealing with stress management and organizational conflict management.**
- 5. Educational leadership programs should include formal training in negotiation and mediation skills development. Such classes are more frequently found in Schools of Business than in Schools of Education, yet the skills are of equal importance to both groups. Individuals may be less likely to resort to Avoidance measures if they have been properly trained in the negotiation**

skills of Compromise and Integration. Mediation as a formal process is an option employed by the Virginia Department of Education to resolve special education disputes. Greater emphasis should be placed on developing these skills in leadership preparation programs.

6. State and local educational agencies should adequately staff and fund the support mechanisms needed by special education administrators.
7. Professional organizations and leadership training programs should encourage directors of special education programs to live a healthy lifestyle including proper nourishment, sleep and exercise, as a burnout preventive measure.
8. Avoidance is the least often used conflict management style. Nonetheless, directors of special education should be trained in conflict management techniques, and encouraged to move farther away from Avoiding techniques.
9. Administrators who suffer from high levels of burnout should be encouraged to practice “detached concern” as identified by Maslach (1982, p. 147).
“Detached concern is that ideal blend of compassion and objectivity that many ... strive for. The [educator] is genuinely concerned about [student’s] well-being but has some distance from their problems.”

Recommendations for Further Research

1. Replicate this study in different states, to allow generalization to wider group. In order for these results to be comparable from state to state, the studies need to be conducted simultaneously, as regular changes to state and federal laws governing special education can result in a special education climate that changes from year to year.

- 2. Conduct similar research with other subgroups of administrators to see how special educators compare to their counterparts in other areas.**
- 3. Conduct specific research into methods designed to reduce Emotional Exhaustion among special education administrators**
- 4. Research why measures of burnout in Virginia special education administrators are different from those found in other states (WI, CT, KS, etc.). Results could be used to develop a program to promote “What Works” in special education administrator training programs.**
- 5. Measure burnout at different points in the school year to determine if changes occur throughout the year.**
- 6. Study the attrition rates of special education administrators to determine how great a role, if any, burnout or conflict management play in decisions to leave the profession.**
- 7. Identify special education administrators who have been formally trained in mediation techniques. Administer the Maslach Burnout Inventory to this group and see if their levels of burnout are significantly different from those of a nontrained control group.**
- 8. Go back to this surveyed population and determine their level of involvement in professional organizations. The group of administrators most highly involved could be disaggregated from the others and comparisons made to determine if involvement in such organizations significantly correlates with lower levels of burnout or less effective conflict management techniques.**

9. While this research indicated directors of special education programs experience high levels of personal accomplishment, further investigation is warranted into how others, not currently serving in these positions, perceive the personal accomplishment of those actually in the field.
10. Study the impact of cognitive versus affective conflict on the measures of burnout. This could prove valuable in helping to develop improved practices in conflict management and reducing burnout.

Conclusion

Conflict is a part of life. So is stress. How one manages conflict can influence whether certain stressors reach a level that leads to burnout, that state of fatigue or frustration brought about by devotion to a cause, a way of life, or a relationship that failed to produce the expected reward. The purpose of this research study was to determine what correlations exist between measures of burnout and organizational conflict among practicing special education administrators. Findings support a conclusion that the *dimensions of the conflict* correlate more strongly than do *management styles*. Notwithstanding, those who deal with conflict squarely are generally better off than those who avoid dealing with it. While this research may have provided quantifiable evidence of that fact, the basic conclusion has been around for at least 2,400 years. Why else would that learned educational researcher Plato exhort us not to avoid conflict, but rather to “take part in the great combat, which is the combat of life, and greater than every other earthly conflict”?

