FORGIVENESS AT WORK: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUSTICE IDEOLOGIES AND FORGIVENESS IN THE WORKPLACE

A Dissertation

by

GREGORY DENNIS PAUL

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

August 2009

Major Subject: Communication

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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

Forgiveness at Work: Exploring the Relationship between Justice Ideologies and
Forgiveness in the Workplace. (August 2009)
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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Linda Putnam

People cope with a variety of hurtful behaviors in the workplace. These actions can have detrimental emotional, relational, and task-related consequences. Forgiveness is one way to cope with these negative consequences. Although previous research examines how immediate situational factors such as offense severity and position in the organizational hierarchy influence the likelihood of practicing forgiveness in the workplace, little research investigates how contextual features such as an organization's conflict ideology shape the likelihood of forgiveness. The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of organizational context on the practice and patterns of forgiveness in the workplace. In particular, this study investigates the relationship between an organization's conflict ideology and employees' coping practices following hurtful events in the workplace. Using three court-based justice models as lenses, this study analyzes the emergence of conflict values, beliefs, norms, and practices in four organizations. This study uses data collected from 103 individual interviews, observational notes, and organizational documents from four organizations to explore the relationship between justice ideologies and the practice and patterns of forgiveness in each organization.

Analysis of the data using a modified version of constructive grounded theory indicated the emergence of multiple conflict values, norms, and practices within each organization. These values, norms, and practices reflected features of the court-based legalistic and restorative justice models. The combination of these features suggested the presence of four ideological justice models. Forgiveness emerged most consistently as a coping practice in an organization that emphasized several features of the restorative justice model. Additionally, features of the organizations' justice ideologies influenced patterns of forgiveness. This research suggests that the practice of forgiveness in the workplace is grounded in the organizational context.

DEDICATION

To Libby

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NOMENCLATURE

CE	Christian Education
GT	Grounded Theory
PE	Prep Education
TE	Teen Education
YE	Youth Education

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: FROM FAILURE TO FORGIVENESS

Conflict is an inevitable fact of life in the workplace (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2000; Kellett & Dalton, 2001; Kolb & Putnam, 1992a; Littlejohn & Domenici, 2001) that can spring from a number of sources. These sources include task-related disagreements and relationship-based hurts done by one person to another (Aquino, Grover, Goldman, & Folger, 2003), such as bullying (Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy, & Alberts, 2007), aggression (Baron & Neuman, 1998; Neuman & Baron, 2005), or injustice (Greenberg, 1990). Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007), for example, speculated that between 35% and 50% of workers in the United States experience at least one negative act on a weekly basis in a six to twelve month time span, while Lutgen-Sandvik (2003) indicated that over 90% of adults experience at least one episode of workplace bullying in their working career.

These hurtful actions can have negative, potentially dangerous, consequences for a workplace, ranging from a mild sense of resentment to a heightened desire for “pay back” and revenge (Grovier, 2002; Kellett & Dalton, 2001). For instance, if an employee keeps thinking about a negative experience suffered at the hands of another, he or she is generally more likely not only to relive the damaging emotional consequences of the hurt but also to experience a heightened desire to avoid or seek revenge against the person responsible (McCullough, 2001; McCullough, Bono, & Root,

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This dissertation follows the style of *Communication Quarterly*.

2007). Lutgen-Sandvik et al. (2007) detail a variety of consequences of experiencing bullying in the workplace that range from depression to suicide. Although such drastic consequences may be more the exception than the rule when responding to hurtful events in the workplace, there is little doubt that relationship hurts can be quite damaging (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2000; Poole & Garner, 2006).

To help people manage these negative consequences, organizations may develop formal polices and informal rules for handling disputes that guide people's conflict management behavior. Together these explicit and implicit expectations for managing disputes constitute a dispute resolution system (Lewicki, Saunders, & Barry, 2007; Moffitt & Bordone, 2005; Ury, Brett, & Goldberg, 1988). Dispute systems serve several functions, including enhancing the organization's social legitimacy (Pfeffer, 1994; Sitkin & Bies, 1994; Sitkin & Roth, 1993) and creating the impression that the organization is meeting employees' expectations of organizational justice or fairness (Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt, Conlon, Wesson, Porter, & Ng, 2001; Greenberg, 1993; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Often similar to the Western legal system, these systems attempt to end disputes as quickly as possible (Moffitt & Bordone, 2005) and help people focus on their job performances rather than their workplace relationships (Kidder, 2007).

However, some have begun to question the utility of dispute systems that attempt to de-personalize personally hurtful and unjust behavior. As Grovier (2002) argues, "When we feel resentment after being wronged, we resent first of all the *person or persons* who wronged us…We resent their *action or actions*, what they did to us that hurt and was wrong and we also resent *them*, and what we assume to be their ill-will toward us" (p. 50) [emphasis in original]. In other words, unjust actions are not simply violations of organizational rules but also violations of organizational members as *persons* (Bies, 2001; Lind & Tyler, 1988). Systems that utilize an impersonal approach may leave the conflict parties dissatisfied with the dispute procedures and results because the systems refuse to acknowledge the personal nature of relationship transgressions and injustices that give rise to conflict.

As a result, some scholars have begun to explore an alternative way of managing disputes in the workplace that emphasizes the welfare of all parties involved (offenders, victims, *and* community members) and empowers them to negotiate outcomes that meet personal interests (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Kidder, 2007; Tripp, Bies, & Aquino, 2007). Proponents of this alternative approach argue that it enhances the voice of the harmed party, facilitates reparation that meets the harmed person's interests, and enables reintegration of the offender into the community. Additionally, supporters argue that this alternative approach facilitates positive management of relationships and emotions through forgiveness (Armour & Umbreit, 2002; Braithwaite, 1999).

Scholars have framed forgiveness as a way to enhance productivity (Kurzynski, 1998; Stone, 2002) and improve relationships among employees (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Butler & Mullis, 2001; Tripp et al., 2007; Yamhure Thompson & Shahen, 2003) while eliminating the negative emotions that arise from hurtful events (Worthington, 1997; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). Aquino et al. (2003) argued that "[f]orgiveness should be an important concern of both organizational theorists and practicing managers because it is a way for individuals to repair damaged workplace relationships and overcome debilitating thoughts and emotions resulting from interpersonal injury" (p. 210). In other words, forgiveness is an important area of concern for scholars of conflict management in the workplace in part because it addresses the often-overlooked emotional and relational consequences of a hurtful event by helping people manage negative and destructive feelings resulting from a hurtful transgression (Kelley & Waldron, 2006; Tripp et al., 2007).

However, despite these proclaimed benefits, forgiveness does not seem to be a common coping practice following hurtful actions in the workplace. For example, Bies and Tripp (1996) observed that, following a trust violation by coworkers, employees reported coping most often by fantasizing about getting revenge or completely withdrawing from their co-workers. In contrast, relatively few respondents indicated that they would forgive the person who violated their trust. Discussing their observations, Bies and Tripp wrote, "The forgiveness response was a surprise and clearly is a phenomenon in need of further investigation" (p. 259). If forgiveness holds all of the positive promises claimed by its proponents, researchers and practitioners would do well to understand what factors promote and inhibit the likelihood of practicing it in the workplace.

A growing number of researchers have grappled with this question, particularly in the context of romantic relationships (Worthington, 1998). To do so, most have taken a post-positivist approach that generally has assumed that a) the same factors predict the likelihood of forgiveness across differing contexts, and b) people operate from a common conception of what forgiveness means and what forgiveness looks like. This approach, however, is problematic in the sense that it tends to ignore the role that context plays in shaping the likelihood and practice of forgiveness (Fincham, 2000; Hook, Worthington, & Utsey, in press; Sandage & Wiens, 2001; Sandage & Williamson, 2005). If conflict performances and the hurts that give rise to them are grounded in organizational context (Beugré, 2007; Dubinskas, 1992; Fairhurst & Putnam, 2004; Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983), forgiveness as a way of coping with those hurts is also bound by context (Aquino et al., 2003; Sandage, Hill, & Vang, 2003; Sandage & Wiens, 2001).

Few studies, though, have explored contextual factors that shape the practice of forgiveness (see Gassin, 2001; Sandage & Wiens, 2001; Sandage & Williamson, 2005), instead framing forgiveness as an individual-level phenomenon. This study offers an initial step toward addressing this gap in the research. This project contributes to an understanding of forgiveness in several ways. First, it shifts the focus to an area that researchers have overlooked for some time now, enabling opportunities for the development of context-sensitive theories of forgiveness. If we are to take seriously the idea that forgiveness is a social phenomenon (Fincham, 2000; North, 1998; Waldron & Kelley, 2007), then we must understand how the social context influences the enactment of forgiveness.

Second, in understanding how context features of an organization influence the practice of forgiveness, this project offers insights into as of yet unexplored contextual elements that inhibit and promote the practice of forgiveness. Understanding the social context can help us better understand why some organizational members struggle with forgiveness, why other members reject the notion of forgiveness, and why still others generally disagree on the very meaning of forgiveness. Rather than assuming that forgiveness is internally-driven or personality-driven (Berry & Worthington, 2001; McCullough et al., 2007; Worthington, 1997), this research acknowledges that people are situated in a larger social context that encourages certain behaviors and discourages others.

Third, this study interrogates the relationship between forgiveness and models of justice (Armour & Umbreit, 2006; Bradfield & Aquino, 1999; Exline, Hill, Worthington, & McCullough, 2005; Hill, Exline, & Cohen, 2005; Tripp et al., 2007), positioning forgiveness as a social phenomenon enabled and constrained by elements of the context in which people practice it. This study explores multiple models of justice by investigating their constitutive parts to better understand the contextual basis for why forgiveness tends to result from restorative interventions. To begin this look into the contextual foundations of forgiveness, the following sections discuss failure events that give rise to conflicts and the nature of workplace forgiveness in response to those failures.

Sparking Conflict

Workplace conflicts begin for a number of reasons, including what Schonbach (1980) calls failure events, or acts of omission or commission that violate socially appropriate and expected ways of behaving. Acts of omission occur when someone violates an acceptable way of acting by *passively forgetting* to do something. For example, failing to follow through on a promise because it slipped one’s mind would constitute a failure of omission. Acts of commission occur when someone violates behavioral expectations by *actively engaging* in inappropriate actions. For example, spreading lies about a co-worker would constitute a failure of commission. Actions are not failures in and of themselves. Rather, they must be interpreted as being deviant for them to be considered failures (Felstiner, Abel, & Sarat, 1980/81). The idea of deviance implies that certain behaviors are expected and/or acceptable whereas others are not.

What constitutes expected and acceptable behaviors, though, depends on the context or situation in which they occur (Beugré, 2007; Sheppard, Lewicki, & Minton, 1992). That is, the interpretation of acts as failures depends on the context in which they occur. For example, cracking off-color jokes may be appropriate and perhaps expected in one organization, but may be inappropriate in another. Whether an action is labeled as a failure depends on the contextualized expectations and ideals in which it occurs.

Failure events are not problematic simply because they violate social norms. Rather, they pose a number of other problems. First, they may suggest that the actor / offender[1] is not concerned with socially-accepted practices (Goffman, 1971). Major deviations suggest that the actor either is not familiar with a practice or does not feel the need to follow it. Though the former is easier to correct (through socialization), the latter suggests that the deviant actor perceives himself or herself as superior to others or does not care for others, both of which violate social expectations of equality

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[1] I use the term “actor” and “recipient” from now on to refer to the individual who undertook the action and who was on the receiving end of that action respectively. I avoid the terms “offender” and “victim” in part because of their litigious connotation and because individuals in a conflict may be both offender and victim at the same time (Grovier, 2002).

(Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976; Bolstad, 2000; Taft, 2000) and can touch off conflict (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998; Putnam & Poole, 1987).

Second, failures can change how the recipient perceives the actor and their relationship (Goffman, 1971; Schlenker, 1980). Failures do not simply communicate differences in normative beliefs; they can negatively shape the actor's and the recipient's desired images (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Goffman, 1959). As Hupka, Jung, and Silverthorn (1987) argue, "The socially inappropriate behavior of one of the partners may interfere not only with the image that the offending partner seeks to present, but also with the image that the innocent partner wants to maintain about himself or herself, and the image that both wish to convey about the quality of their relationship" (p. 304). In other words, failures can negatively impact both the parties' desired images and their relationship.

Third, failure events may lead the recipient to perceive an "injustice gap," or gap between how one expects to be treated and how one actually is treated (Exline, Worthington, Hill, & McCullough, 2003). That is, failures are harmful because they violate a recipient's expectations of being treated fairly and justly.

Fourth, as a consequence of the perceived injustice gap, recipients of the failure events (or what Folger and Cropanzano (1998) call "sparking events") may heat up cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally (Folger & Cropanzano, 1998). Essentially, failure events are unjust actions that can spark conflicts characterized by heated emotions, thoughts, and/or behaviors.

This explanation is not to suggest that all acts of injustice are similar in meaning or severity. Recipients and actors can (and often do) interpret the same actions in very different ways (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1997). For example, if someone is caught spreading rumors about a coworker, one person might interpret that action as a relational injustice whereas another might interpret it as a violation of company policy. Additionally, failure events can vary in terms of the severity of the injustice. Keltner (1994) differentiates among a number of types of conflicts in his struggle spectrum, from mild disagreements to public campaigns to war. Similarly, failure events differ along a number of dimensions, including the perceived intentionality on the part of the harmdoer, the severity of the failure, and the extent to which the recipient of the event deserved to be hurt (Hill et al., 2005).

Responding to the Sparking Event

If recipients perceive a violation and sense an injustice gap, they may try to eliminate this injustice gap in a number of ways. Bies and Tripp (1996), for instance, identify different coping responses: having revenge fantasies about the actor (though not acting on those thoughts), doing nothing to the actor, confronting the actor in private, taking steps to restore one’s public image, withdrawing from the scene, feuding with the actor, and forgiving the actor. Their typology illustrates that people can respond in a number of ways that range from avoidance (doing nothing and socially withdrawing) to private coping (having revenge fantasies, private confrontation, and forgiveness) to public coping (restoring one’s image, and public feuds). Somewhat similarly, in their vigilante model, Tripp et al. (2007) argue that, in the face of perceived injustice, people will avoid the conflict, engage in revenge, and/or offer forgiveness. In other words, parties have a number of options for responding to or coping with a hurtful event, including revenge and forgiveness.

Revenge, or the “attempt to redress an interpersonal offense by voluntarily committing an aggressive action against the perceived offender,” generally has a bad reputation in western cultures (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001, p. 602). McCullough (2008) argues that discussions of revenge usually follow a “disease” metaphor, such that revenge is a disease wrought on an unsuspecting and undeserving host, causes them great harm, and then potentially spreads to others if not appropriately diagnosed and treated. To root out and prevent this onset of revenge, those people must be cured by healthy doses of emotion work (Domagalski & Steelman, 2007; Hochschild, 1983) and de-personalization so that, by thinking through their situation and controlling their emotions, they might escape the dreadful effects of revenge and the accompanying desire to avoid the harmdoer (McCullough et al., 1998; Tripp et al., 2007; Worthington & Wade, 1999).

Revenge is not entirely bad, though (Barton, 1999; Grovier, 2002; Murphy, 2000). For example, revenge may allow recipients to feel a renewed sense of justice (Jacoby, 1983; McCullough, 2008; McCullough et al., 2001). For many, “vengeance” is the “pursuit of justice” by another name. Additionally, revenge allows recipients to protect themselves by showing the ability to strike back, thus deterring those who wish to do harm to them in the future (McCullough, 2008). Despite these benefits, however, many do not see vengeance as an acceptable response in today’s workplace (Grovier, 2002). As McCullough (2001) argues, “avoidance and revenge in the workplace can put one's job at risk, so most people are probably careful to inhibit the expression of such negative motivations in the first place, regardless of how strong they might have been as a result of the transgression" (p. 194).

Often cast as the dualistic opposite of revenge, forgiveness stands as the "better" alternative to revenge. Proponents argue that forgiveness is associated with restoring relational closeness (Kelley, 1998; Kelley & Waldron, 2005; McCullough et al., 1998), improving physical and mental health (Berry & Worthington, 2001), and reducing feelings of negativity and anger (Witvliet, Ludwig, & Bauer, 2002). On an organizational level, advocates have argued that forgiveness is an effective way to resolve organizational conflict and encourage employee productivity (Butler & Mullis, 2001; Kurzynski, 1998; Yamhure Thompson & Shahen, 2003). In other words, forgiveness in American culture is treated as the responsible choice favored over revenge.

In effect, forgiveness comes into consideration when an actor who has engaged in a sparking event creates the perception of an injustice gap because of violating a norm. If the recipient does in fact interpret the event as a violation, that person must decide how to deal with the action. Revenge and forgiveness are but two ways in which someone can react. While revenge does have its benefits, people often (publicly) view it negatively and eschew such desires. Forgiveness, then, represents a way for recipients to manage the emotional and relational dimensions of injustice.

Forgiveness in the Workplace

Researchers have proposed a number of definitions for forgiveness. Worthington (1997), for example, defines forgiveness as “a motivation to reduce avoidance and withdrawal from a person who hurt us, as well as the anger, desire for revenge, and urge to retaliate against that person” (p. 108). In other words, forgiveness involves a lessening of negative emotions and behavioral desires against a person. Coming from a communication perspective, Kelley and Waldron (2006) interpret forgiveness as “a relational process whereby harmful conduct is acknowledged by one or both partners; the harmed partner extends undeserved mercy to the perceived transgressor; one or both partners experience a transformation from negative to positive psychological states, and the meaning of the relationship is renegotiated, with the possibility of reconciliation” (p. 307). In other words, forgiveness is both a process and an outcome involving a shift to positive affect, cognition, and behaviors.