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Appendix A – Letters of Transmittal

Letter of Transmittal

School of Education
 Post Office Box 8795
 Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8795
 Office: 757/221-2406
 Fax: 757/221-2988

James H. Stronge, Professor
 Brenda T. Williams, Associate Professor
 Michael F. DiPaola, Associate Professor
 Bud Livers, Doctoral Candidate
 Home 757/498-0263

January 6, 2003

Dear

I am a doctoral candidate in the closing months of my program of study here at The College of William & Mary. I am currently working on my dissertation and am conducting research concerning job-related attitudes of directors of special education. We are facing a difficult situation in the dwindling ranks of qualified special education administrators. To help determine why this is so, this study is designed to survey perceptions held by incumbent directors of special education programs.

Your candid response to the enclosed questionnaire would be very helpful. I know this is a busy time for you, but I really need your help. That is why I have selected questionnaires that should take a total of no more than 15 minutes of your time. Please, won't you take a few moments right now to answer these questions? Please return the completed survey results in the enclosed stamped, self-addressed envelope by January 16, 2003. Survey information is being collected from Directors of Special Education Programs throughout Virginia. To protect your anonymity, you will not be identified with your answers in any way, unless you elect to do so. A number is assigned to each survey for tracking purposes. The results will be kept entirely confidential and data will be used for statistical purposes only. To determine how representative the response is to the questionnaires, there is a postcard included with each survey that we ask you to mail back separately so we can track who has responded, without compromising the anonymity of the survey responses on the questionnaire itself.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at 757/437-4842 (Work) or 757/498-0263 (Home). To receive a summary of the results of the study, check the appropriate box on the enclosed postcard. As a small token of my appreciation, (I am a *graduate student*, after all) please feel free to keep the enclosed \$2 bill, even if you decide - (for reasons known only to you) - not to participate.

This project was approved by the college of William and Mary protection of human Subjects committee (phone: 757-221-3901) on November 6, 2002 and expires on November 6, 2003.

Sincerely,
 Bud Livers, Doctoral Candidate

First Follow-up Letter

School of Education
Post Office Box 8795
Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8795
Office: 757/221-2406
Fax: 757/221-2988

James H. Stronge, Professor
Brenda T. Williams, Associate Professor
Michael F. DiPaola, Associate Professor
Bud Livers, Doctoral Candidate
Home 757/498-0263

January 16, 2003

Dear

Help! I haven't heard from you yet!

Now that we are fully into the swing of the New Year, I hope that you can find the 15 minutes needed to respond to the questionnaires on special education administrator perceptions sent to you 10 days ago. It is extremely important that I have your views on these significant issues affecting the future of our profession.

The questionnaires are anonymous, but to determine how representative the response is to the questionnaires, I ask that you return the postcard enclosed with the survey separately so I can track the response rate.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at 757/437-4842 (Work) or 757/498-0263 (Home). To receive a summary of the results of the study, check the appropriate box on the enclosed postcard. If you've not spent it yet, why not use the \$2 bill to buy a cup of coffee or tea, on me, with my sincere thanks for your assistance on this project.

Sincerely,

Bud Livers, Doctoral Candidate

p.s. If you *have* already completed and returned the questionnaires, my sincere thanks for your assistance, and please ignore this letter.

Second Follow-up Letter

School of Education
 Post Office Box 8795
 Williamsburg, Virginia 23187-8795
 Office: 757/221-2406
 Fax: 757/221-2988

James H. Stronge, Professor
 Brenda T. Williams, Associate Professor
 Michael F. DiPaola, Associate Professor
 Bud Livers, Doctoral Candidate
 Home 757/498-0263

January 26, 2003

Dear

Greetings.

The responses to my survey on special education administrator job perceptions have been encouraging so far. Unfortunately, I have not yet received your response. Your input is critical, if this research is to truly represent Virginia administrators who are involved in providing services to persons with disabilities.