As suggested by the definitions above, no consensus exists on the exact dimensions of forgiveness (Kearns & Fincham, 2004). For example, one area of debate revolves around whether forgiveness means simply no longer feeling negatively toward someone (the “neutralist” position) or feeling positively toward the transgressor (the “positivist” position) (Bright, Fry, & Cooperrider, 2006). Though there may not be consensus on the meaning of forgiveness, there is general agreement on several key characteristics. First, forgiveness is necessitated by a harmful act or sparking event (Bright et al., 2006; Yamhure Thompson & Shahen, 2003). What counts as a harmful act likely will vary by person. For forgiveness to enter the picture, the recipient of that act must interpret the action as a violation of normative behavior. Although some argue that forgiveness can only follow severe and prolonged hurts (Veenstra, 2001), others (Worthington, 2003) suggests that forgiveness can follow sparking events ranging from being cut off in traffic to violence. Second, forgiveness is both intrapersonal and interpersonal (McCullough, 2001; Veenstra, 1992). That is, forgiveness occurs within and between individuals along behavioral, cognitive, and affective dimensions (Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). Third, forgiveness is a process (Veenstra; Worthington, 1997). In other words, forgiveness occurs over time rather than at one moment. Essentially, when forgiving, individuals attempt to alter their behavior, thoughts, and affect toward a transgressor, thereby reconstituting their relationship with that person, returning it to either a neutral state or a positive state in which reconciliation can occur.

Forgiveness can take multiple forms, depending on the extent to which interpersonal and intrapersonal change occurs (Baumeister et al., 1997; Kelley & Waldron, 2006; McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002). For example, Baumeister et al. argue that *no forgiveness* occurs when neither interpersonal nor intrapersonal change occurs, whereas *total forgiveness* occurs when both types of changes occur. If an individual experiences intrapersonal but not interpersonal changes, they experience *silent forgiveness*; however, if that person experiences interpersonal but not intrapersonal changes, they experience *hollow forgiveness*. Grovier (2002) differentiates forgiveness into two types based not upon the actions of the forgiver but upon that of the one requesting forgiveness. *Unilateral* forgiveness occurs when the actor does not confess responsibility for the hurtful action.

Bilateral forgiveness, though, occurs when the actor admits guilt and the recipient grants forgiveness. In effect, the practice of forgiveness can vary.

The form forgiveness takes also seems to depend on the assumptions people make about what it means (Fincham, 2000). In their study of lay definitions of forgiveness, Kearns and Fincham (2004) note that people conceptualize forgiveness in different ways, disagreeing on the extent to which forgiveness involves condoning the offense, forgetting the offense, and reconciling with their offender. These findings are consistent with other findings regarding lay conceptualizations of forgiveness (see Lawler-Row, Scott, Raines, Edlis-Matityahou, & Moore, 2007; Younger, Piferi, Jobe, & Lawler, 2004). These observations are interesting not only because they demonstrate the wide (sometimes conflicting) variety of ways in which people forgive, but also because some of them contradict researchers' definitions of forgiveness. For example, scholars generally agree that forgiving does not involve condoning an offense, pretending the offense never happened (i.e., forgetting it), or reconciling (Enright & Coyle, 1997; Kelley & Waldron, 2006; McCullough, 2001; Waldron & Kelley, 2007; Worthington, 1997). However, from the studies above, many people believe otherwise. In other words, there remains disagreement about the nature and practice of forgiveness.

Fincham (2000) suggests that these differences spring from unarticulated personal assumptions about forgiveness. The debate regarding the relationship between forgiveness and reconciliation is particularly illustrative of this point. Although researchers generally have differentiated between forgiving one's harmdoer and reestablishing a relationship with that person (Enright, Gassin, & Wu, 1992; Kelley &

Waldron, 2005, 2006; Waldron & Kelley, 2007; Worthington & Drinkard, 2000), others have suggested that the difference between the two concepts – if it exists – is small (McCullough, 2008). Sandage and Williamson (2005) suggest that these differences are rooted in the contextual foundations of forgiveness. They note that whereas individualists separate the two concepts, collectivists are more likely to see the two as linked, if not part of the same process (Gassin, 2001; Sandage & Wiens, 2001). In other words, the unarticulated personal assumptions Fincham (2000) discusses are attributable not simply to differences in *personality* characteristics, but also to differences in *context* characteristics.

These different approaches to forgiveness suggest that forgiveness is not simply an individual-level phenomenon. Currently, the majority of forgiveness research has cast forgiveness as a rationalized, individual choice (Berry & Worthington, 2001; McCullough et al., 2007; Worthington, 1997), as illustrated by the variety of books outlining steps an individual can take to forgive (e.g., Enright, 2001; Waldron & Kelley, 2007; Worthington, 1997, 2003). While this conceptualization of forgiveness is interesting, it overlooks the inherently social and moral nature of forgiveness (Fincham, 2000; Waldron & Kelley, 2007). In other words, forgiveness exists in the context of other socially constructed values and beliefs, not in individual isolation. These values and beliefs regarding such behaviors as emotional expression and relationship maintenance influence not only whether people forgive but also how they do so. Waldron and Kelley (2007) begin to explore this area with their Negotiated Morality Theory. They argue in part that the decision to forgive is motivated by values that are shared and sanctioned by others in the community and embraced by the individual deciding to forgive. While their model still privileges the individual as the ultimate, active decision-maker of forgiveness, it begins to position forgiveness in a larger context constituted by constellations of values, norms, and beliefs.

Context and Forgiveness

As suggested above, the ways in which people conceptualize forgiveness depend on the context in which people enact it. However, the vast majority of studies on forgiveness to date, both in romantic relationships and in the workplace, have tended to concentrate primarily on situational variables that can be generalized across contexts (Hook et al., in press), such as apology (Cupach & Metts, 1994; Girard, Mullet, & Callahan, 2002; Kelley & Waldron, 2005; Zechmeister, Garcia, Romero, & Vas., 2004), offender likableness (Bradfield & Aquino, 1999) and religiosity (Konstam, Holmes & Levine, 2003; McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Rye et al., 2000; Wade & Worthington, 2003). Bradfield and Aquino (1999), for example, found that people were more likely to engage in revenge when they had thoughts about revenge or when they concentrated on the pain brought about by the hurtful action. However, when recipients were hurt by someone whom they already liked and when they thought about forgiveness, they were more likely to forgive those who hurt them. Aquino, Tripp, and Bies (2006) observed an interaction effect between hierarchical position and procedural justice on forgiveness, such that forgiveness was more likely when a) recipients held a lower position than their actors and b) recipients trusted that the organization would punish the people who hurt them. In general, the study of forgiveness has taken a post-positivist approach that has tended to concentrate on situational variables to make generalizable claims about the likelihood of forgiveness in the workplace.

Missing from these examinations, though, is an accounting for contextual forces that shape people's responses to transgressions (Gassin, 2001; Hook et al., in press; Sandage et al., 2003; Sandage & Wiens, 2001; Sandage & Williamson, 2005). In the workplace, for example, expectations regarding appropriate and fair conflict management behavior and day-to-day workplace behavior may influence whether people seek revenge or grant forgiveness (Aquino et al., 2003; Bartunek, Kolb, & Lewicki, 1992; Putnam, 1994; Tripp et al., 2007). Additionally, of those studies that attempted to situate forgiveness in a larger context, all have concentrated in forgiveness likelihood and practice based on broad-stroke differences between individualism and collectivism. Exploring the influence of context on forgiveness casts forgiveness as a communicative-based, social phenomenon shaped by contextual features. In fact, context characteristics may help to explain the varying definitions and approaches people have for forgiveness (Fincham, 2000; Kanz, 2000; Lawler-Row, 2007; Younger, 2004). Situating forgiveness in the larger communicative context also acknowledges the socially constructed nature of emotions (Jones, 2001), which are of key concern in the forgiveness process. Additionally, context clues may help to explain whether and why people grant and seek forgiveness. Thus, positioning forgiveness as a communicative phenomenon highlights the potential influence of contextual features such as beliefs, values, and norms in socially constructing the meaning and enactment of forgiveness.

Summary

To summarize, forgiveness is a prosocial behavior that involves the development of positive affect for an actor who has engaged in a transgression judged to be injurious and unjust and the release of negative feelings. Forgiveness, in turn, may give rise to reconciliation between conflicting individuals. In past studies, researchers suggest that the likelihood of forgiveness hinges on such factors as apology, empathy, relationship closeness, and personality. This approach, however, has overlooked the influence of contextual norms, such as organizational practices. These norms, which include expectations of how to manage conflict and how to work with others in the workplace, indeed may influence whether people practice forgiveness in a workplace setting.

Summary and Preview

Given the prevalence of hurtful events in the workplace and the potentially negative ways in which people can respond to these events, exploring the concept of forgiveness seems particularly important. Standing in contrast to vengeful responses such as sabotage or violence, forgiveness represents a way for recipients of hurtful behavior to cope with the relational and emotional dimensions of a normative violation by embracing neutral or positive feelings, thoughts, and actions, and reducing negative affect and behaviors. In trying to understand what can enhance the likelihood of forgiveness, researchers have taken a largely individualistic approach to understanding the relationship between specific variables and forgiveness. This approach, though, while undoubtedly helpful, runs the risk of overlooking the potential influence of social context on forgiveness. That is, social norms likely influence people's decisions to forgive or seek vengeance.

This study uses a modified grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to explore the ideological foundations of forgiveness in the workplace. By taking this approach, this research looks to shed light on the ideological foundations of dispute resolution systems that may shape how people respond to failure events. CHAPTER II explores this concept of the ideological justice models in more detail, laying out research questions that guided this study. CHAPTER III identifies the methodology used in the study, including site selection for data gathering, data collection, and data analysis. CHAPTERS IV, V, and VI discuss the results of the data collection and analysis. Finally, CHAPTER VII discusses the implications of these findings for the investigation of the ideological foundation of forgiveness, as well as the implications for theory, research, and practice for future workplace forgiveness research.

CHAPTER II

EXPLORING THE IDEOLOGY OF ORGANIZATIONAL DISPUTE PROCESSES

The discussion in the previous chapter on failure events and forgiveness in the workplace points to the integral role of context in shaping not only why employees interpret certain actions as hurtful but also how they respond to those transgressions. In positioning forgiveness as a socially constructed phenomenon (Waldron & Kelley, 2007), this study suggests that context features shape the likelihood and practice of forgiveness in the workplace. Thus, rather than foregrounding situation-specific variables such as offense severity, this study explores organizational context features that shape why and how people forgive in the workplace.

A note about "context" is in order here. Thus far, this discussion has treated context as if it were a singular, unified whole. However, actions occur in a multiplicity of contexts. For example, Phatak and Habib (1996) describe two types of contexts in which conflicts occur: immediate and environmental. Whereas the immediate context includes those characteristics over which people exercise some level of control (such as relational closeness and relative power), the environmental context includes those characteristics over which people exercise very little to no control (such as structures, values, and norms of the organization). Although a handful of studies (Aquino et al., 2006; Kelley & Waldron, 2006; McCullough et al., 1998; Worthington & Wade, 1999) explore immediate context features, fewer (Gassin, 2001; Hook et al., in press; Sandage & Wiens, 2001) examine the elements of the environmental context.

Proceeding from the assumptions about values in Negotiated Morality Theory (Waldron & Kelley, 2007), this study examines one element of the environmental context: an organization's ideologies toward conflict management. An ideology is a constellation of values and beliefs in a specific context (Alvesson, 1991; Beyer, 1981; Putnam 1994; Trice & Beyer, 1993). As Trice and Beyer note, "Ideologies…are powerful in specific situations because they link actions [such as forgiveness and revenge to] fundamental beliefs" (p. 33). Examining an organization's conflict management ideologies, then, centers the study's explorations on context features potentially linked to the practice of forgiveness in the workplace.

To date, research on conflict management in the workplace has taken a number of different approaches to explain and predict employees' responses to transgressions. Among these approaches are dispute system design (Ury et al., 1988) and organizational justice (Ambrose, 2000; Colquitt, 2001; Greenberg, 1993). Although these approaches are useful for understanding various characteristics that shape conflict management behavior, they do not adequately address the ideological foundations of forgiveness. Instead, models derived from the criminal justice setting (Braithwaite, 1999; Kidder, 2007) provide useful lenses to examine perceptions of ideologies. This chapter reviews these approaches and their utility in highlighting the ideological foundations of forgiveness in the workplace.

Dispute Management Systems

In their seminal work, Ury et al. (1988) outline the fundamental goals, structures, and functions of a dispute management system (DMS). A DMS is a coordinated collection of official and unofficial procedures to help disputants arrive at a satisfactory outcome to a conflict (Constantino & Merchant, 1996; Gleason, 1997; Moffitt & Bordone, 2005; Ury et al.). Studies of DMSs in the workplace often focus not only on how to design a dispute system but also on whether certain procedures are more effective than others in generating optimal outcomes.

Ury et al. (1988) offer a number of structural and functional prescriptions for dispute system design. First, these systems should help the disputants focus primarily on interests or their underlying needs and desires. Ury et al. argue that when parties attempt to satisfy their interests rather than their positions, they are more likely to reach a mutually satisfactory outcome. Second, dispute systems should have low-cost rights- and power-based back-up mechanisms in case interest-based procedures fail. Rights-based procedures, which typically use neutral third parties to serve as adjudicators, emphasize the use of fixed rules and objective criteria to assess fairness or appropriateness (Constantino & Merchant, 1996; Ury et al., 1988). Power-based procedures usually rely on coercion or pressure derived from hierarchical position or ability to influence decisions (Jameson, 2001; Ury et al.). Third, dispute systems should enable the parties to “loop back” to interest-based procedures from rights- or power-based procedures. This loop-back process helps parties escape the potentially negative consequences that result from procedures based on rights or power (Lytle, Brett, & Shapiro, 1999; Ury et al., 1988). Fourth, these systems should facilitate consultation before parties go through the dispute procedures and provide feedback after they do so. Fifth, organizations should arrange dispute procedures from lowest to highest cost. In other words, organizations should set up interest-based procedures as the first steps rather than rights- or power-based procedures. Finally, organizations should provide their employees with the necessary motivation, skills, and abilities to use the dispute system procedures effectively.

Dispute procedures can take a variety of forms. Official procedures, codified in organizational rules and often enacted by superiors or neutral third parties, can involve several processes, such as arbitration or mini-trials that follow a pre-determined set of steps. Unofficial procedures can take a number of forms as well, from power-based procedures such as building coalitions and seeking third party support (Volkema, Bergmann, & Farquhar, 1997) to interest-based procedures such as negotiation and mediation (Jameson, 2001). Disputants may use both official and unofficial procedures to manage their conflicts. Together, these procedures form a larger system designed to manage disputes effectively and efficiently.

Optimal outcomes have a number of characteristics (Ury et al., 1988). First, they satisfy the disputants' interests. Second, they result in improving or at least sustaining relationship between the conflicted parties (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991; Stitt, 1998). Third, they emerge as a result of parties providing information and listening to one another (Cloke & Goldsmith, 2005; Rowe, 1997; Ury et al.). In other words, the best outcomes are those derived from proper procedures and interactions that leave the parties satisfied with both tangible (problem-centered) and intangible (relationship-centered) issues.

Although research on dispute system design has been useful for understanding the importance of interests, rights, and power in organizational conflicts, it does not provide guidelines for exploring the contextual foundation of workplace forgiveness. First, the prescriptive nature of dispute system design assumes a high degree of structural and functional uniformity among different types of organizations. Proponents of dispute system design (Constantino & Merchant, 1996; Gleason, 1997; Rowe, 1997; Ury et al., 1997) suggest that the design will work across many types of organizations, regardless of the environmental context in which employees operates. However, this assumption of uniformity overlooks organizational differences emerging from unique interactions among employees (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell Trujillo, 1983; Putnam & Fairhurst, 2004; Smircich, 1983). These interactions influence not only how people carry out their job responsibilities, but also how they manage dispute situations. If forgiveness is a way of managing conflicts (Fincham, 2000; Waldron, & Kelley, 2007), its likelihood and practice is also grounded in these unique employee interactions. Thus, using a research approach that assumes organizational uniformity would be ineffective for exploring the nuanced and unique social foundations of forgiveness. Second, focusing on whether participants use interest-, rights-, or power-based procedures does not necessarily shed light on whether disputants will practice forgiveness. Although the parties are more likely to feel satisfied with outcomes derived from interest-based procedures (Jameson, 2001; Ury et al.), this observation does not mean that the disputants are more likely to experience an emotional transformation (i.e., forgiveness) toward each other. Forgiveness, in fact, may not even be an issue for the disputants if they frame the conflict as an impersonal problem in need of an objective solution. As a result, using dispute system design as a lens to explore contextual features holds limited promise to uncover the contextual features linked to forgiveness.

Organizational Justice

Research on organizational justice takes a different approach to examining workplace conflict than investigation into dispute system design. Rather than looking at the process of managing disputes using interests, rights, and power per se, justice studies generally focus on employees' decisions about the fairness of a certain action or conflict episode (Ambrose, 2002; Colquitt, 2001; Colquitt et al., 2001; Greenberg, 1993; Mannix, Neale, & Northcraft, 1995). Researchers argue that organizational justice is important for three reasons (Colquitt; Cropanzano, Goldman, & Folger, 2003; Konovsky, 2000). First, people care about justice because it allows them to anticipate how their co-workers will treat them (the instrumental view) (Beugré, 2007). Second, people care about justice because it allows them to understand their social position in the organization (the interpersonal view) (Beugré; Lind & Tyler, 1988). Third, people care about justice because it is an inherently moral good (the deontic view) (Cropanzano et al.; Hill et al., 2005). In short, researchers argue that the various dimensions of organizational justice – distributive, procedural, and interactional – are important considerations for employees when making sense of and responding to a perceived injustice.