I realize you have many other demands on your time, and I would not presume upon your schedule if it were not important. I do hope that you can find the 15 minutes needed to respond to the questionnaires on special education administrator perceptions sent to you earlier this month. In the event that your first copy of the survey may have been misplaced, I have included another here, copied on front and back sides of the page, for your use. It is extremely important that I have your views on these significant issues affecting the future of our profession.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact me at 757/437-4842 (Work) or 757/498-0263 (Home). To receive a summary of the results of the study, please check the appropriate box on the postcard enclosed with your original survey, or indicate so on the enclosed survey. If you've not spent it yet, why not use the \$2 bill to buy a nice cup of coffee or tea, on me, with my sincere thanks for your assistance on this project.

Sincerely,

Bud Livers, Doctoral Candidate

p.s. If you have already completed and returned the questionnaires, my genuine thanks for your assistance, and please ignore this request.

Appendix C – The Research Process

Table C-1

Numbers of Surveys Returned, by Day**Survey Responses**

Date	Day #	# Resp	Req Results	\$2	Cum %	Cum Tot	Survey Cost	Remarks
Mon 1/6/2003	0	0	0	0	0	0		Mail 138 Surveys
Tue 1/7/2003	1	0	0	0	0	0		
Wed 1/8/2003	2	7	4	1	5.04%	7	\$104.29	
Thu 1/9/2003	3	8	6	1	10.79%	15	\$48.67	
Fri 1/10/2003	4	14	11	1	20.86%	29	\$25.17	
Sat 1/11/2003	5	21	12	4	35.97%	50	\$14.60	
Sun 1/12/2003	6	0	0	0	35.97%	50	\$14.60	
Mon 1/13/2003	7	11	7	1	43.88%	61	\$11.97	
Tue 1/14/2003	8	7	4	1	48.92%	68	\$10.74	
Wed 1/15/2003	9	14	5	1	58.99%	82	\$8.90	
Thu 1/16/2003	10	5	2	0	62.59%	87	\$8.39	1st Follow-up Req (56)
Fri 1/17/2003	11	4	3	0	65.47%	91	\$8.02	
Sat 1/18/2003	12	2	1	2	66.91%	93	\$7.85	
Sun 1/19/2003	13	0	0	0	66.91%	93	\$7.85	
Mon 1/20/2003	14	0	0	0	66.91%	93	\$7.85	Holiday - No Mail
Tue 1/21/2003	15	2	3	1	68.35%	95	\$7.68	
Wed 1/22/2003	16	5	4	0	71.94%	100	\$7.30	
Thu 1/23/2003	17	2	0	0	73.38%	102	\$7.16	
Fri 1/24/2003	18	1	1	1	74.10%	103	\$7.09	
Sat 1/25/2003	19	3	0	0	76.26%	106	\$6.89	
Sun 1/26/2003	20	0	0	0	76.26%	106	\$6.89	
Mon 1/27/2003	21	5	3	1	79.86%	111	\$6.58	2nd Follow-up Req (33)
Tue 1/28/2003	22	0	0	0	79.86%	111	\$6.58	
Wed 1/29/2003	23	4	2	0	82.73%	115	\$6.35	
Thu 1/30/2003	24	5	3	0	86.33%	120	\$6.08	
Fri 1/31/2003	25	0	0	0	86.33%	120	\$6.08	
Sat 2/1/2003	26	1	1	0	87.05%	121	\$6.03	
Sun 2/2/2003	27	0	0	0	87.05%	121	\$6.03	
Mon 2/3/2003	28	0	0	0	87.05%	121	\$6.03	
Tue 2/4/2003	29	1	2	0	87.77%	122	\$5.98	
Wed 2/5/2003	30	2	2	0	89.21%	124	\$5.89	
2/6 & Beyond		5	0	0	92.81%	129	\$5.66	
TOTALS		129	76	15				
Percent		92.81%	55.07%	10.97%				

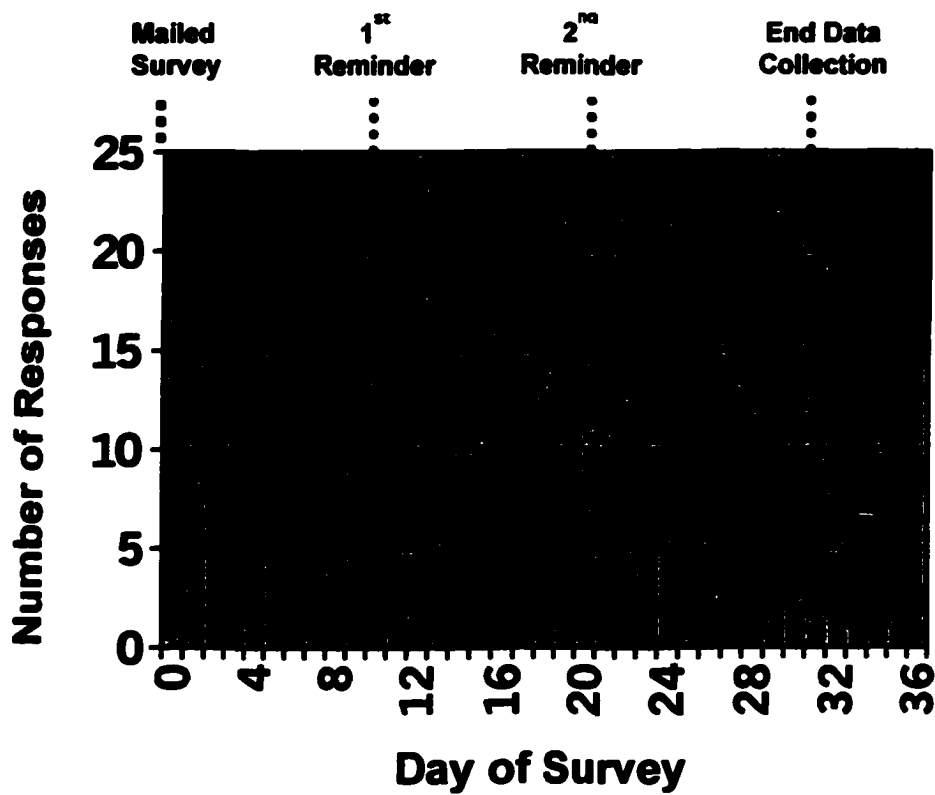


Figure C-1. Numbers of responses received each day of data collection phase.

Appendix D – Text of Additional Comments

Several of the administrators surveyed added personal notes of encouragement to their responses. This section contains the full text of added comments by well-wishers.

Comments of Well Wishers

- Good Luck!
- Good Luck in your research & the completing of your program.
- (Added return address)
- Good Luck Bud – (signature)
- Good Luck Bud! (Signature)
- Good Luck! (Signature)
- Thank You! Good Luck!
- Best of Luck!
- Good Luck Bud. See you in the field – (signature)
- Good Luck! If you see Professor (name) tell her (signature) said Hi!!
- Best wishes with your study.

Others commented on the \$2.00 bill included with each survey as an inducement to participation. Surprisingly, 15 respondents (11%) returned the \$2 dollars. One respondent felt inclined to return the cash, but was apparently struck by the novelty of a \$2 bill – so in place of the original \$2 bill, this person returned two single \$ bills.

Additional Comments included:

- **Not comfortable accepting \$2.00 so I gave it to the office coffee fund.**
- **Thanks for the tip \$\$.** Good Luck.
- **I am returning the \$2.00**
- **Let this be the start of your collection. Best of Luck! (written on the returned \$2.00)**
- **Use the \$2.00 to treat yourself while analyzing these data (signature).**
- **Please accept the \$2.00 back – I completed my dissertation & graduated from (University) in April 2000 and I'm happy to do this for free.**
- **Thanks, anyway! Happy to help! (returned \$2.00) (signature).**
- **Bud – I think your survey is a little confusing and tends to “jump all over the place.” Some of the stem statements would appear applicable, while others do not. Nonetheless, you obviously have a purpose here. Good Luck, and here's your \$2.00 back.**
- **Good luck completing your dissertation – keep the \$2 dollars and buy yourself some coffee.**

Some apologized for being late in responding.