Distributive justice, which stems from research on equity theory (Adams, 1965), relates to assessments of outcome fairness (Folger & Konovsky, 1989). Individuals judge the fairness of outcomes based on the extent to which they conform to expectations of equality, equity or needs satisfaction (Mannix et al., 1995). Procedural justice relates to the fairness of the process through which organizations make a decision regarding what to do about a transgression (Konovsky, 2000; Thibaut & Walker, 1975). Tyler and Bies (1990) indicate that fair procedures take employees' viewpoints into account, eliminate personal biases, apply decision-making criteria consistently for everyone, give timely feedback after a decision, and provide a rationale for the decision. Voice, or the ability to have a say in the process, plays an integral role when assessing procedural fairness (Bies & Shapiro, 1988; Gleason, 1997; Konovsky, 2000; Tyler & Bies). Interactional justice relates to perceptions of the fairness of the personal treatment experienced during the decision-making process (Bies & Moag, 1986). Two dimensions constitute interactional justice: interpersonal justice, which relates to the perceived dignity and fairness of personal treatment, and informational justice, which relates to the perceived quality and amount of information given during the process. Employees assess the quality of their treatment by judging the appropriateness and respectfulness of an explanation or account offered for an outcome (Gonzales, Pederson, Manning, & Wetter, 1990; McLaughlin, Cody, & O'Hair, 1983; Schonbach, 1980). Perceptions of organizational justice, then, depend on whether a conflict party feels that the outcomes, processes, and interactions of a dispute were fair.

Each of these justice dimensions influences people's affect, behavior, and cognition in the workplace. Studies demonstrate positive correlations between high ratings of distributive justice and outcomes such as increased job satisfaction, enhanced organizational commitment, lower rates of theft, and diminished motivation to withdraw from others (Greenberg, 1990; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997). Researchers also report positive relationships between levels of procedural justice and greater organizational commitment (Colquitt et al., 2001; Folger & Konovsky, 1989), fewer negative emotions (Barclay, Skarlicki, & Pugh, 2005), a reduced likelihood of revenge (Aquino et al., 2006; Skarlicki & Folger, 1997), enhanced motivation to forgive (Aquino et al.), and fewer lawsuits (Bies & Tyler, 1993). Finally, research indicates that if employees perceive a low degree of interactional justice, they are more likely to withdraw from other co-workers (Barling & Phillips, 1993), lack commitment (Barling & Phillips), have lower job satisfaction (Colquitt, 2001), have greater likelihood of retaliating (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002), have negative affect (Colquitt et al., 2001), and display poor organizational citizenship (Moorman, 1991). Perceptions of organizational justice, then, influence employees' behaviors, affect, and thoughts in the workplace.

Using organizational justice as a lens for examining the likelihood and practice of forgiveness, however, is problematic for three reasons. First, the apparent relationship between forgiveness and procedural justice is somewhat unclear. Aquino et al. (2006) argue that employees are more likely to forgive if they perceive a high degree of procedural justice in their organization. They suggest that employees are motivated by an overriding concern for justice and that they will feel comfortable forgiving only when they believe that the organization will carry out justice. Justice, then, becomes an *individual* concern rather than a *social* concern. This argument, however, is problematic because justice derives its meaning and importance from the social context. What is procedurally fair in one organization may not be fair in another. Additionally, fair procedures do not ensure that the parties actually address any underlying relational problems that may fuel the conflict, particularly if the procedures attempt to de-personalize the dispute. As such, the problems that gave rise to feelings of hurt may still remain.

Second, the organizational justice approach is insufficient because it pertains to decisions made during specific situations rather than to general contextual features that span multiple situations. Although some researchers (Beugré, 2007; Beugré & Barron, 2005; Sheppard et al., 1992) advocate the notion of systems justice, which pertains to a person's perception of the overall justice climate in an organization, such perceptions are grounded in specific organizational experiences.

Finally, the organizational justice approach assumes that employees define justice in similar ways. Organizations, however, may develop certain ways of responding to failure events that conform to their own values and beliefs regarding conflict management. For example, whereas one organization may make decisions based on a person's seniority rather than the merits of a case, another organization may reject such a decision procedure as inherently unfair. Currently, research into organizational justice has not explored the roots of these differences. Looking at the values and beliefs – that is, the ideological foundation – for conflict management can shed light on why the same action is deemed fair in one organization but not in another.

Essentially, the two approaches reviewed thus far – dispute system design and organizational justice – seem inadequate for exploring the ideological foundations of forgiveness in the workplace. A different framework that foregrounds the moral and contextual nature of justice is necessary to highlight the influence of values and beliefs on workplace forgiveness. Court-based justice models provide this framework.

Court-Based Justice Models

Court-based justice models focus on values and beliefs about fairness or justice in the workplace. Models guide people's definitions of fairness or justice as well as their expectations for what is fair or just behavior. These models also embody the collection of values and beliefs about what is "fair," "good," or "just" behavior when responding to an unjust action. In other words, court-based justice models espouse ideologies of justice that guide conflict management behavior.

Using these models as a lens to explore contextual features associated with forgiveness differs from the previous approaches in a number of ways. First, the models are not necessarily concerned with the specific outcomes or process fairness. Whereas organizational justice is concerned with specific criteria for assessing dimensions of fairness, court-based justice models are concerned with the communicative process by which individuals construct the meaning of fairness and enact it. Second, unlike research on dispute system design, this approach attempts to describe and understand outcomes and procedures rather than prescribe them or assume that they will occur in a similar way across organizations. These justice models are fluid products of parties' negotiation of what is good, fair, or just. Third, court-based justice models foreground the role of values and beliefs that guide conflict management norms and practices in the workplace. In other words, these models set forth conflict management ideologies that make up part of the environmental context in which people experience and cope with acts of injustice (Gordon & Fryxell, 1993).

Organizational Ideology

The concept of ideology has become increasingly important as researchers have conceptualized organizations as sites and products of meaning-making (Pacanowsky & O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1983; Putnam & Fairhurst, 2004; Smircich, 1983; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Despite some disagreement about its specific characteristics (Alvesson, 1991; Weiss & Miller, 1987), an ideology is an interrelated, relatively coherent set of values and beliefs in a specific context (Beyer, 1981; Putnam, 1994; Schein, 1985). An ideology, however, is not the same as an organizational culture, which includes "articulated patterns of actions, knowledge, practices, and symbol systems" (Putnam, 1994, p. 32). An ideology, instead, is a constellation of values and beliefs that shape the social construction of an organizational culture.

Values are the preferences, goals, or ideals that organizational members hold (Morris, 1956; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Values essentially act as criteria by which people judge whether an object or behavior is preferable, ideal, or good. For example, Trice and Beyer (1993) observe that American organizations value such ideals as "efficiency" (versus wastefulness), "rationality" (versus subjectivity), and "competition" (versus collaboration). Values enable employees to organize, direct, and justify their actions in pursuit of morally appropriate goals.

Related to values are beliefs, which are "understandings that represent credible relationships between objects, properties, and ideas" (Sproull, 1981, p. 204). Beliefs pertain both to the physical world (i.e., “gravity pulls things down”) and the social world (i.e., “my co-workers like me”). They express not only whether some object or property exists (i.e., “I work hard”), but also how behaviors or actions and outcomes are related (i.e., “working hard pays off”) (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Beliefs emerge and take shape as people encounter and make sense of objects and experiences. As such, beliefs are products of interpretation and meaning-making (Trice & Beyer, 1993).

The values and beliefs of an organization matter for several reasons. First, they provide a unifying force for organizational members, in part, because of a consistent system of expectations (Beyer, 1981). Essentially, ideologies provide a coherent in-group, out-group distinction through which people identify or differentiate themselves from each other. Second, ideologies enable employees to make sense out of their roles in the organization. If employees believe that they are part of a larger process, they may be more motivated to continue to fulfill their functions in the organization (Trice & Beyer, 1993). Third, ideologies form the basis for people’s normative expectations of what is appropriate or acceptable behavior in the workplace (Feldman, 1984; Mannix et al., 1995; Morris, 1956; Trice & Beyer, 1993). Often informal and unstated, organizational norms can influence how employees interact with one another in a variety of settings by establishing expectations for proper behavior (Friedman, 1989). However, people can behave in ways that violate these norms, as with failure events (Goffman, 1971; Schonbach, 1980). These failure events may underscore the importance of those norms, or may even lead to the re-evaluation of the violated norms. In short, ideologies provide employees with a way to know what is true and false, right and wrong, and acceptable and unacceptable, and to act accordingly.

An organization's ideologies influence conflict behavior in a number of ways (Putnam, 1994). First, ideologies shape the meanings that members ascribe to certain behaviors and whether or not they see those behaviors as normative violations or failures. Ideological differences, then, can explain why some behaviors are considered failures in one organization and viewed as acceptable in another. Second, ideologies shape perceptions of appropriate conflict behaviors and outcomes. In other words, ideological differences may lie at the root of why some people perceive certain practices as appropriate and others as improper. Third, based on these expectations, ideologies can influence the enactment of conflict practices. That is, ideologies differences may explain why people engage in some conflict practices but not in others.

To explore the ideological underpinnings of these practices, approaches to justice that utilize different conflict practices are needed as analytical lenses. Such differing approaches exist in the criminal justice context in the forms of the legalistic and restorative justice systems. A number of scholars (e.g., Braithwaite, 1999, 2002; Daly, 2003; Johnstone, 2002; Morris, 2002) have noted the differences between these models of criminal justice. In fact, many of these researchers argue that the models are fundamentally different in how they conceive of basic ideals such as justice and reality. For example, Stutman and Putnam (1994) note, "Litigation is not only a domain of experience that prescribes behaviors, but also a set of beliefs or a way of conceiving the correspondence between organizational life and social reality" (p. 292). In other words, researchers suggest that these models not only lay out differing normative conflict practices, but also are rooted in dissimilar fundamental values and beliefs regarding the nature of conflict and life in general. Thus, court-based justice models provide a lens through which to view the ideological foundations of such varied conflict practices as avoidance, revenge, and forgiveness (Tripp et al., 2007).

Court-Based Models of Justice as Ideologies of Conflict Management

As indicated above, researchers have identified two primary models of justice in the criminal justice literature: retributive (labeled by some as legalistic) and restorative (Braithwaite, 1999; Daly, 2003). However, equating the retributive and legalistic approaches seems problematic for two reasons. First, it overlooks the distinction made by researchers exploring dispute system design between approaches based on interests, rights, and power. Second, as forgiveness scholars argue, there is a distinction between personal vengeance and judicial punishment (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998; North, 1998; Waldron & Kelley, 2007; Worthington, 2003). In other words, there appears to be a distinction between retribution and legalism in terms of their fundamental features. Thus, this study identifies three court-based models of justice: legalistic, retributive, and restorative. The following discussion explores the features of these ideological models in more detail (summarized in Table 1), specifically focusing on how each conceptualizes relationships, issue definitions, procedures, and outcomes.

Essentially, the legalistic model of justice takes a systematic, rule-based approach to conflict management (Sitkin & Bies, 1994). The model approaches the conflicting parties as separate individuals on either side of a dispute, regardless of

Table 1 Comparison of Justice Models

	Legalistic	Retributive	Restorative
Management of Relationships	Regulated	Controlled	Managed
Nature of Relationships	Separate	Combative	Partnered
Locus of Control	External	Internal	Internal
Definition of Issue	Impersonal / Objective	Personal / Subjective	Inter-subjective
Fairness as	Application of law	Evening the scales	Meeting unique interests and needs
Target of Trust	System	Oneself	One another
Area of Emphasis	Redress past; Prepare for future	Redress past; Restore own standing	Develop working consensus; Restore relationships

whether they had a relationship with each other before the issues arose. Because the model approaches the individuals as separate figures, it also attempts to regulate their relationship through a system of formalized, standardized rules governing interaction (Sitkin & Bies, 1994). Thus, the model emphasizes *procedural conformity* more than *personal sensitivity*. As such, the legalistic system defines the issues between the parties impersonally, situating them as objective problems which parties can prove or disprove through the use of evidence-based, logical argumentation. Overseeing this argumentation is a third party judge or arbiter whose responsibility is to ensure that the parties follow appropriate procedures and to regulate their relationship. Thus, the locus of control is not with the disputants, but rather with the external governing authority and the system in general. Fairness, then, becomes a matter of appropriate application of rules and laws. The ideal outcome is one that both restores order by enforcing conformity to the violated social rules and prevents such rule violations from occurring in the future. In other words, the legalistic model emphasizes a rights-based, rule-governed process in which individual parties argue their cases and an objective third party renders a verdict which attempts to prevent similar disorder from occurring in the social system in the future.

The retributive model differs in a number of ways from the legalistic system. Namely, this model is characterized by an emphasis on an internally-driven accomplishment of personal vindication rather than an externally-regulated process of order restoration (Hill et al., 2005; Tripp et al., 2007; Worthington, 1997, 2003). First, rather than seeing individuals simply as separate entities, the model casts the parties as combatants. In other words, the parties’ relationship is best characterized as a negative connection rather than a neutral separation. Second, whereas the legalistic model relies on an external system of rules to regulate the parties’ relationship, the retributive model involves an internally-driven personal desire to control the relationship and the other party. That is, not only is the locus of control internal to the parties, but the disputants use that control to (re)gain the upper hand in their combative relationship. Third, as a result, the parties are more likely to define fairness as evening the scales of personal justice rather than the appropriate application of procedures. In other words, whereas the legalistic model highlights the importance of conflict *process*, the retributive model foregrounds the importance of conflict *outcomes*. Fourth, the retributive model approaches conflict issues as inherently personal to the disputing parties rather than as impersonal issues needing objective analysis. Finally, whereas the legalistic model emphasizes a future-orientation, the retributive model emphasizes passing judgment for past transgressions in order to restore one's own standing. In other words, the features of the retributive model highlight justice as an internally-driven accomplishment characterized by evening the scales or gaining the upper hand in the relationship between two combative parties.

The restorative model differs from the other two models with regard to several features. Specifically, the restorative model emphasizes collaboration among the involved parties that foregrounds the importance of relationship restoration (Braithwaite, 1999; Kidder, 2007). First, the restorative model conceptualizes the nature of the disputants' relationship as a partnership of equal individuals (Braithwaite, 1999; Kidder). In other words, the model sees the parties as individual entities constituting a larger relationship. Second, in foregrounding the importance of the parties' relationship, the model locates control over the process in the hand of the disputants. Thus, the individual parties are responsible for managing their disputes, potentially with the help of a third party facilitator. Third, while managing their dispute, the parties negotiate the meaning and nature of the conflict issues. In other words, the issues are neither impersonal nor subjective, but rather are intersubjective (Baumeister et al., 1997; Exline & Baumeister, 2000). Finally, the model emphasizes the importance of coming to consensus about the conflict issues and restoring the relationships between the parties by fulfilling the interests and needs of the individual parties. In all, the restorative model emphasizes a relationally-driven process in which the disputants negotiate the meaning and nature of the conflict, ideally resulting in reconciliation and consensus.

Although researchers traditionally have situated these models in the criminal justice setting, there is sufficient evidence that these models are applicable in an organizational setting as well (Aquino et al., 2006; Bies & Tripp, 1993; Kidder, 2007; Sitkin & Bies, 1993; Sitkin & Bies, 1994; Tripp et al., 2007). For example, several researchers have noted the increasing legalization of the workplace (see Pfeffer, 1994; Sitkin & Bies, 1994; Stutman & Putnam, 1994). Similarly, Tripp et al. (2007) propose a "vigilante model of justice" which theorizes the likelihood of revenge, avoidance, and forgiveness in the workplace. Likewise, Kidder (2007) theorizes how the restorative justice model might function in the workplace. However, aside from the research on workplace legalization, little research has explored which features of these models are evident in the organizational context.

> RQ_1: How do the organizations in this study illustrate features of the legalistic, retributive, and restorative models of justice?

The differences in features suggest an underlying divergence in values and beliefs regarding the nature of conflict, relationships, and justice. For example, whereas the legalistic model appears to emphasize core values such as objectivity and trust in authority (Stutman & Putnam 2004), the retributive model seems to emphasize core values such as independence and self-determination. The restorative approach, meanwhile, seems to hold reconciliation and equality as core values (Armour & Umbreit, 1996; Braithwaite, 1999; Johnstone, 2002; Kidder, 2007; Newbury, 2008). Another purpose of this project, then, is to explore the relationship between values and beliefs regarding conflict management in the workplace and the characteristic features of the three justice models.

RQ$_2$: What conflict values and beliefs in these organizations are associated with the ideological justice models?

In turn, these values and beliefs likely are associated with differing conflict norms. For example, under the legalistic model, organizations may encourage the parties to approach their disputes as objective problems and to refrain from taking problems personally (Sitkin & Bies, 1994; Stutman & Putnam, 1994). Additionally, they may expect people to control their emotions so as not to interfere with logical problem solving. Under the retributive model, organizational members may view actions such as sabotage as acceptable forms of regaining justice (Greenberg, 1993; Tripp et al., 2007). Employees may also see talking through their problems with a third party as an inappropriate waste of time because justice is about getting even. Under the restorative model, employees may see going to a third party to manage the conflict as inappropriate because it signals a lack of trust in the other disputant (Kidder, 2007). Additionally, disputants may see apologizing as an appropriate way of addressing the “interpersonal debt” and potential damage to self-esteem caused by transgressions

(Baumeister et al., 1997; Exline & Baumeister, 2000). In other words, certain conflict norms likely are associated with particular justice models.

RQ$_3$: What conflict norms in these organizations are associated with the ideological justice models?