- **Sorry this is late – there should be a question on here re: Can you ever meet a deadline anymore? (Signature) (Recv'd day 20).**
- **My gravest apologies for the late arrival of this survey. I am pursuing a doctorate myself while maintaining my position as a Sped director and am feeling very “challenged” in regards to time. Good Luck! (Signature) (Recv'd day 23).**
- **Sorry I am late. I was out on leave. Good Luck. (Signature) (Recv'd day 24).**
- **... So sorry that this is late (recv'd day 26).**

Most of the comments, summarized in Table D-1, dealt with the actual content of the survey.

Table D-1

Comments Addressing the Text of the Survey Instruments

Survey Content	Comment Area	Comment
Burnout	Working with students	I do not work with students.
Burnout	Working with students	Note: SpEd Directors have little contact with students.
Burnout	Working with students	Do not work directly with students.
Burnout	Working with students	I don't usually work directly with students.
Burnout	Working with students	I really don't have much direct contact with the students on a regular basis
Burnout	Working with students	Bud – I had to leave a few blank on the first survey, as I do not work directly with students. Best wishes and let me know if there is anything else I can do! (Signature)
Burnout	Working with students	Limited direct contact with students impacts answers to some questions.
Burnout	Working with students	Not in classroom situation - only work with students in an indirect way.
Burnout	Treating students as impersonal objects	Never – at least I try not to.
Burnout	I feel very energetic	At the start of the day.
Burnout	Becoming more callous	Not yet!
Burnout	Job is hardening me emotionally	More toward legislative groups than parents, students, teachers, etc.

Table D-1 (continued)

Comments Addressing the Text of the Survey Instruments

Survey Content	Comment Area	Comment
Mgmnt Styles	General	I have a hard time identifying with this page. I work well with my boss. He gives me great freedom to do my job. I keep him informed of issues that might bubble up to his level.
Mgmnt Styles	Allow concessions to the Boss	We solve problems together.
Mgmnt Styles	Allow concessions to the Boss	When he is right!
Mgmnt Styles	Go with/Give in to Boss' suggestion	If they are what is best for the student, teacher, school
Mgmnt Styles	Go with/Give in to Boss' suggestion	If it benefits the student
Mgmnt Styles	Go with/Give in to Boss' suggestion	If they are workable.
Mgmnt Styles	Go with/Give in to Boss' suggestion	I don't see it as "giving in." As superintendent, certain mandates need to be followed.
Mgmnt Styles	Satisfy needs of boss	Within reason & if it is best for the student.
Mgmnt Styles	Problem solving with the boss	I problem solve with my boss and feel comfortable stating my opinion regarding an issue – even if it's different from his. However, I respect the authority of my boss and follow his directives if, after discussion, we disagree on an issue. He has the "final say," so to speak.
Mgmnt Styles	Conflicts with the Boss	Conflicts with my "boss" are nonexistent: My "boss", the deputy Supt, defers to me in special education.

Table D-1 (continued)

Comments Addressing the Text of the Survey Instruments

Survey Content	Comment Area	Comment
Mgmnt Styles	Conflicts with the Boss	I don't have problems with my boss so these are difficult to answer correctly.
Mgmnt Styles	Conflicts with the Boss	I don't have a problem with my boss. My previous job was totally different a lot of stress. The administration makes a difference! (Left 21 of 28 answers blank on survey II)
Mgmnt Styles	Conflicts with the Boss	No conflict. We reach consensus thru understanding. We don't have deadlocks.
Mgmnt Styles	Avoiding encounters with boss	We work well together and do what is best for the children we serve.
Mgmnt Styles	Avoiding encounters with boss	I try to avoid negative encounters but I do confront issues.
Mgmnt Styles	Decision making	Make decisions that are best for the student and student's needs. Work with administration to achieve this goal.
Mgmnt Styles	Using authority to make decisions in my favor	Only if legal issues are involved.
Mgmnt Styles	Being firm in pursuing an issue	Depends.
Conflict Domain	Clashes between groups	Sometimes.
Conflict Domain	Clashes between groups	Occasionally, not consistently.
Conflict Domain	Parent Groups	Overall reach agreement with others. There are times with a few parents I feel differently.

Table D-1 (continued)

Comments Addressing the Text of the Survey Instruments

Survey Content	Comment Area	Comment
Conflict Domain	Parent Groups	I agree there is agreement, mutual assistance, cooperation, harmony with 95% of the parent group – with the other 3-5% I disagree.
Conflict Domain	Parent Groups	Overall reach agreement with others. There are times with a few parents I feel differently.
Conflict Domain	Parent Groups	Other groups sometimes create problems for our group by bring to our attention violations of law or not following IEP, in their opinion.
Conflict Domain	Middle ground for breaking deadlocks	Mediation with parents.
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Changed title from Ms. to Dr.
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	Additional school plans i.e.) Will begin doctoral program next week!
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	The person you sent this to is no longer in this job. I took this job this past August. Note: He/She did not provide name for update.
Miscellaneous	Miscellaneous	My immediate boss is an assistant superintendent – it depends on the issue as to which “boss” is involved – this person or the superintendent. I answered questions about immediate supervisor.

One respondent completely skipped the demographics info. Another skipped the dimensions of conflict survey. Twenty-two individuals skipped questions dealing with students on the burnout inventory.

Appendix E – Differentiation by Sex

Differentiating by Sex of individuals and Boss

Grouping the respondents by sex yielded results similar to those obtained by the entire group. Some difference is noted in the reversal of the last two management styles – males were least likely to employ Avoiding as a conflict management style, whereas females were least likely to use Dominating as a style of choice. However, this difference is not statistically significant. While the study group reportedly used all five conflict management styles at one time or another, they reported higher scores for Integrating and Compromising than for the others. The results of this analysis are displayed in Table E-1.

Table E-1

Interpersonal Conflict Management Styles – Mean and Standard Deviation by Sex

Management Style	<u>M</u> Male	<u>SD</u> Male	<u>M</u> Female	<u>SD</u> Female
Integrating (IN)	4.42	.43	4.50	.48
Compromising (CO)	3.97	.57	3.97	.61
Obliging (OB)	3.81	.68	3.71	.60
Dominating (DO)	3.22	.74	3.11	.63
Avoiding (AV)	3.11	.85	3.14	.80

Earlier research suggested that women tend to be more relationship-driven and therefore would tend toward Compromising and Avoiding management styles (Valentine, 1995). In this study however, while Compromising was rated fairly high

as a management style of choice, Avoiding was the least likely conflict management style employed by the study group, 75% of whom are women.

Disaggregating the data by respondents' sex and bosses' sex led to variation in responses. Differences were noted depending on if the subordinate/superior relationship was male/male, male/female, female/male, or female/female. The numbers of pairs falling into the different groups is displayed in Table E-2.

Table E-2

Sex – Boss's Sex Cross-Tabulation

		Boss's Sex		Total
		Male	Female	
Sex	Male	23 (19%)	8 (7%)	31 (26%)
	Female	53 (44%)	36 (30%)	89 (74%)
Total		76 (63%)	44 (37%)	120 (100%)

The conflict management styles grouped according to subordinate's/superior's sex are presented in Table E-3.