Third, based on these norms, a number of conflict practices may be associated with these models. For example, employees operating under the legalistic model may take their conflicts and frustrations straight to their superiors instead of to the other disputant. Additionally, organizations may institute hierarchical dispute systems similar to that found in the criminal justice system. Employees advocating a retributive system may be more likely to avoid one another (McCullough et al., 1998; Tripp et al., 2007) or attempt to seek personal justice for a perceived transgression. People approaching conflict from a restorative ideology may be more likely to confront one another directly first and apologize. In other words, a number of practices may be associated with these justice models.

Among these practices is the act of forgiveness. Proponents of the restorative system argue that one of the model's benefits is that it encourages forgiveness because individuals receive an apology (Armour & Umbreit, 1996; Braithwaite, 1999; Kidder, 2007). This approach still situates it as an individual-level phenomenon shaped by situation-specific factors. However, the above discussion suggests that values and norms, rather than a situation-specific factor or behavior such as an apology, may be responsible for the likelihood of forgiveness. Additionally, forgiveness may be associated with values related to the other justice models as well. For example, Tripp et al. (2007) suggest that revenge, in fact, may *encourage* forgiveness if the recipient of the transgression feels that justice has been served. In other words, forgiveness as a conflict practice may be associated with multiple values and norms associated with the different models of justice.

RQ $_{4A}$: How are conflict practices in these organizations associated with the ideological justice models?

RQ$_{4B}$: How is the practice of forgiveness in these organizations associated with the ideological justice models?

Finally, these ideological differences suggest that, if participants decide to practice forgiveness, they may do so in different ways. These differences may spring from the extent to which the forgiver is concerned about himself or herself and the other party (Baumeister et al., 1997). These differences may also spring from whether an apology preceded the offering of forgiveness or not (bilateral versus unilateral forgiveness) (Grovier, 2002). Importantly, although overlooked in previous research, these differences likely are grounded in ideological context features (Hook et al., in press). In other words, differences in values and beliefs may influence how individuals practice forgiveness in the workplace.

RQ$_{5A}$: What patterns of forgiveness surface in the organizations?

RQ$_{5B}$: How are these patterns of forgiveness in these organizations related to the three ideological justice models?

Summary

Researchers have taken a number of approaches to understanding the roots and processes of managing workplace disputes arising from failure events. Dispute system design research has explored the influence of procedures based on interests, rights, and power on generating acceptable outcomes. Organizational justice research has explored individual perceptions of fairness with regard to specific outcomes, procedures, and interactions. Neither of these approaches, however, explores the ideological foundations of workplace conflict. Organizational ideologies shape perceptions of appropriate behavior in the workplace, particularly with regard to conflict. This set of values and beliefs guide the meaning-making process of individuals as they decide whether or not an action is a failure event and what to do about a grievance. They also constitute models of justice. These justice models – the legalistic, retributive, and restorative models – in turn also espouse normative behaviors and practices for managing conflicts in the workplace, such as personal punishment and forgiveness. To explore the ideological foundations of justice and forgiveness, this research used a modified version of grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to explore people's experience of injustice in four organizations, as discussed in CHAPTER III. The following chapter discusses the selection of research sites, the organizations involved in the study, data collection, and data analysis.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Previous research interested in measuring the likelihood of forgiveness has taken a largely variable-analytic approach (Waldron & Kelley, 2007). However, because this study was interested in exploring, comparing, and contrasting the ideological foundations of forgiveness in the workplace, it called for an interpretive approach that would be sensitive to the specific relationships between conflict ideologies and practices. Thus, this study used a modified version of grounded theory to compare and contrast the ideologies shaping the dispute process in four organizations (Charmaz, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Tracy, 2005). By collecting data through individual interviews, organizational documents, and observations in four educational organizations, this study attempted to shed light on the context features that constituted the conflict management practices that might lead to forgiveness. This chapter outlines the methodology used for this project, including the research sample, description of participants, data collection, and data analysis.

Organizations

An important decision for doing the study was selecting the sites for collecting data. The most useful sites would be places where the phenomenon of interest could be readily observed and explored (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Based on this criterion, schools were appropriate places for collecting data because relationships among staff were important and because diverse options existed for managing conflict situations.

Conflict in Educational Settings

Schools provide an interesting and informative setting for research on forgiveness in the workplace for three key reasons. First, various webs of relationships among stakeholder groups (students, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community) constitute the very nature of schools (McGregor, 2003, p. 368). These relationships are central to the functioning of the schools. As Hargreaves (2001) argues

> The importance of close personal bonds of friendship in teaching should not be underestimated or belittled. They can and did sustain teachers in the face of professional stress, crisis and difficulty. In the context of team teaching or similar relationships, they can also stimulate and energize professional engagement. Nor should close bonds and friendship necessarily inhibit the creativity and disturbance of professional conflict and disagreement…Their deep personal trust insures them against the risk that disagreement might end their relationship (p. 517).

Given the importance and emotionality of these bonds (Waldron, 2002), these relationships among teachers have the potential to escalate, particularly when violations of professional and relational norms occur. As such, normative violations have the potential to affect the operations of the school in a strong and negative way.

Second, schools provide an interesting case study for how employees manage the dialectic tensions of interdependence and independence (Kolb & Putnam, 1992a). On the one hand, schools encourage teachers to build strong personal and professional relationships with one another for the sake of collegiality (Angelides & Ainscow, 2000;

Ingersoll, 1996; Lima, 2001). On the other hand, teachers hold a certain degree of autonomy and independence (Achinstein, 2002), allowing them to work on their own to solve problems as well as potentially avoid awkward confrontations by escaping into their classrooms. Because avoidance is associated with revenge (McCullough, 2001), the school setting allows for an investigation not only of forgiveness and retribution, but also of how individuals manage the interdependence / independence and confrontation / avoidance tensions following a transgression.

Third, conflict is an integral part of a collegial school environment (Achinstein, 2002; Lima, 2001). Lima argues that fostering cognitive conflict may encourage teachers to work more effectively with one another. However, the extent to which schools recognize these benefits depends on how the parties interpret the conflict. If they interpret the conflict as relational, the tensions in fact could be counterproductive (Kuhn & Poole, 2000; Poole & Garner, 2006). Thus, the appearance of conflict in an organization, whether work-related or centering on relationships, has the potential to bring colleagues closer together or strain their inclinations to collaborate.

As such, because of their grounding in relationships, their inherent independent / interdependence dialectic, and their potential for conflict, schools offer a setting in which relational transgressions could occur. These occurrences create opportunities for parties to manage conflicts with various dispute practices and approaches, allowing for comparisons between organizations that have potentially different beliefs and values about conflict management.

Selected Organizations

After selecting schools as research arenas, I began the process of site selection. To start, I sent an email message announcing the general purpose of the study to the principals of every school in a twin-city area. Five schools agreed to take part in this research. I made appointments to meet with each principal to conduct pre-selection, informational interviews. After analyzing the responses from these interviews, I chose four organizations as sites for data collection. Table 2 provides a summary of the demographic data of each school.

Table 2 School Information

	Grade Levels	Public / Private	Total Staff (Administrators / Teachers)	Women / Men
CE	Pre-K – 12	Private	40 (11 / 29)	26/14
PE	Pre-K – 12	Private	51 (7 / 44)	38 / 13
YE	Pre-K – 4	Public	73 (7 / 66)	71 / 2
TE	7 & 8	Public	61 (7 / 54)	51 / 10

One school, "Christian Education[2]," was a private, Christian school (CE). The school, which taught pre-kindergarten through twelfth grades, was a rather small school spread over several temporary buildings and three fixed buildings. The school employed 40 staff members – 11 administrative personnel (head of school, assistant principal, and administrative assistants) and 29 teachers. The organization clustered its teachers by school: the school of grammar (pre-kindergarten through sixth grade), the school of logic (seventh and eighth grades), and the school of rhetoric (ninth grade through twelfth grade). While teachers in the schools of logic and rhetoric reported to the head of school, the teachers in the school of grammar reported to the assistant principal. Almost two-thirds (65%) of the school's employees were female, and all were Caucasian. Of the teaching staff, 12 teachers were in the lower and middle schools, and 17 teachers taught the upper school. The administrative offices and multiple classrooms were housed in the four temporary buildings. Separated from the rest of the campus, the lower school was housed in its own building that had posters and artwork hanging on its walls. Likewise, the upper school was housed in its own building that had a gym-turned-cafeteria and fairly narrow hallways with a few posters lining the walls. In general, the teachers in the fixed buildings were located fairly close to each other within rather narrow hallways, while those in the temporary buildings and athletics were largely separated. During the weekly chapel services and daily lunch periods, the teachers tended to congregate based on their grade levels.

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[2] The names of the schools are fictitious.

A second school, "Prep Education," (PE) a private college preparatory school, also included pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade. This school employed 51 people – seven administrative personnel and 44 teachers. Like CE, the school clustered teachers by grade levels: lower school (pre-kindergarten through sixth grade), middle school (seventh and eighth grade), and upper school (ninth grade through twelfth grade). Each school had its own dean of students, who served in a middle supervisory level between the teachers and the head of school. Of the employees, three-quarters were women and over 90% were Caucasian. There were 26 teachers in the pre-school and lower school combined and 18 teachers in the middle and upper schools combined. The school recently underwent a major transition, with several key teachers and administrators (including the former head of school) leaving the school either during or after the school year. To account for these personnel losses, the school hired several new administrators (including a new head of school[3]), promoted a handful of teachers into administrative roles, and hired several new teachers. Additionally, the school celebrated the opening of a new building that housed the lower school on one wing and the upper school on another. The hallways in this new building were relatively plain, with very few posters hung on the walls (though some classrooms contained a limited number of wall-hangings), windows that looked into each classroom, and tables spread throughout the halls. The other classrooms were housed in older buildings spread throughout the campus.

A third school, "Youth Education," (YE) located in a relatively affluent residential area, was an elementary school (kindergarten through fourth grade) with 73 staff members – seven administrative personnel and 66 teachers. The school grouped teachers by grade level, with an average of six teachers per level. The school employed a principal and an assistant principal. Ninety-seven percent of employees were female, and almost all were Caucasian. Group members typically worked in close physical proximity with each other, having classrooms along the same U-shaped halls called "pods" spread throughout the school. These pods were spread out to the various corners of the "H" shaped building, with the administrative offices and classrooms for arts, music, computing, and physical education occupying the middle section. The distance meant that members of each grade level needed to seek each other out if they wanted to interact with teachers in other grades. Additionally, between classes, teachers often lined up their students in the hallways to walk them from their classrooms to another room. This practice provided teachers a brief chance to visit with each other, but such visitation or "chit-chat" generally was kept to a minimum.

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[3] The new head of school also left before the school year ended. He took part in an interview, but left before the study's completion. This study refers to him as the principal and his predecessor as the former principle.

A fourth school, "Teen Education," (TE) was a public middle school (seventh and eighth grades). Of the 61 employees at the school, seven were administrative personnel and 54 were teachers. Approximately 85% of the employees were female, and virtually all were Caucasian. The school grouped teachers in two ways: by teaching subject (e.g., math, English, across all grade levels) and by individual grade level. There were approximately four to five teachers per subject and grade level team. The school employed two assistant principals (one for each grade level) and a principal. The school had two primary buildings, one X-shaped building that housed the majority of the classrooms and another building that housed the band and athletics programs. Each of the hallways contained a number of posters, including anti-bullying posters, student artwork, and other motivational posters. Each hallway housed one or two teams of teachers (identified by their animal mascots hung above their doors), giving them a close proximity in which to interact with each other. During class transitions when students walked from one room to another, teachers often stood outside their rooms to police the hallways. Little interaction among teachers occurred during this time. However, two or three principals seemed to make it a point to stand in the hallways as well to help shuttle the students. This practice made the principals visible to both the students and the teachers.

Pre-Selection Interviews

As discussed previously, I chose these organizations based on individual informational interviews conducted with the principals of each school. These interviews focused on four general areas: (1) general work atmosphere at the school, (2) views of conflict, (3) types of conflicts, and (4) preferred conflict behavior. Interviews took place in the principals' offices and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. I coded the responses based on conflict management expectations (i.e., outcomes, ways for employees to manage conflict, and typical types of conflicts experienced at the school). Analysis of these interviews, summarized in Table 3, suggested that these organizations managed conflicts differently and indicated that they would be useful sites for data collection.

Each school had an established formal grievance procedure as set forth in their human resource policies. These procedures involved the first step of engaging in informal conversations with the other disputant before elevating the complaint to a higher level. In the public schools, employees were directed to file a number of complaint forms before meeting with the school's administrator. Grievances could then proceed to the district superintendent's delegate, then to the superintendent, and finally to the board of directors. Similarly, in the private schools, employees with a grievance

Table 3 Conflict Management Comparison

	Prep Education	Teen Education	Youth Education	Christian Education
Frequency of Conflict Training	Minimal	None	None	Extensive
Appropriate Procedures	Address situation individually first; Proceed up administrative hierarchy next	Address situation individually first; Proceed up administrative hierarchy next	Address situation individually first; Proceed up administrative hierarchy next	Address situation individually first; Proceed up administrative hierarchy next
Administrator Role	Arbitrator	Arbitrator	Mediator	Mediator
Handbook Type	Family	Employee	Employee	Employee

were directed to discuss the matter first with the other conflict party before pursuing the matter further. If the informal conversation did not resolve the matter, grievances could proceed to the principal. If the meeting with the principal did not resolve the matter, the final grievance level involved the school's board of directors.

The four schools emphasized different features of conflict management that were useful for this study. The elementary school (YE) emphasized the influence of the collegial workplace climate on conflict management behaviors. Teachers worked together frequently during off-periods, indicating a high level of interdependence. When conflicts occurred, they typically involved philosophical differences. Teachers were encouraged (though not trained) to talk individually with each other and exhibit empathy, understanding, collaboration, and information-seeking. The school's policy was for teachers to attempt to manage a dispute between themselves before coming to the principal. If staff members came to the principal, the principal would allow each person to state his or her case before helping the disputants come to a mutually satisfactory decision (mediation). Individuals also could choose a formal grievance procedure, if the issue had legal dimensions. The principal indicated that successful agreements were ones which focused on the performance of teachers and acknowledged the diversity of the individuals. In all, this site emphasized practices related to interpersonal concerns that addressed the social contract.

Prep Education (PE), on the contrary, highlighted the importance of following documented procedures and exhibited different interpersonal practices[4]. This school relied on the use of the Myers-Briggs Test as an analytical and procedural tool for conflict management. The former principal noted that employees framed conflicts as largely centering on personality differences – a sentiment the principal repeated several times. He seemed to suggest that framing disputes in this way reduced the likelihood of relational conflicts because people understood that their co-workers were not trying to hurt them intentionally. Instead, they could attribute actions that made them upset to personality differences, which reduced the blameworthiness of the co-worker who hurt them. PE also differed from YE in the number of administrative levels through which a dispute would go before making its way to the principal. Unlike YE, where teachers had direct access to the principal following an initial attempt to resolve the conflict, teachers at PE needed to take their disputes through additional administrative levels (department head, school dean, then principal). Additionally, whereas the principal of YE indicated that he/she functioned like a mediator, the former principal of PE identified his role as more of an arbitrator or referee. In other words, rather than facilitating the parties' attempts to come to a mutually satisfactory outcome (see Baruch Bush & Folger, 1994), the former principal of PE ruled on the rightness or wrongness of an action. The schools shared an emphasis on the interactional dimension. However, the former principal of PE established a fairly collegial / professional atmosphere as opposed to a family-like climate at YE, with conflicts usually occurring between teachers and administrators.

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[4] The former head of school left after the pre-selection interview was conducted but before the data collection had begun.

The former principal at PE stated that he was wary of coalition-formation among co-workers through gossip. The primary goal of the system was to resolve a conflict as soon as possible before it polarized the staff. He stated that any agreement should advance the school's core principals of an inclusive/transparent culture rooted in relationship building. In all, responses indicated similarities and differences between YE and PE. These differences involved PE's emphasis on interactions, its relational quality, and its reliance on the Myers-Briggs Test in conflict management training.

Christian Education (CE), a private, religious school, likewise exhibited similarities and differences in workplace disputes. Similar to PE, the principal strongly emphasized the importance of following procedures. On multiple occasions, the principal stated that following proper procedures was the best way to manage conflicts that could otherwise escalate. These procedures included going to an immediate supervisor before taking the conflict through the rest of the hierarchy. However, this school differed from the other schools in its emphasis on a religious-based approach (Protestant Christian) to conflict management (rather than a personality-based approach). In other words, practices derived from the Christian faith seemed to guide approaches to managing disputes. These practices emphasized the importance of maintaining good relationships and treating each other properly. Similar to PE, the principal at CE wanted to avoid coalition-formation. In fact, he removed the teachers' lounge because of previous conflicts that nearly tore the school apart and were lived out in these areas. As such, unlike both PE and YE, the school had no break room, thus the principal wanted to discourage practices of coalition building and backroom gossip. In outcomes of conflict, the principal at CE expressed a desire similar to PE to end the conflict and keep the focus on the organization's mission. In all, CE seemed to differ from both YE and PE in its emphasis on adherence to the organization's dispute management rules, religiosity, and interactive practices.

Teen Education (TE) was similar to the previous three schools on a number of levels, but differed from them as well. Like the other three schools, the former principal at TE expressed a desire for teachers to work through conflict issues on an individual basis to provide better conflict management tools for future situations. Similar to PE and CE, the appropriate procedure was for the conflict to make its way to the principal only after being addressed by the team leader and possibly an assistant principal. However, TE differed from the other schools in a number of ways. For example, unlike at PE and CE, personnel received no specific training on conflict management. Instead, their training was more generic, focusing on the "seven habits of highly effective people." TE also seemed to differ from YE and CE in the relationship closeness of its staff. The former principal stated that although the school exhibited a fairly collegial environment in which teachers worked with each other on lesson planning, this collaboration was also a primary source of conflict. Task accomplishment was the primary goal. Thus, each of the schools appeared to have different practices for managing conflict, making them suitable sites for exploring practices associated with forgiveness.

Sample

Because the goal of this study was to understand how people at all levels of their respective organizations managed hurtful events, I followed a multi-stage process of identifying and recruiting participants. I used stratified sampling to generate a representative sample from each school. Additionally, to achieve theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), my goal was to recruit a minimum of 25 participants at each school.

First, before visiting each school, I left an announcement brochure in the teachers' mailboxes to notify them about the study. The brochure identified the purpose of the study and information with which to contact me if they wanted to participate.

Second, I scheduled an initial visit to introduce myself and the study so that people would be able to put a face with a name and ask questions about the purpose of the study. During the initial visit to each school, I indicated that people who were interested in participating should write their names and contact information on the sign-up sheet I brought to them.

Third, I generated a list of all employees at each school and categorized people into administrative and teaching positions. Administrative personnel were those people who did not teach on a day-to-day basis and carried out the administrative functions of running the school, such as principals, assistant principals, administrative assistants, and counselors. Teaching personnel were employees who taught on a regular basis. If teachers were teamed or grouped at the school, this list reflected this grouping and noted any team leaders or department heads.

Fourth, after obtaining the sign up sheet for the school and noting who had signed up, I sent a follow-up recruitment email to half of the employees, taking care to select a representative sample of personnel in each grouping (i.e., administration, grade level, or team). If this initial recruitment email did not generate a large enough sample at the school, I sent a follow-up recruitment email to the other half of the employees. Employees volunteered to participate in the study.

This recruitment strategy led to a sample of at least twenty-five participants from each organization. A total of 103 individuals (15 administrative personnel and 88 teachers) participated in the interviews. All four principals took part in interviews. Twenty men and 83 women, who had worked at their respective schools for an average of five years, volunteered for the study. In general, participants had worked in the education field for about 13 years, ranging from less than one year to more than 35 years. Table 4 provides demographic data on participants at each school.

At the Christian Ed, 26 people took part in the interviews – three administrative personnel and 23 teachers. Of these participants, seven were men, and 19 were women. Of the teachers, 10 worked in the lower and middle schools (pre-kindergarten through sixth grade) and 13 worked in the upper school (seventh through twelfth grades). Participants had worked at the school approximately 3.5 years, with a range from 2 months to 9 years.

Table 4 Participant Demographics

	Number of Participants	Number of Administrators	Number of Teachers	Women / Men	Avg. Tenure
CE	26	3	23	19/7	3.5
PE	25	4	21	18/7	3.95
YE	27	5	22	26/1	7.32
TE	25	3	22	23 / 2	5.95

At Prep Ed, 25 people (four administrators and 21 teachers) participated. Of the 25 participants, 18 were women. Nine participants worked in lower school (pre-Kindergarten through fourth grade), while 15 participants worked in middle or upper school (fifth grade through twelfth grade). Participants had worked at the school an average of 3.95 years, ranging from two months to 19 years. Half of the participants were in their first year of working at the school – a number that reflects the massive turnover that occurred the previous year and included a new head of school.

At Youth Ed, 27 people participated in interviews. Of the five administrative personnel and 22 teachers, 26 were women. These participants had worked at the school an average of 7.32 years, ranging from two years to 19 years.

At Teen Ed, three administrative personnel and 22 teachers participated. Of the participants, 23 were women. Participants had worked at their respective schools for an average of almost six years, ranging from less than one year to 20 years.

Though the disparities between men and women and between teachers and administration may appear large, the samples actually reflected the population of participants' gender and roles from which they were drawn. For example, in this study, the majority of male respondents came from the two private schools. This is not surprising, given that these schools had the highest percentages of male employees (CE: 35%; PE: 25.5%, JH: 8%, EE: 2%). This gender disparity reflected the larger demographic distribution of educators in the area as being predominantly women. Additionally, the racial distribution of this sample (ninety-seven Caucasians, three African-Americans, two Hispanics, and one Asian-American) paralleled that of the schools' populations. In sum, the sample of individuals who participated in the individual interviews used for data collection in this study generally reflected the larger population of their respective schools.

Data Collection

As mentioned above, this study used semi-structured, in-depth interviews that were supplemented by organizational documents and observations during my campus visits. Waldron and Kelley (2007) note that the use of self-report data, while having disadvantages (including editing to make responses more desirable and lack of clear recall), is quite useful for helping researchers understand how people make sense of past transgressions and how those events shape current social practices. For example, Bright et al. (2006) took a grounded approach and used semi-structured interviews to explore why people in a blue-collar organization engaged in forgiveness. Tracy (2005) used a similar open-ended strategy of data collection to explore norms of emotional expression in a correctional facility. In other words, this approach to data collection seemed best for exploring past actions and obtaining insights into conflict management practices.

Interviews

The interview guide focused on three main areas of inquiry guided by the forgiveness and conflict management literatures: the social environment of the organization, situations when the participant felt hurt, and conflict management practices of organizational members (see Appendix A). This line of inquiry explored participants' perceptions of their organization's model of justice (RQ_1); dispute values and norms (RQ_2 and RQ_3); and coping practices (RQ_{4A} and RQ_{4B}) and patterns (RQ_{5A} and RQ_{5B}). In probing occurrences of hurtful events, the interviews were able to generate a rich set of experiences and insights into how people generally managed conflicts in their organizations. These instances of hurtful events not only indicated how participants made sense out of confusing and emotional events (Mishler, 1991; Riessman, 2008; Trethewey, 1999; Waldron & Kelley, 2007), but also highlighted the social practices of the organizations indirectly (Friedman, 1989; Smith & Keyton, 2001). In short, the interviews focused on eliciting and probing how people interacted on a daily basis and worked through naturally-occurring conflicts.

Before proceeding, I should note that at no time did I mention the term "forgiveness" in the interviews unless participants brought up the term on their own. Unlike Bright et al. (2006), whose interest was in exploring *why* people forgave, the purpose of this study was to see *whether* people forgave. To keep from suggesting a proper response, I used words such as "coping" with a hurt, "handling" a situation, or “dealing” with emotions. Additionally, I mirrored the language the participants used to describe their coping practices.

When conducting these interviews, I followed the guidelines laid forth by Waldron and Kelley (2007) for discussing a potentially sensitive subject matter (see Table 5). Key among these guidelines were the establishment of rapport with the participants, the practice of using minimal note-taking during the interviews, and the use of questions that prompted a description of specific situations. As mentioned above, before scheduling the interviews at a school, I visited the school to introduce myself to the staff, discuss the project, and answer any questions. I felt this was an important first step in establishing a relationship with the participants so that they would not be revealing potentially upsetting information to a virtual stranger. Additionally, I tried to minimize my note-taking during the interviews, jotting down key words and phrases. I felt that establishing a connection with the participants required me to focus on them rather than my notes while they were relaying personal conflict experiences. At times, this was impractical, such as when participants indicated that they did not want me to tape record their interviews. (Twenty people opted not to be tape-recorded). When people chose not to be recorded, I attempted to keep my note-taking to a minimum so that I would not appear aloof or disinterested during our conversation. Instead, I wrote down their comments immediately after I left.

The 103 interviews totaled almost 61 hours of interview time and generated 1,182 pages of single-spaced, typed transcript data. Although a handful of interviews took place before the school day, the majority took place during a teacher’s off period

Table 5 Guidelines for Conducting Interviews on Forgiveness

Guideline Area	Suggestion
Interview Content	Focus on concrete situations that participants remember clearly and believe to be important. Have respondents assess the clarity of their recollections. Use open-ended questions to foster better description. Assure anonymity / confidentiality when conducting the interview. Use aliases in write-up. Use many questions to tap into a concept.
Interview Conduct	Establish rapport before diving into sensitive areas. Be conversational to establish authentic relationships. Rephrase and seek feedback to ensure that you have understood their responses correctly. Record interviews and keep note-taking to a minimum. Review transcripts.

Adapted from Waldron & Kelley (2007)

during the day or after school. Because of the time constraints inherent in teachers' class schedules, the interviews averaged approximately 40 minutes in length. All but two participants chose to hold the interviews at their school, and all but three of them took place during the school year, between August and November.

Conducting the interviews at the schools was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, participants were in a safe, familiar, and private setting, thus providing them a space for sharing frustrations. On the other hand, the fact that the interviews took place on school grounds with co-workers around them may have limited their disclosures. All things considered, conducting the interviews in the classrooms was acceptable both because the space was most convenient for the participants and because the employees were most at ease in their own private surroundings. All interviews conducted at the schools were conducted behind closed doors rather than in a public setting.

Organizational Documents and Observational Data

I supplemented these interviews with an analysis of organizational documents and periods of observation. These documents consisted of employee handbooks from three of the schools, a family handbook from the fourth school (that did not have an official employee handbook), and organizational charts identifying supervisors and subordinates. The handbooks detailed proper protocol for the teachers as well as proper dispute procedures.

I took notes on my observations and used those notes to supplement my data analysis. Observations generally occurred during my visits to the organizations to conduct interviews. I allowed myself time to observe interactions in the office and hallways by arriving well ahead of the scheduled interview times. I chose administrative offices as my primary observation point because they provided the best opportunity to watch administrative and teaching staff interact. I quickly learned as I started my interviews that teachers preferred to work behind closed doors, meaning the public spaces, such as hallways, were largely empty. Additionally, lunch rooms went generally unused, limiting the benefits of observation there. Thus, my observations were limited to interactions that occurred in the school office. Overall, I conducted approximately 20 hours of observation total among the four schools.

In short, this study gathered data through the use of individual interviews designed to probe situations in which participants perceived a transgression in four local educational organizations. Participants were recruited through a stratified sampling process that generated a sample that mirrored the larger populations of each organization. The data, in turn, was useful for generating a grounded understanding of how people cope with conflict situations in the workplace.

Data Analysis

This study followed a two-level approach to data analysis, exploring concepts and categories of dispute norms and practices that emerged through grounded theory, and comparing and contrasting the ideological foundations of those norms and practices in each workplace. This two-level approach allowed this study to remain grounded in the lived experiences of the participants and to organize those experiences for comparison and contrast among the four organizations (Beyer, Ashmos, & Osborn, 1997). A modified version of grounded theory similar to that advocated by Charmaz (2000) seemed most appropriate for this exploratory study because of its interpretivist approach that foregrounded the process of meaning-making (see Smircich, 1983). Before describing the analytical process used, the following section lays out the basic tenets of grounded theory as elaborated by Corbin and Strauss (1990).

Grounded Theory

Originally developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), the use and practice of grounded theory has evolved over time, taking a number of different forms (Charmaz, 2000; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak, & Vetter, 2005). The grounded theory approach (GT) is a research *process* that intertwines the processes of data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2000; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Titscher et al.). Data collection proceeds on the basis of theoretical sampling, which involves the sampling of concepts rather than people (Corbin & Strauss). The goal of data collection is to generate a comprehensive and representative list of *concepts*, which GT defines as incidents, events, or phenomena that occur in a given context. To judge the comprehensiveness and representativeness of sampled concepts and reach "theoretical saturation," the researcher must begin data analysis after collecting the first piece of data (Corbin & Strauss). Data collection ceases when the researcher believes he or she reaches theoretical saturation.

Data analysis begins with the process of *open coding*, which involves breaking down the collected data into concepts and assigning a provisional label for those concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In this approach, concepts are the unit of analysis. If concepts appear repeatedly throughout the data, the researcher keeps them. During the process of open coding, the researcher engages in *constant comparison* of the concepts to each other to understand their similarities and differences. The investigator captures his or her thoughts on the concepts and their relationships with each other in written *memos* that detail observations of the concepts. *Sensitizing concepts*, derived from the extant literature on the topic of study, can guide the researcher's thoughts and observations. As the researcher proceeds, he or she begins to group similar concepts together to create more abstract *categories*.

Upon identification of a category, the researcher begins to develop and specify the dimensions or “paradigms” of those categories during the process of *axial coding*. Essentially, the researcher adds complexity to the categories by exploring the conditions in which the subsumed concepts occurred, the context in which they occurred, the mode by which they occurred, and the consequences of their occurrence. Toward the end of the process, the investigator engages in *selective coding* by searching for a core category that ties the categories together. This core category describes the primary phenomenon the researcher sees running throughout the data.

GT does not involve simply a description of concepts and categories, however. It also involves hypothesizing about the relationships among the concepts and categories and the processes by which they are related to develop a valid theory grounded in lived experience. In this way, the researcher attempts to account for patterns and changes observed during data collection. Essentially, traditional GT involves the use of open, axial, and selective coding to generate a theory that fits the observed data well.

Charmaz (2000) offers a slightly different approach to GT in the form of constructivist grounded theory. The constructivist approach makes slightly different ontological and epistemological assumptions than does Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) approach to grounded theory. Specifically, this approach assumes the existence of multiple social realities and an emphasis on localized meaning (rather than an overarching, generalizable truth). In general, this approach keeps the rigor of traditional

GT, but views the process of data collection and analysis as being more flexible than with traditional GT. The approach involves a type of intuitive questioning of the data in which new questions emerge throughout the reading and rereading of the data. In asking questions of the data, the focus is less on describing an objective and generalizable truth than it is on interrogating possible meanings of participants' experiences. Thus, the interpretations offered here are not necessarily generalizable to other school populations or to other organizations. Even though the analysis focuses more on meaning, however, it is not less rigorous, as the following section suggests.

Analytical Process

As mentioned previously, the data analysis followed a two-level course. I began analysis using constructivist GT to identify and interpret the concepts and categories that emerged in participants' discussion of conflict management in their organizations. Next, I looked for similarities and differences across the organizations' ideologies underlying their dispute systems.

The GT portion of the analysis involved several steps. First, when collecting transcripts, I kept them separated into folders based on schools. Because the pre-selection interviews suggested that each organization advocated differing approaches to managing conflict, I could not assume that similar concepts and categories would emerge. I labeled each transcript with the first initial, last name, and school of the respondent.

Second, as each transcript came in, I followed the suggestion of Corbin and Strauss (1990) and began conducting data analysis with a quick read of each transcript to "get a feel" for the participant's responses. Essentially, these initial reads were designed to sensitize me to participants' experiences and begin the interpretation process. In each successive reading of the transcripts, I read through each school's collection of transcripts as a group so that I could look for common patterns emerging from the interviews.

Third, in my next reading of the transcripts, I underlined statements and behaviors that stood out as important or meaningful for the participant regarding conflict management. Because these behaviors and statements generally shed light on the underlying ideologies (Porter & Samovar, 2004; Trice & Beyer, 1993), I made note of how people described their behaviors and the behaviors of others in conflict and non-conflict situations. I did not assume, however, that what I underlined would become a concept or category later. This process was designed to take me deeper into the participants' stories and elaborate the interpretative process central to naming concepts.

Fourth, during my next read through, I conducted line-by-line (open) coding of the data, writing out my thoughts in the margins of the transcripts either by hand or in a word processor. I made note of concepts on a separate sheet of paper so that I could keep track of those that appeared repeatedly (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I also wrote notes to myself detailing and defining the various concepts that were emerging. This process of writing memos and assigning concepts involved multiple readings of each transcript, constantly comparing behaviors, incidents, and statements to each other.

Fifth, I developed categories by searching for similarities and differences among the concepts. This process involved multiple attempts at finding categories that fit the data at hand. I kept these categories school-specific, though, until I had finished categorizing all of the data.

Once I finished the categorization process, I moved to the second part of data analysis which involved an exploration of the types of justice ideologies present within each organization (RQ_1) as well as the values (RQ_2), norms (RQ_3) and practices (RQ_{4A} and RQ_{4B}) associated with each. To do this, I looked for the values and beliefs about conflict that characterized the organizations' dispute systems, paying special attention to judgments of conflict behavior, such as "Venting is so childish." The process of identifying values and beliefs was highly inductive (Schein, 1985). Rather than using the models of justice as fixed categories and fitting the organizations' dispute systems into those boxes, I tried to understand the nuanced differences in values and beliefs that were associated with features of the organizations' model(s) of justice.

Based on this exploration of conflict ideology, norms, and practices, I was able not only to compare and contrast the organizations but also to associate these expectations and behaviors with the values and beliefs that characterized the organizations' approach to justice. In this way, I was able to understand the ideological foundations that shaped not only whether participants practiced forgiveness (RQ_{4B}) but also how they practiced it (RQ_{5A} and RQ_{5B}).

During this process, I made note of whether the term "forgiveness" (or any of its derivatives, such as "forgive," "forgiving," or "forgiver") appeared in the text. Although the research to date has used a variety of colloquial expressions (such as "moving on" or "letting go") as substitutes for the term, my interest was in seeing whether or not *forgiveness* emerged as a concept in people's experiences. This differentiation is not unimportant. As discussed in the previous chapter, researchers have suggested the existence of multiple types of forgiveness. Thus, because my goal was to explore not only *whether* forgiveness occurred in organizations but also *how* people enacted forgiveness, it was important to be sensitive to language use. I did not want to assume that "letting go," "moving on," and "getting over it" were the same as "forgiving."

Essentially, the data analysis process involved multiple readings and dynamic interpretations of participants' reported experiences. In being sensitive to language use, my goal was to search for categories and concepts that gave insight into ideological features associated with conflict norms and practices such as forgiveness.