Table E-3

Order of Conflict Management Style Means by Subordinate/Superior Sex

	M / M	M / F	F / M	F / F
Integrating	1 st - 4.40	1 st - 4.46	1 st - 4.53	1 st - 4.46
Compromising	2 nd - 4.03	3 rd - 3.81	2 nd - 3.99	2 nd - 3.94
Obliging	3 rd - 3.80	2 nd - 3.85	3 rd - 3.73	3 rd - 3.67
Dominating	4 th - 3.19	4 th - 3.32	5 th - 3.08	4 th - 3.17
Avoiding	5 th - 3.10	5 th - 3.13	4 th - 3.13	5 th - 3.14

Note. M = Male, F = Female.

Additional Observations

Regardless of sex, all groups reported **Integrating** as their primary conflict management style. Same-sex subordinate/superior teams (i.e, male with male boss or female with female boss) placed the five conflict management styles in the same sequence, with **Integrating** as the most often employed and **Avoiding** as the least often used. Females with male bosses reported **Dominating** as their least likely conflict management style. Males, on the other hand, reported being least likely to employ **Avoidance** as a conflict management style. Additionally, males with female bosses reported they were somewhat less likely to use **Compromising** as a conflict management style.

Appendix F – Analysis of Pilot Survey Data

The surveys were pilot-tested on a group of 15 local school district special education coordinators. The pilot study yielded a 100% response rate within two weeks of survey distribution. Part of the reason for this excellent rate of response was the researcher's personal contact, encouraging pilot-study participants to answer and return their surveys. Having all the respondents located under one roof proved instrumental to this effort.

The data were analyzed using SPSS software. Because this was a pilot study designed to assess the process of the study only and not the results, data analysis was limited to measures of central tendency and frequency counts. Table F-1 contains a summary of the burnout indices means, along with where they scored compared with the publisher's standardized norms.

Table F-1

Pilot Study Indices of Burnout by Frequency, Mean and Standard Deviation

Indicator	Burnout Level ^a	<u>M</u> ^b	<u>SD</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>pct</u> ^c
Emotional Exhaustion (EE)	High (27 +)			4	26.5%
	Moderate (17-26)	19.7	12.7	4	26.5%
	Low (0-16)			7	47%
Depersonalization (DP)	High (14 +)			3	20%
	Moderate (9-13)			2	13%
	Low (0-8)	6.1	6.5	10	67%
Personal Accomplishment (PA)	High (0-30)			0	0%
	Moderate (31-36)			5	33%
	Low (37 +)	41	6.5	10	67%

^a High, moderate and low levels of burnout are described by the publisher in the accompanying test manual, based on nationwide norms.

^b This mean is of the population for this study, positioned near the corresponding level of burnout as identified by the publisher.

^c Percentages are of this particular study sample as they fell within the different ranges.

Pilot Study Results

Observations:

- Generally lower levels of burnout experienced
- Wide fluctuation in scores, resulting in large standard deviations

Conflict Management Style –

- Very collaborative, indicated by high scores in Integrating and Compromising
- Not “afraid of a fight,” as indicated by low scores on Avoiding.

Table F-2

Pilot Study – Interpersonal Conflict Management Styles, Means, Standard Deviations, and Comparisons to Reference Norms

Management Style	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Norm^a</u>	<u>Above Norm^b</u>	<u>Below Norm^c</u>
Integrating (IN)	4.4	.45	4.21	73%	27%
Compromising (CO)	4.3	.53	3.44	93%	.07%
Obliging (OB)	4.0	.61	3.32	87%	13%
Dominating (DO)	3.4	.74	3.30	47%	53%
Avoiding (AV)	2.9	.43	2.67	67%	33%

^a Test publisher reference group norm (208 managers with Master's degree)

^b Percent of sample that scored above the reference norm

^c Percent of sample that scored below the reference norm

Earlier research suggested that women tend to be more relationship-driven and therefore lean toward Compromising and Avoiding management styles (Valentine, 1995). In this study however, Avoiding was the least likely conflict management style employed by the pilot group, 93% of whom were women.