Summary

The grounded theory approach influenced multiple parts of the methodology process, from data collection to data analysis. Based on the extant literature, schools, particularly the four in this study, emerged as appropriate sites for research and data collection. Data collection involved the use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews designed to explore the social environments of each organization as well as disputants' descriptions of transgression situations. The sampling process produced both a sufficient theoretical sample as well as a representative sample of the school populations. Data analysis involved the interpretation of participants' experiences and the induction of dominant ideologies. CHAPTERS IV, V, and VI present an interpretation of this data, address the research questions, and describe strategies for coping with transgressions at each school. The following two chapters identify the values, beliefs, norms, and practices associated with the conflict management features in each organization. Chapter VI focuses on how people coped with transgressions in the workplace, specifically exploring the practice of forgiveness.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS FOR PREP EDUCATION AND TEEN EDUCATION

This chapter explores the constitution and manifestation of the justice models in two of the organizations on the basis of the conflict management characteristics espoused and practiced by organizational members (RQ_1 and RQ_2). For each school, the analysis begins by identifying organizational values and beliefs regarding conflict management. The sections continue by outlining the conflict norms that emerged from these values and follow with a discussion of the interactional and procedural practices of dispute management within the school (RQ_3 and RQ_{4A}). Based on these values, norms, and practices, this analysis identifies features of each organization's respective justice systems by focusing specifically on the nature and management of relationships, issues of fairness and trust, and the areas of the disputes. Using these features, the analysis identifies the models of justice operating within the organizations. The following chapter continues this exploration with the remaining two schools. CHAPTER VI concludes the analysis by identifying general conflict outcomes or ways in which people in each organization coped with transgressions.

Overall, analysis of the data indicated a number of similarities and differences in the values, norms, and practices of conflict management in the four organizations. For example, participants from three schools emphasized the importance of effective teaching. Additionally, participants from every organization indicated that the appropriate way to manage conflict was to maintain one's emotional composure and communicate directly with the other disputant. However, important differences also emerged from the data in the values, norms, and practices of conflict management. Although the same justice models emerged for different schools, the organizations embraced them in different degrees. The extent to which they held to these differing justice models, in turn, influenced how people coped with transgressions, from “moving on” to “getting over it” to “forgiving.”

Prep Education

In its family handbook, Prep Education (PE) stated that its vision was “to be one of the most desirable preparatory schools in the Southwest.” In pursuit of this vision, the school identified its three core values: “a program that is exclusively college preparatory;” “focused resources for each child;” and an “inclusive, responsible, and transparent culture.” These core values aligned with the ideals and beliefs that guided employees’ expectations and practices of conflict management.

Conflict Values and Beliefs

The core values identified above centered on the students and their preparation for continued collegiate education. This emphasis on job performance was evident in the organization’s conflict values as well. A number of values for effective conflict management emerged in the data analysis: classroom effectiveness, respecting personal authority, and connecting with other staff and employees. Various beliefs regarding the nature and practice of conflict management reinforced these values. These values and corresponding beliefs influenced to differing extents how people managed transgressions in the workplace.

First, participants suggested that their primary concern was classroom effectiveness, which involved concentrating on one's own school-related duties above any other concerns. The school underlined the value of classroom effectiveness by requiring teachers not only to carry out their traditional teaching responsibilities, but also to lead an extracurricular organization. Many participants indicated that these expectations kept them very busy, with very little time to get to know one another. In other words, classroom effectiveness implied an individualized, somewhat isolated, approach to the workplace in which teachers concentrated on fulfilling their classroom obligations. As one participant indicated, "Whether you like it or not, this is a business, and we're here to provide a service." Because of the importance given to the accomplishment of work responsibilities, employees emphasized the need to overcome distracting conflicts in order to restore their work focus. Brayden, for example, indicated that, after experiencing a transgression, employees needed to "put on a happy face" and "get back to work." That is, regardless of how people felt, they needed to do their jobs. Another teacher, Deborah, who felt hurt by an administrator in the organization, commented that after the transgression, "Yes, maybe I went home [and] I cried. But, you know, the next day I have to teach. I have to continue with my life." Continuing with life involved concentrating fully on her work obligations.

Second, participants indicated that respect for personal authority, which involved recognizing another teacher's jurisdiction of decision making authority, was an important value as well. One teacher, for example, had spelled the word "respect" on his classroom wall as a guiding value for how his students were to treat him and their fellow classmates. Violations of expectations of respect also touched off several conflicts within the organization. For example, Lucas, who emphasized the importance of respect from his coworkers and students, indicated that a situation in which a coworker had suggested he was too uptight with his students had been deeply offensive to him precisely because it was so disrespectful. Yet another teacher was offended by the perceived lack of respect given to her by another coworker who had undermined her classroom efforts. In other words, respect was an important value for teachers. Another teacher indicated that she felt a violation of disrespect when a colleague undermined her actions.

> I think that if I am the teacher, I have the freedom, the responsibility, and the decision making [power] of certain subjects I'm going to teach. Then somebody came to the school, telling me, 'Oh, you cannot help her. You're [not] going to be teaching that because we're going to change everything.' I go, like, 'Excuse me?! We're going to change it?! Nobody told me. Going to change it for what?'…I didn't like to be imposed [on] and not explain if changes are going to occur. I don't need them being told to me in that way.

In other words, this particular teacher felt that her colleague's imposition had interfered with her authority to determine what happened in her classroom. This ideal of personal authority essentially lay at the root of several conflicts identified by participants.

Finally, participants also suggested that connection to one another, which involved a feeling of association with co-workers, was an important value. This value pertained to *relational* connection rather than *task* connection, as evidenced by the above values that suggested a degree of separation from one another. The nature of this connection varied between the lower school and the other grade levels. Specifically, in the lower school, participants indicated that they appreciated the *familial* connection among each other in which people supported one another. One teacher, for example, praised PE as being "laid back … [and] more of a *close-knit family*." Another teacher indicated that she appreciated the friendliness and personal acceptance by her coworkers. Another teacher, also in the lower school, stated, "I feel it's like a *family*. I mean, people will help you out. There's no competition, no contention." In other words, lower school participants expressed an appreciation for their familial connection to each other.

Unlike the teachers of the younger grades, employees in the other grade levels did not address the issue of connection very often. Instead, relationships among teachers in the middle and upper schools tended to be more superficial and "professionally distant." The distance suggested a different type of valued association: *professional* connection. This type of connection differed from the type of association in the lower school in terms of its relatively looser connection. As Owen stated, "I don't know how many people have *deep friendships* with each other. I don't sense too much of that going on. But in terms of just being able to communicate and *hang out for an hour or two* at a time, it's very easy and natural for the most part." Frank said that he felt that his co-workers were "very collegial." Others, however, commented that, because of the business of their schedules, they were unable to form many close relationships even though they wanted to do so. In essence, participants in the middle and upper schools expressed an appreciation for a professional connection among each other.

In effect, three values emerged from the data: classroom effectiveness, respect for personal authority, and connectedness. The ideal nature of connectedness varied between the lower school and the other grade levels, with the former emphasizing relationships and the later emphasizing professional job performance. Each of these values, in turn, shaped participants' perceptions of appropriate ways for managing conflicts.

Conflict Norms

Participants identified a number of appropriate and inappropriate ways of managing conflict. These norms related to both proper conflict procedures and dispute interactions. Specifically, participants indicated that, when in a dispute, people should approach each other directly, manage the dispute in private, use appropriate language, and move on so that they could focus on their work responsibilities.

Employees indicated that people should follow organizational procedures that directed people to approach the other conflict party about any disputes. As Ann said, "the expectation is to be professional and address it." Another teacher said that the appropriate first step would be talking to the other person first. "I think they want a personal level first… We can solve the problem ourselves." John likewise said, "So I think the expectation is if you have a problem with a teacher, with a coworker, then you are part of that relationship, so you need to approach that and take care of that." In other words, the appropriate first step was communicating directly with the other party in the conflict. As Regina said, "It's better to see things head on rather than avoiding them."

Employees also indicated that people should talk to one another out of the public eye so that they did not exacerbate the conflict and make it harder to move forward. In other words, participants indicated that, when people found themselves in a conflict situation, they should approach the other person in private so that no one else became aware of the dispute or watched it unfold. One administrator, for example, reported that she told her employees that they "[shouldn't] let [conflict] happen in front of other parents. Pull them aside, and separate yourselves from what's going on, and then tell them you'll be happy to meet with them tomorrow." Similarly, Patricia relayed a situation in which she rebuked a coworker for engaging in a public dispute with an angry parent. The rebuke followed her direction not to argue with the parent where other students and parents could see the dispute. In other words, the general expectation at PE was to manage conflicts in private where they could keep the disputes out of the public eye.

Additionally, when talking with the other person, the school encouraged its employees to use an explicit language framework called the RRO (Rights, Responsibilities, and Outcomes) to facilitate communication. As one teacher said, the RRO "allows communication to happen" when a transgression occurs. The RRO suggested that each individual at the school had rights and responsibilities. If someone violated another person's rights or did not follow through on his or her responsibilities, that transgression resulted in specific outcomes as laid down by an authority figure (i.e., the teacher or the administrator). Sharon indicated that the basic rights of a teacher included the right to be safe, to express one's opinions safely, and to teach one's class.

Should a student (or another teacher) violate these rights, the RRO provided a mechanism for establishing specific conflict outcomes. As Monica indicated, “We have the RRO program here… and it’s so wonderful. It’s like this morning, ‘Okay [students], I have the right. We’ve got to get this done today. [I] have a right, I’ve got to get this done today.’ So it’s instant. You know, that’s it.” Another argued that the RRO was an appropriate way to address situations because it helped her collect her thoughts and communicate them in a calm way that did not threaten or insult the other person. Essentially, the RRO attempted to uphold the values of connection and respect for personality authority by not only giving each person individual rights but also providing people with a way to de-personalize the situation so as not to threaten the connection between teachers.

This de-personalization also highlighted a fourth interactional norm. Namely, employees articulated the need to be calm in conflict situations. One teacher commented that “there’s a big emphasis on being calm,” particularly during conflicts with parents. Deborah indicated that she counseled teachers to try to remove themselves and parents from the situation to allow emotions to subside. Tyler likewise indicated that “good conflict management is not anger oriented.” He stated that people instead should concentrate on controlling their emotions, in part by using the RRO to guide how they spoke to one another. The school, then, expected its employees to interact calmly with each other.

Finally, participants indicated that people should “move on” and focus on their work. Moving on involved no longer thinking about whatever upset them and by maintaining one's composure. One teacher counseled that, "you just have to move on because you can't dwell on it forever." Heidi agreed, saying, "You need to just get over things and let them go. You can't take it into the classroom." Another teacher indicated that, following a personal insult from a colleague, he had to let the situation go because it was inappropriate to allow a transgression to interfere with his teaching responsibilities.

In sum, employees at PE advocated a number of conflict management norms. When conflicts occurred in the organization, the school expected participants to approach the other party, meet in private, use the RRO, remain composed, and move on. In effect, these norms highlighted the values of connectedness and classroom effectiveness. Together, these norms formed the basis for conflict management practices that, when put into action, would foster a sense of association between the disputants through their direct communication and respectful language use as well as their need to focus on classroom performance by moving on from the conflict.

Conflict Practices

Employees, however, did not always follow these conflict management norms. In fact, the extent to which people's actual conflict behaviors conformed to organizational expectations seemed to vary by whether they taught in the lower school or other grade levels. Although the practices of employees in all grade levels highlighted the importance of classroom effectiveness, they differed as to whether they upheld values of connectedness and respect for individual rights. Namely, lower school employees fostered a sense of connectedness with one another through compliance with organizational norms whereas employees in other grade levels emphasized their desire for individual authority by violating workplace expectations of conflict management.

Despite the organization’s expectations for employees to manage problems between themselves, employees in the middle and upper schools often went straight to the administration to report a transgression and did not approach the other person. Heidi succinctly spoke to this point, saying, “If conflict happens, go to the head.” Deborah reported that she went to her administrator when she felt hurt by what a colleague had said. Tyler likewise said that, because people did not want to be the “killjoy” of the group, they often did not approach the other party. In other words, employees in the upper school did not necessarily follow official expectations by approaching one another first about their conflicts. Instead, many reported going straight to their administrators to manage the situation.

However, employees in the lower school reported approaching the other person first. One employee indicated that, when her administrator told her to talk directly with the person who had hurt her, she complied despite her anxiety about doing so. Another incident which appeared repeatedly throughout the interviews with lower school participants involved a situation in which two teachers were at odds with each other about classroom management. Although it took time, the two eventually spoke with each other about it rather than avoid the situation. In other words, lower school employees appeared to follow proper procedure by talking with each other directly.

When conflicts made their way up the hierarchy, administrators managed the disputes in different ways. Whereas lower school administrators took on more of a facilitator role, the upper school administrators typically became an arbitrator who "laid down the law." Tyler pointed out this authoritative practice. "Those [in] administration help facilitate a conversation. Not even facilitate – they just *are* the conversation with the one who did the wrong." Owen likewise related a situation in which the head of school called an employee into his office and told that person that what he or she was doing was inappropriate and needed to stop. The administrator often would attempt to prevent future similar conflicts by announcing behavior rules at a faculty meeting. Tyler, for example, said, "The [conflicts] I hear about are the ones that come up during faculty meetings saying, 'Don't do this. Don't talk this way.'" In other words, the upper school tended to focus on regulating workplace behaviors and relationships by announcing official rules regarding how people were to address conflicts.

The lower school administrator, however, indicated that she was hesitant to engage in such an authoritarian conflict practice, preferring instead to act as a sounding board for the conflicted parties before encouraging them to speak to each other. She felt it was her responsibility to give people space to express their emotions and frustrations and then to encourage them to approach the person who had hurt them. The lower school teachers agreed with this assessment, saying that the administrator rarely told them what the outcome of a conflict should be. Instead, they said that she focused more on helping the disputants manage their issues themselves. In other words, whereas the upper school administrator concentrated on conflict *outcomes*, the lower school administrator emphasized the importance of interacting respectfully with each other.

Despite the organization's expectation to use the RRO, few employees outside the lower school used the framework. A number of employees, particularly the ones new to PE, indicated that the school had provided very little training on how to use the model, despite extensive training in the procedures before the new administration came into the organization. Because of this, people rarely reported using the model. Additionally, disputants went straight to the administration with their problems. Hence, they had little or no motivation to use the model because it focused on interactions between the conflicted parties. As a result, employee RRO use appeared minimal.

Finally, consistent with the normative expectations to remain composed, employees in all grade levels typically "lumped" their emotions or vented them to non-involved parties. Jessica indicated that most employees "probably more stew[ed] and maybe vent[ed] to others." This practice was the experience of another participant's coworkers. "She just vented to me about it and I think vented to her husband about it and just kind of tried to make the best of it and maybe kind of give (sic) her teaching partner the benefit of the doubt…I think she worked through it well." In other words, people kept their appearance of composure by lumping their emotions to people outside the school.

In practice, then, whereas lower school members generally behaved consistently with organizational expectations, upper school employees did not always conform to organizational expectations regarding conflict management. Specifically, employees reported going directly to the administration, which would then typically pass down judgment. Employees also rarely used the RRO, in part because they did not address their frustrations with each other first. Parties attempted, however, to maintain the appearance of composure by venting their feelings to non-involved parties or hiding their emotions. In all, some employees' practices did not appear to align very much with organizational expectations for managing conflicts.

Justice Ideologies

Together, these values, beliefs, norms, and practices suggested an interesting split in the espoused versus practiced conflict management ideologies. While the espoused model was evident in the approach taken by the lower school, a different ideology emerged in the practice of the other grade levels. First, in the lower school, the value of connectedness and the practice of communicating directly with one another suggested close relationships among employees. At the same time, however, the use of a linguistic framework that stressed individual rights and responsibilities also suggested a degree of regulated separation between the employees. In other words, lower school members attempted to negotiate a tension between relational connection and separation. Second, given the emphasis on working problems out directly, the locus of control was within the parties. Fairness, then, became a matter of respectful interaction and meeting each others' needs. However, the organization's official appeals procedure of taking conflicts to an administrator also located control in an external system, in which fairness became a matter of following appropriate organizational rules. Third, because of the importance of connection, relationship restoration emerged as an important area of emphasis. Lower school members, though, also emphasized moving on to focus on future teaching responsibilities. In effect, the values, norms, and practices suggested an emphasis on both relationship restoration through directly negotiating conflict issues and performance requirements and through the reliance on an appeals system for a final agreement.

In the other grade levels, though, a different picture emerged in the employees' conflict practices. Namely, the practice of taking problems to the administration and relying on an authority figure to pass down judgment reflected an approach which regulated people's relationships and located control in the larger organizational system outside of the disputants. Additionally, because employees had so little time to focus on relationship maintenance, relationship restoration was not an area of emphasis. Instead, carrying out one's own teaching responsibilities was the participants' primary focus, suggesting a degree of separation among the employees. Additionally, conflict became a matter of following organizational rules rather than respecting one another, creating a sense of transgressions as impersonal or objective violations of workplace policies. In this case, issues became matters of right and wrong. For example, Owen indicated his appreciation of a meeting with a coworker in which his colleague admitted responsibility. "It was good because we discussed several things and he was *willing to admit* that they (sic) could have been more supportive of me." Another teacher indicated that people's avoidance of conflict came from their fear of being proven wrong. In other words, the approach to conflict management in the upper grade levels suggested that relationships were distant, that control was out of the disputants' hands, and that the primary emphasis was on protecting teaching responsibilities.

These features suggest two justice ideologies at work in PE. In general, even though the values and norms espoused a blend of the restorative and legalistic ideologies, the legalistic model was the dominant justice ideology in the upper school. This model was best exemplified in relying on a third party administrator to lay out the rules for appropriate behavior and on minimizing future transgressions. In the lower school, however, participants utilized both the restorative and legalistic ideologies, negotiating each model in a particular conflict situation. By attempting to work out conflicts with each other and avoid blaming the other person, employees attempted to manage their connected relationship.

The distinction between the models became apparent in two conflicts. In the upper school, an employee made a remark to a coworker at the lunch table which a third person found inappropriate. Rather than confronting the employee who made the remark on the issue after lunch, the person went straight to the head of school to report the issue to him. The head of school then called the employee into his office to tell him that what he said was inappropriate and did not conform to organizational rules. The employee indicated in his interview that he found the entire situation "curious" and "unsettling" because his coworker was not offended by the remark and because he did not have a chance to defend himself. Instead, he indicated that the situation had taken on a life of its own and had strained his relationships not only with the person who reported him but also to the administrator who upbraided him. No conversation between the employee and the person who reported him ever took place, and the employee seemed to harbor some bitterness toward the school in general. In other words, the legalistic approach was associated with a focus on organizational rules, a sense of detachment between the parties, and reliance on a third party administrator to manage the conflict.

In contrast, in the lower school, the blend of the restorative and legalistic ideologies was characterized by a concern for connectedness and conformity to organizational procedural expectations. For example, the situation mentioned previously in which the lower school administrator encouraged a teacher to confront her coworker over an issue affecting the teacher's classroom management highlighted two elements of the blended ideology at work. First, the teacher's hesitancy to confront the other teacher suggested that she valued feelings of connectedness above other concerns – even classroom effectiveness. Ironically, even though direct communication was grounded in the desire to rebuild connectedness following a transgression, the emphasis on connectedness hampered the teacher's motivation to confront the other teacher directly. Second, the actions of both the teacher and the administrator reflected an irony of control. On the one hand, the expectation for the teacher to communicate directly placed the locus of control in her hands. On the other hand, however, such control of the situation reinforced the *organization's* control over how to manage conflicts. In other words, the organization's direction for employees to manage their relationships through confrontation actually reinforced the organization's legitimate authority to manage how employees engaged in dispute practices. Thus, the locus of control was both internal and external to the parties. In short, the organization's adoption of the restorative approach involved blending its tenets with the characteristics of the legalistic ideology.

In effect, PE exemplified both the legalistic and restorative models of justice. The legalistic model emphasized the values of performance effectiveness, respect for personal authority, and professional connectedness whereas the restorative model stressed the importance of familial connectedness. These models were associated with different practices. Namely, whereas the legalistic ideology was evident in appealing to administrators to render a final decision, the restorative model was apparent in the personal negotiation of conflict issues. In all, both models appeared in PE, although different grade levels emphasized the ideologies to differing extents.

Teen Education

Teen Education's Employee Handbook identified several objectives related directly to teachers and administrators. One, the school would "recruit, develop, and retain effective personnel." Additionally, the school would "maintain a safe and disciplined environment conducive to student learning." Moreover, the school's teachers would "keep abreast of the development of creative and innovative techniques in instruction and administration using those techniques as appropriate to improve student learning." In other words, the school's primary focus was on effective classroom performance that promoted student learning. The teachers' primary obligations and functions, then, were to enable learning at school. The values and beliefs regarding conflict management in the workplace largely reflected these responsibilities.

Conflict Values and Beliefs

Several conflict management values emerged: classroom effectiveness, thoughtfulness, conformity to chain of command, and helpfulness. Of these values, effectiveness in the classroom was the dominant ideal that constituted a true professional teacher. As one teacher said, “Whatever [the teachers are] doing, they’re doing *for the good of the kids*. Most people are pretty professional most of the time.”

One value that emerged from the interviews was the ideal of classroom effectiveness, which involved concentrating on school-related duties above any other concerns. The school district to which TE belonged emphasized the importance of classroom effectiveness in many of the objectives in the Employee Handbook. Participants assessed effectiveness in terms of how much students learned in the classroom. Madeline indicated this goal when talking about the school board and administrators. “Their big thing is…success for the kids. And if it’s not good for the kids, we’re not going to do it. And even if you don’t want to do it, but it’s good for the kids, you’re going to do it.”

This statement suggested two important points about classroom effectiveness in terms of conflict management. First, employees were to judge any conflict agreement primarily on the basis of whether it contributed to student learning. Other concerns, such as interpersonal relationships among the teachers, were of secondary importance compared to student performance. Second, this statement suggested that the wants and interests of the school were of primary importance in managing conflicts. Thus, the ultimate criterion for measuring effectiveness in conflict and non-conflict situations was whether it contributed to student learning. As Colton said, “Our focus is again on how do we instruct the best way, to teach them what they need to know, [and] when they need to know it.” This focus on instruction meant that any activity that was not related to teaching was less valuable. In short, the ideal of classroom effectiveness was the dominant concern guiding both conflict- and non-conflict related behavior.

Part of achieving classroom effectiveness involved thoughtfulness, or thinking through conflict situations. Thoughtfulness highlighted the importance of thinking or cognitive reflection during conflict situations. One teacher, for example, indicated his preference for rationality when making decisions, saying that he hoped the other person would “actually *put thought* into what I said and not just say, ‘Well, no. I’ve done it this way and this is the way it’s going to be.’ But *stop and think* about it. At least give time to think about it and not just make a decision rashly.” Another teacher, Colton, indicated that teachers needed to know “how to calm yourself in a heated situation.” He said that “when someone says something that triggers that emotion, … try to calm yourself to a point where *you’re able to speak rationally* and control your emotions.” Overall, employees at TE indicated that thoughtfulness was important in conflict situations.

This preference for thoughtfulness was rooted in the belief that cognitive processing, which often took time, led to good problem-solving. As Lucy said, “I do know it’s good not to react right there. I’ve really probably learned that the hard way a lot of times. But if you can step away from the situation and have even like 24 hours, [that] would be awesome because then *you can think about it*. You can be more *rational*.” Another colleague commented that she tries to approach a situation only once her emotions have subsided. “I don’t put myself in that situation until we have a *level head* and we can talk level-headedly.” The implication of her statement was that, by speaking with the other person without an emotional reaction, she could work out a reasoned, thoughtful solution. In other words, processing conflicts with emotions still running high was associated with poor results whereas thoughtfulness was associated with more preferable results.

A third emergent value was conformity to chain of command, or the idea that employees could follow organizational levels of decision making. This value differed from the ideal of respect for individual authority mentioned earlier in its emphasis on *hierarchical* authority. Conformity to chain of command was based upon the belief that final decision-making authority lay at the top of the organization, which was perhaps most evident in the school's official grievance system. According to this system, if employees had a dispute, they were to take it first to their principal. If they were not satisfied, they could then appeal to the superintendent and finally to the school board. At TE, this value became evident as participants spoke of their appreciation for administrators who made clear decisions to which teachers could comply. As Lucy, said:

> And there's a lot of times that [the principal] has said, 'I'm going to ask you to do something you don't want to do. You're just going to do it. There's times where, *regardless of how you feel about it, you're just going to need to do it for me.*' And he'll say it, you know. And you kind of got to respect that.

One administrator, in fact, referred to himself as a "referee" of the disputes in which one side dominated the conversation. For him, a referee controlled the action, punished wrongdoers, and called out violations. In other words, as the referee, he enacted the value of conformity to chain of command by being the official voice in the dispute process.

Finally, helpfulness emerged as a dispute management value. Helpfulness involved the idea of assisting a colleague in his or her own work because of the school-based relationship connecting one another. Helpfulness differs from connectedness at PE in its prioritizing of task over relationship. In other words, whereas relationship connectedness was the primary end at PE, relationships were means to the greater end of task completion at TE. One teacher, for example, referred to the hierarchical conflict process as a “support system” rather than a “chain of command” in which people provided advice on how to manage conflict situations. Other employees indicated that they valued the advice given by their friends on how to handle a dispute. The importance of helpfulness was evident in the mottos used by the school in the past two years. Two years ago, the administration created what it called “the four C’s”: cooperation, communication, celebration, and collaboration. For the year in which this study took place, the administration touted “the three R’s”: relevance, relationship, and responding to a need. Each of these ideals, particularly cooperation, collaboration, and responding to a need, pointed to the importance of helpfulness in managing workplace disputes.

In effect, there were several conflict management values at TE: thoughtfulness, classroom effectiveness, conformity to chain of command, and helpfulness. Chief among these values was the idea of classroom effectiveness, as emphasized in the Employee Handbook. Because the chief aim of employees at TE was to perform well in the classroom, the conflict management norms generally reflected this emphasis on teaching effectiveness.

Conflict Norms

Although the school offered no extensive, official training on how to manage disputes with co-workers, it laid out general expectations for how teachers should behave and interact with each other. These informal expectations, along with the official norms laid out in the Employee Handbook, pertained primarily to conflict management procedures. Specifically, the school expected people to communicate privately and directly with one another first and refrain from gossip. Participants also indicated that, while interacting with each other, employees should control their emotions and listen to each other. Additionally, once employees had spoken with one another, they should move on and focus on their work.

The primary norm was for employees to follow appropriate procedures. What constituted appropriate procedures, though, was somewhat unclear. On the one hand, a number of participants indicated that the school expected the conflicted parties to work on the issues themselves and not talk about the situation behind each others' backs. Jocelyn, for example, expressed her expectation that employees would behave appropriately by "[taking] the initiative and talking and actually having that conversation." An administrator likewise indicated that his desire was for people to manage it themselves without dragging him into the situation. Other participants suggested that talking about the conflict behind each others' backs, which bordered on gossip, was inappropriate. Jada, for example, argued that talking about the other person to one's coworkers was detrimental. Maria agreed, suggesting that gossip and talking behind people's backs contributed to the many conflicts in the workplace. Instead, she suggested that the appropriate way to handle conflicts was to approach the other person directly rather than talking about that individual to others.

On the other hand, some employees indicated that the appropriate first step was to take their issues to a mentor or supervisor. The Employee Handbook codified this expectation in the official grievance process:

> In an effort to hear and resolve employee concerns or complaints in a timely manner and at the lowest *administrative level* possible, the board has adopted an orderly grievance process. Employees are encouraged to discuss their concerns or complaints *with their supervisors or an appropriate administrator* at any time.

Madison reported a similar process for appropriately managing conflicts in the workplace.

> So first, you go to your *mentor* and if that did not work, then you go to your team leader. Team leaders are in place and [the conflict moves from them] to the assistant principals. I think in this particular school district, I think there would probably be no conflict that you would have to handle by yourself.

These statements suggested that the appropriate procedure involved going to an authority figure first rather than going to the other conflicted party. Together, there seemed to be two different expectations for appropriate conflict management. One involved approaching the other person involved in the conflict, and the other involved going to a mentor or supervisor.

A conflict norm similar to that advocated at PE also developed regarding the appropriate place to address conflicts. Participants indicated that the appropriate place to address disputes was backstage where no one else could see or hear them. Emma argued that confronting someone in public was inappropriate. “And, just going into the teachers’ workroom and starting to go off about somebody is not the time or place either because of who can overhear you.” Instead, Adam indicated that “professional arguments should never be done in front of students… Try to handle it *outside of class* or *go to the office* for a second.” Adam also said that “all of it needs to be behind closed doors, kind of like in the office.” That is, when confronting the other person, the appropriate way to address the conflict was to do so in private in order not to create the impression that people were distracted from their work by conflict. In all, participants at TE outlined several procedural norms, including addressing the conflict first with the other conflicted party (or possibly an administrator), not talking behind someone’s back, and managing the dispute in private.

Participants identified expectations regarding appropriate conflict interactions as well. These included listening to one another, being mature, and controlling one’s emotions. While talking with the other person, participants indicated that it was appropriate and expected for people to listen to each other. Sophia, for example, evaluated the way that the administrator handled a dispute because “he really listened to everybody and everybody’s concerns and everybody’s needs, and I think he took it into consideration before he made decisions.” Another person argued that people should “seek to understand before you’re understood” when managing conflict situations. In other words, rather than emphasizing the appropriateness of arguing for one's position, participants indicated that employees should attempt to understand the other person's views first.

Additionally, participants indicated that appropriate conflict management involved being mature or adult-like by staying calm and thinking through the issues at hand. Calming one's emotions involved refraining from yelling and from losing control over one's speech. As Adam said, "There never should be any hollering, you know. Not between adults. That seems that you kind of *revert back to a childish state when you holler*." In other words, raising one's voice at another teacher was inappropriate in part because it was unbecoming of mature adults. Lucy agreed, saying "me yelling at another professional at school, to me, is just a no-no. That's not right." Instead, people needed to display their maturity by staying calm and using their skills of thoughtfulness to work through the conflict issues. One teacher indicated that "everyone needs to remain as calm as they can about it" and "think through [the problem]." Colton said appropriate conflict management involved "expressing yourself by objective statements." Proper conflict interaction, then, involved maintaining control of one's emotions and listening to the other person.

In the end, participants indicated people should attempt to solve the problem and let go of the situation. Emma said, "I usually try to solve that problem with the person and I have to let it go." Another teacher said that "it's good to talk about your subject and it's good to problem solve." However, being around people who were constantly negative because they could not let go of the situation was draining. Jackie, meanwhile, said, “I’ve learned, to be at my best, I’m going to have to let it go. Now that doesn’t necessarily mean I’m going to resolve it, but I need to let it go.” This idea of letting go to focus on one’s work was also apparent in the principal’s approach to managing disputes. As one teacher said, “I don’t know if [the principal’s] goal is to necessarily solve the conflict but maybe get it to a workable state…Maybe you can’t make them shake hands and make up, but you can at least get them to talk and come to some kind of understanding *where it doesn’t affect the rest of what they’re doing – their work*.” In other words by letting the situation go, they were able to return to their work obligations and not concern themselves with a problem that had been distracting them from their work. As Sophia said, “I don’t need to obsess about it. I need to let it go.”

In short, participants identified several conflict norms. Procedurally, the school expected employees to follow the appropriate processes grounded in the chain of command by talking directly with the other person (or possibly an administrator) in private and refraining from gossip. The school also expected its employees to remain calm, think, and listen to one another during their interactions. Ultimately, employees indicated that the appropriate response was simply to let go of the situation in order to return to their work.

Together, these norms reflected a number of underlying values, particularly helpfulness, thoughtfulness, and classroom effectiveness. In essence, employees espoused an approach to conflict management in which disputants were to work through problems by approaching one another directly, listening to one another, and thinking through the situation together. However, the extent to which people followed these procedural and outcome-related norms varied.

Conflict Practices

Although the employees held several expectations for how to address conflicts, participants also noted that people did not always put these expectations into practice. Instead, actual conflict behaviors varied from expected norms on a number of levels, particularly with regard to procedural expectations.

First, many participants noted that people did not always approach one another directly. Often, people would talk only to other people who were not directly involved with the situation, such as friends or family members. This typically took the form of venting or advice-seeking. As Ashlyn said,

> I choose not to make my life worse by having that conversation.… And I have somebody here at school that we're really close we're really good I mean she's my closest circle of friend. She is my circle. You know so I talk to her and she's kind of my grounding point my sounding point.

Sophia said that "there's little pockets, little cliques, maybe teamwise or across teams…I think if you get upset with someone, you *tend to run to your friend and talk about it*, get advice. Which probably doesn't sound *very professional*, but it's kinda what we do." Emma said that she "will usually find my husband or someone that's neutral, that's completely away from the situation that I can kind of vent to and get it off my chest." In other words, even though the expectation was to approach the other person first, the actual practice was to approach close friends or spouses.

Second, in addition to talking with friends and spouses, people also went straight to the principal with their problems. Lucy noted this practice of people going to the principal to manage the situation. “That’s the typical thing…they run and go straight to the principal or assistant principal, saying ‘Look, I’m having a problem with this person. Can you talk to this person?’” Another teacher felt that the principal “[dealt] with a lot of things that he shouldn’t have to deal with,” because people took their conflicts to him rather than to the other person. In other words, people asked the principal to step into the conflict and render a decision to bring the situation to a close.

Third, the end result often was an absence of direct communication between the parties and a perceived increase of avoidance. “Sometimes there’s a little avoidance, you know,” Jackie said. “So, I can say in the past, when someone has hurt my feelings, I’ve kind of avoided them for awhile. And then, you know, it’s okay.” Jackie also related a story of avoidance which caused her stress as a team leader.

> You know, [avoidance] comes up all the time. And as team leader, I had several problems last year where we had two teachers who were at odds most of the year. One would say something and the other one would come to me and say, ‘I’m not speaking to that person in team meeting. Don’t even ask me to participate because I’m not going to do it.’…We had several little triangular problems going on between the women on the team.

This situation exemplified a larger trend in which people did not approach the other party, but instead internalized the situation. As Ashlyn said, “It’s easier just to deal [with it] and move on you know kind of roll my eyes.” In general, although the school advocated an expectation for direct communication between the conflicted parties, people in practice seemed to avoid each other, choosing instead to approach their friends or spouses to vent or seek advice. As a consequence, because no communication took place, people also did not have the opportunity to listen to one another.

In all, when faced with conflict situations, participants typically approached parties not directly involved with the conflict without confronting the other party in the dispute. In approaching the principal, people tended to ask him to determine an appropriate outcome to their conflict situation. As a result, rather than working through the process and listening to each other, participants avoided one another, preferring instead to talk with their supporters to whom they could vent their emotions to maintain the appearance of maturity and emotional control.