Table F-3

Pilot Study Dimensions of Organizational Conflict – Means, Standard Deviations, and Comparisons to Reference Norms

Dimension	<u>M</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>Norm^a</u>	<u>Above</u>	<u>Below</u>
				<u>Norm^b</u>	<u>Norm^c</u>
Intrapersonal (IP) – within the individual	2.12	.65	2.35	33%	67%
Intragroup (IG) – within groups	3.34	.73	2.31	87%	13%
Intergroup (NG) – between groups	3.01	.80	2.50	67%	33%

^a Test publisher reference group norm (208 managers with master's degree).

^b Percent of sample that scored above the reference norm.

^c Percent of sample that scored below the reference norm.

Also of interest, of the 15 \$2.00 bills attached to the surveys, 5 of them (33%) were returned along with the completed surveys. Perhaps pilot-study participants, all personal acquaintances and working partners of the researcher, felt uncomfortable accepting the remuneration and completed the surveys as a personal favor.

Personal Accomplishment

- **Personal Accomplishment inversely related to Dominating leadership style.**
Conventional wisdom might suggest that people who Dominate (win-lose) may feel that their Personal Accomplishment is linked to the ability to accomplish personal goals, even at the expense of others (Dominating). The opposite seemed to be the case, however: The more Dominating the management style, the lower the Personal Accomplishment score (i.e., higher burnout).
- **Personal Accomplishment significantly correlated with Integration management style (read-lower burnout).**

- **Personal Accomplishment significantly correlated with Compromising management style.**

Appendix G – Threats to Validity

Table G-1

Threats to Internal Validity

Factor	May Contribute	Does Not Contribute	Remarks
Experimental mortality (attrition)		*	Data collection phase of this research was only 30 days, with a single data collection
Differential selection (sampling procedure)		*	The entire population of interest was asked to participate
Statistical regression (regression to mean)		*	Single data collection
Selection-maturation interaction (different levels of age, SES)		*	No interaction between participants
Maturation (trend in age of population – physical and developmental)	*		Analysis differentiation by age showed no significant difference in responses
Instrumentation (product; validity and reliability of instrument)		*	Instruments commercially available, with adequate reliability and validity previously demonstrated
Testing (process; training - where)	*		May have been factor, as unable to control where/when survey was completed (at end of stressful day at work, during lunch hour, or during commercial breaks while watching the Super Bowl)
History (what happened; media)	*		Probably not a factor, although concern over terrorism and possible war with Iraq may have lead to elevated stress levels
Diffusion of treatments (control group has access to treatment).		*	No control v. treatment groups

Table G-1 (continued)

Threats to Internal Validity

Factor	May Contribute	Does Not Contribute	Remarks
Rivalry by respondents receiving less desirable treatments (John Henry Effect-control works harder)		*	No control v. treatment groups
Equalization of treatments (political pressures – equality)		*	No control v. treatment groups

Table G-2

Threats to External Validity

Factor	May Contribute	Does Not Contribute	Remarks
Explicit description of the experimental treatment		*	No treatment
Multiple-treatment interference (volunteers)	*		This subject population is often selected for surveys
Hawthorne effect (Knowledge/awareness of being studied)	*		Data are entirely self-reported. Subjects may give “politically correct” answer, versus true answer
Novelty and disruption effects	*		Unable to determine when surveys were completed and under what circumstances
Experimenter effect (experimenter influencing outcome)		*	Experimenter interaction limited to letters of transmittal and follow up
Pretest sensitization (teaching to the test)		*	No preteaching
Posttest sensitization (does it solidify the treatment)		*	No treatment

Table G-2 (continued)

Threats to External Validity

Factor	May Contribute	Does Not Contribute	Remarks
Interaction of history and treatment effects		*	No treatment
Measurement of dependent variable (what do they mean by "concept")		*	Dependent variables using published definitions
Interaction of time of measurement and treatment effects.		*	No treatment
Interaction of selection and treatment		*	No treatment
Interaction of setting and treatment		*	No treatment