Justice Ideologies

Together, participants' espoused conflict values, beliefs, and norms, along with their actual dispute practices, suggested several features of the organization's justice ideologies. Although the organization espoused the appropriateness of problem solving through direct communication, employees instead interacted with their friends and supporters in venting their emotions, suggesting that the value of helpfulness pertained more to *receiving* assistance than to helping one another manage disputes. In other words, despite the ideal of helpfulness, relationships still appeared to be rather separate and distrusting. Moreover, in relying on administrative authority to pass final judgment on the conflicts rather than working through disputes together, relationships between the parties appeared regulated and separate, with the locus of control being in the external system. In highlighting the importance of thoughtful information processing, participants also suggested that conflict issues were objective problems best addressed through a rational cognitive effort. Additionally, despite the professed importance of coming to consensus by “working it out,” participants’ expectation that people “move on” suggested an emphasis on work responsibilities rather than restoring relationships. In other words, the organization’s justice model seemed characterized by regulated relationships combined with expectations for help; an external locus of control in which an administrator held final decision-making authority combined with taking ownership of the problem; and an emphasis on work responsibilities combined with coming to an agreement about how to proceed.

Based on the above features, it became apparent that participants vacillated between the restorative and legalistic ideologies. On the one hand, employees espoused elements of the restorative model, such as direct communication and listening to one another. On the other hand, however, employees *practiced* characteristics of the legalistic ideology such as taking disputes to an administrator. In fact, the attempt to balance the “appropriate” and actual conflict management behaviors might account for some of the frustration that employees at their school were not as close as they once were. That is, even though they held ideals of close working relationships, their conflict practices produced social relationships that were regulated, separate, and grounded in official procedures.

This ideology was most apparent in the case of workplace bullying discussed briefly above. In this situation, one of the teachers began to accuse the other teacher of repeatedly attempting to control her actions and teaching style. For example, the teacher who felt bullied indicated that the other person constantly asked her for her whereabouts during the school day and even controlled whether she was able to hold a birthday party for a student. The situation eventually spiraled out of control to the point where the two teachers would not speak to one another. All of the teachers involved in the situation (the two primary parties and their team leader) articulated the “appropriate” ways in which employees should manage conflict in the workplace. However, the tension and hostility on the part of the person who felt bullied toward the aggressor was palpable throughout the interview. This negativity seemed to spring from how the conflict unfolded. Namely, despite her leader’s repeated suggestions that she talk directly with the other teacher, the disputants generally avoided one another, communicating instead through the team leader. The disputants effectively turned over control of the dispute to the leader at the same time as they tried to separate themselves from one another. Additionally, the person who saw herself as the victim expressed frustration with the principal for not confronting the situation and punishing the other teacher. Essentially, the conflict evolved into a situation in which the administration separated the parties from one another after determining that the parties could no longer work together effectively, highlighting the primacy of the values of deference to administrative authority and classroom effectiveness.

In all, despite TE’s espousal of a blend of legalistic and restorative ideologies, most employees followed practices that conformed to legalistic expectations of classroom effectiveness and deference to administrative authority. Additionally, employees appeared to place more value on receiving support from their friends and family during conflict situations by venting to them than on restoring the relationship with the other disputant through direct communication. Coupled with an emphasis on production responsibilities, the prevalence of forgiveness was rather low in comparison to other coping practices, such as letting go or avoiding the conflict.

Summary

Analysis of the data suggested the emergence of both the legalistic and restorative justice models at PE and TE. Although the legalistic model was the dominant justice ideology at PE, TE appeared to espouse a blend of both models. However, in practice, employees favored the legalistic ideology. Several values reflected this model, including thoughtfulness, job performance effectiveness, and administrative authority. Together, these values provided the foundation for norms and practices, including controlling one’s emotions, avoiding the other conflict party, and asking administrators to make the final decisions about the conflict. Essentially, by following a legalistic model, participants stressed the need to manage conflicts professionally so that they could get back to work while they de-emphasized the importance of repairing their potentially strained relationships.

Not all schools in the study, however, believed that relationships were unimportant. In fact, participants at the other two schools – Youth Education and Christian Education – suggested that relationship repair was an integral part of their approach to conflict management in the workplace. The following chapter offers an analysis of their justice ideologies and concludes with a comparison of the schools' respective models.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS FOR YOUTH EDUCATION AND CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

This chapter continues the analysis of justice ideologies by focusing on the remaining two schools – Youth Education (YE) and Christian Education (CE). Just as PE and TE exhibited a blend of models, combined models also emerged at YE and CE. In fact, YE and TE shared a number of similar norms, including the expectation to listen to one another and communicate directly with each other. However, whereas the previous schools ascribed primarily to a legalistic model of justice, YE and CE advocated a somewhat different approach to managing transgressions in the workplace. This ideological difference was evident in the schools' conflict values, beliefs, norms, and practices.

Youth Education

Several participants at Youth Education (YE) spoke of the lofty expectations shared by organizational members and the positive reputation of the school in the community. For example, Brooke said, "You know, I think that's what's made YE so good is that it's just high expectation from every one of the principals that we've had here." These expectations pertained primarily to excellent classroom performance and teaching effectiveness. This desire to maintain high standards provided the foundation for the conflict management values, norms, and practices at the school.

Conflict Values and Beliefs

Participants identified several values relating to conflict procedures, interactions, and outcomes. Namely, participants advocated the values of professional responsibility, objectivity, and moderated partnership. Both partnership and professional responsibility emerged as the central values.

First, the majority of participants indicated that their primary concern was professional responsibility, or collective accountability for the school's effectiveness. This value incorporated classroom effectiveness in that it implied that teaching was important; however, it differed in that professionalism extended outside of the classroom per se. For example, Janet indicated the principal cared first and foremost about student learning. Another member said that disagreements should not take away teachers' focus on their teaching responsibilities. As he said, "It's about what's right for the kids and the school." Likewise, Sydney said one's work was more important than other concerns. "You can't hold things against the child because the parent was so ugly to you or cursed at you or filed a grievance against you or whatever. You have to focus on doing what your job is." In other words, regardless of circumstances, teachers needed to focus on their classroom responsibilities.

However, unlike at PE and TE, where classroom effectiveness suggested a degree of separation between individuals, professional responsibility implied a sense of shared ownership in the school, such that relationship formation and maintenance were integral parts of one's teaching performance. Although some, including Brandon and Jordan, argued that the professional and personal were different, others suggested that the line between the two was blurry. Sydney, for example, said that personal and work relationships in education were much more intertwined than in the business world. Other employees outside of YE commented that because of the nature of elementary education, teachers tended to be more emotional and open with each other, elevating the importance of personal relationships in the workplace. As a consequence, professional responsibility involved not only one's teaching responsibilities but also one's relationships with coworkers.

The value of professional responsibility was also associated with the ideal of partnership, which implied a common identity grounded in professional collaboration or helpfulness. That is, helpfulness implied a focus on task coordination through work-based relationships. Unlike connectedness that was valued in PE, collaboration suggested feelings of association, not just task assistance. Partnership suggested an equal focus on collaborating to produce a common good in addition to task assistance. Kate, for example, indicated that people demonstrated partnership by "*[working] with everyone*. You're willing to work with whoever you're placed with, and you need to work things out if there's a problem." Jordan indicated that partnership was a key value for teachers in general. "We've been *cooperative* learners from the beginning. We want school – our classroom – to be cooperative learning. So we tend to be that kind of people anyway." Other teachers suggested that they thought of each other as belonging to a large family in which people "look out for each other" and "show [each other] respect." In other words, the ideal of partnership pertained not only to classroom activity, but also to collaborating with others, looking out for each other, and showing professional respect.

However, this partnership did not imply complete dependence on each other. Participants such as Gabbi suggested that detachment enabled people not to be overly dependent upon their colleagues. Alexis, likewise, suggested that having "a degree of separation" was useful in the workplace. Keira also said that, in some conflict situations, she needed to recognize her limits or boundaries regarding what she could and could not accomplish.

> It's the same kind of thing – I'm never going to change that person. So the only thing I can worry about is, 'Did I handle that the best I could handle it that day? Did I handle it with my coworker the best I could handle it that day?'

In other words, Keira's comments suggest that, despite the importance of partnership, detaching oneself from the other person was also important. Thus, participants seemed to advocate the value of *moderated partnership* in their interactions with each other.

Participants also indicated a preference for objectivity over subjectivity, which involved an elimination of bias and a focus on verifiable facts and information. Objectivity differed from thoughtfulness in that, whereas thoughtfulness emphasized *rational thought free of emotion,* objectivity stressed the importance of paying attention to *information* and striving for *neutrality* which did not necessarily involve the elimination of emotion. This expectation applied to both non-conflict and conflict situations. As Alexis said, "I think professional educators do need to rely on data in making certain choices about what will be taught as well as dealing with coworkers or dealing with parents, which is part of our profession as well." In conflict situations, this emphasis on objectivity applied to both official and unofficial dispute management. As laid out in the school's Employee Handbook, any employee who wished to file a grievance through the official dispute system needed to have objectively identifiable evidence to support their case. Likewise, Maya indicated her preference that the principal "would sit there objectively and listen" to her if she had to take an issue to him. In other words, participants indicated that good conflict management relied on objectivity rather than subjectivity.

In sum, participants suggested that several ideals were important in the management of workplace conflict. These values included professional responsibility, objectivity, and moderated partnership. Of these values, professional responsibility and partnership were the dominant ideals. This merging of relationship closeness with task productivity was evident in the conflict norms identified throughout the interviews.

Conflict Norms

Participants at YE expressed a number of expectations regarding appropriate conflict procedures, interactions, and outcomes that mirrored the expectations found at TE. These norms included the expectation to communicate the problem directly with the other party; to listen, try to understand, and apologize for actions; to avoid blaming the other person; and to seek common ground before moving on. Camryn succinctly summarized these expectations regarding conflict management. "I think it is important to state your views *calmly*. It's important to *listen* to the other person and try to understand their perspective and then *try to find a common ground* – something you can both deal with."

Like at TE, participants indicated that the appropriate process for managing conflict involved talking with and trying to understand the other person rather than avoiding the conflict or going straight to the principal. Brandon said, "You gotta be willing to sit down and talk about it." Additionally, when talking about it, employees needed to try to understand one another because, as Gabbi put it, "they're just as much right as you are." As such, people needed to try to understand one another. Sydney, for example, said "Come, sit down, and talk to me about it. *Don't go to other people and talk to them*." Jordan concurred, saying, "To get your feelings hurt and to go crying to the supervisor – it's like, come on, we're all grown up people here. Let's not do this." In other words, the appropriate and expected conflict process at YE was to approach the other person directly rather than going straight to the administration. However, participants at YE also identified other norms not mentioned at TE.

Namely, people indicated that disputants should take personal responsibility by apologizing for their actions. As Kalyn said, "I think there is always room for an apology. I mean, that's very important. It lets the other person feel like you are acknowledging them for whatever reason… I think an apology goes a long way." Reagan expressed her expectation that people should apologize because of the golden rule of treating others the way one wants to be treated. Other participants expressed appreciation for the apologies they received from others, suggesting that they saw apologizing as an appropriate and expected way to manage disputes.

At the same time as employees suggested that appropriate conflict management involved accepting responsibility by apologizing, they indicated that it was inappropriate to blame the other person. As Sydney said, “When you’re dealing with conflict, *you can’t point the finger at someone* or make them feel like it’s their fault.” Another teacher indicated that, rather than blaming, “you have to look at someone’s intentions” to find out why they did what they did to you. Alexis supported this idea, saying that the right way to talk with someone in a dispute situation is to “reaffirm your appreciation for that individual…and their value as a person and to try to achieve that separation of, ‘Okay, this is *not you* my frustration is from, but this.’” Finally, Megan suggested that her preference was to “work it out and just act like it’s really nobody’s fault, but [that] it is a problem and we need to take care of it.” In other words, rather than blaming the person, participants indicated that the appropriate way to manage conflict was to refrain from assigning responsibility.

Participants also indicated that people should seek compromises. As Summer said, “You’re supposed to listen to the other [person] and compromise.” Taylor also indicated that people should engage in a give and take to find a compromise. “So now, you know, compromise is good and other things [could] come about eventually that may even work out better.” In cases where compromise was not feasible, several participants commented that it was legitimate to agree to disagree. “I think the thing is it doesn’t mean that you have to agree with what they do,” Gabbi said. Likewise, Brandon said that “it’s okay to disagree, but knowing when you get up from the table, we are all still on the same team and nothing is personal.” In other words, the appropriate conflict outcome was to seek a mutually acceptable agreement, whether in the form of a compromise or in the form of agreeing to disagree.

Finally, once a dispute was over, participants stressed the need to “move forward.” Kalyn indicated that a good agreement is one with which “everyone is happy…and can move forward. I think that’s the best outcome with anything.” Keira suggested this same idea, saying “You just kind of have to *walk away* from it. As long as I’ve been doing this, to be honest, you just got to walk away from it ‘cause you can’t let all that stuff [get to you].” Another teacher suggested that people’s teaching performance would suffer if people did not move on. “If those conflicts continue to exist,” she said, “then you’re not going to be able to – I think it greatly hinders individual ability to maybe give the time and attention to the kiddos, which is ultimately what we’re here to do.” In effect, once the parties reached an agreement, the appropriate course of action was to let the conflict go and move on to other responsibilities.

In general, a number of conflict norms emerged. The data indicated that participants felt employees should approach one another directly without going to an administrator first, listen to each other, apologize for their respective roles in the conflict, seek a mutually acceptable solution, and then move on. These norms reflected an emphasis not only on following proper procedure but on interacting appropriately with each other as well.

Conflict Practices

As with TE, the espoused values and norms for appropriate conflict management were not necessarily consistent with the reported behaviors and practices. For example, employees sometimes violated the norm of going to the other party first. However, the lack of confrontation stemmed not from a motivation to avoid *per se* but rather from a cost-benefit analysis of the situation.

When transgressions occurred, organizational members appeared to perform a cursory cost-benefit analysis to see if the conflict was worth addressing. As Alexis said, she would ask herself if the issue was something she was being "*overly sensitive* about, or is it a *real issue of conflict* that needs to be further addressed." During this analysis, participants essentially evaluated whether the costs or consequences of a hurtful action had crossed a "professional threshold" and thus merited expending the energy to address an issue. This threshold consisted of three criteria. One criterion was whether the action was relevant to professional responsibility. Professional responsibility related not only to whether the issue involved school-related matters, but also to one's character as an educator. Keira, for example, explained:

> If the issue is something that truly is worth addressing – If it's 'Oh, she didn't speak to me this morning' – well, you know what? Move on. Get over it. Whatever. But if it's an issue that really needs to be addressed and if the individuals involved aren't able to –are finding themselves not able to move past it without approaching it, [then approach each other]."

Another teacher indicated that "when you feel like… it's not a direct personal thing, we just kind of go about our business and get on with it."

The statements suggest that superficial, personal issues such as whether someone made small talk with someone else were not important enough to be addressed.

However, matters such as those involving one’s character, student learning, or responsibility to the school did warrant confrontation. Another criterion was whether the conflict was likely to occur on more than one occasion. For example, one team experienced multiple instances of impolite behavior from one person on the team to another. Several members of the team indicated that they moved on from the situation at first, but then confronted the person about it as she repeated her behavior. A final criterion was whether the confrontation was likely to bring about an agreement or a resolution. Brandi related a story in which she avoided a colleague who was treating her poorly because her coworkers indicated that confrontation would not work. In another situation, a teacher reported simply swallowing her concerns because she was not convinced that talking with the other teacher would do any good. These three criteria – relevance of the action to professional responsibility, possible repeated behavior, and potential of reaching a settlement – constituted a professional threshold across which teachers would confront one another.

If the parties felt the issue was worth addressing, they typically talked about it with the other conflict party rather than go to the administrator like participants at PE and TE. Alexis shared a recent incident in which the grade level collaborated in finding a solution to a problem that had emerged.

> I think there’s been one of those issues already this year. And I think it was resolved by approaching the parties involved and clearing the air, so to speak. An opportunity to truly express, okay, what I’m thinking, what I’m feeling, this is what I was thinking when these actions took place. And, fortunately, that was

> an instance in which that clearing of the air worked wonders and it was a good thing.

Participants indicated that this direct approach was practiced not only among teachers but also among administrators. “The main thing that comes to mind,” Reagan said, “is the administration doesn’t talk about, to my knowledge anyway, they don’t talk about negative things about another teacher. If he has a problem with someone, he says he will talk to that person about it and it will not be brought up.” In other words, participants practiced normative expectations regarding approaching the other person when the benefit outweighed the costs.

This practice of direct communication, however, did not mean that teachers *only* communicated to the other disputants. Several teachers reported venting their frustrations to friends and spouses. As Kate said, she typically “[went] home and [told] my husband and [blew] off on him.” Another teacher indicated that teachers sometimes went into the lounge and “had a meltdown.” However, unlike at TE, employees generally followed up their venting practices by communicating directly with the other party.

Additionally, when talking with one another, participants indicated that teachers usually listened to one another and apologized for their actions. One teacher, for example, reported a situation in which one of her assistants apologized after “blowing up” at her, saying “That was not supposed to be towards you. It was supposed to be someone else, and I’m sorry.” Reagan similarly reported apologizing to coworkers and parents on several occasions. Kate reported feeling gratified after receiving an apology from an administrator for his actions. In other words, apologizing appeared to be a common practice at YE.

In effect, when faced with a conflict, participants engaged in several practices to manage it. Namely, they first assessed whether approaching the other about the situation was worthwhile; hence, they applied a cost-benefit analysis before addressing a conflict. If so, they communicated directly with the other person in the conflict before agreeing to disagree or coming to some other resolution.

Justice Ideologies

These values, norms, and practices indicated several justice features. First, by directly communicating with each other, participants located control and trust within each other and cast relationships as managed, moderately close partnerships. This practice was linked to the value that YE placed on moderated partnerships. However, by engaging in a cost-benefit analysis, the employees also suggested a level of detachment or separation from one another. Second, in asking administrators to manage a dispute as a next resort, participants also located control and trust within the system itself. Third, in framing conflicts as problems in need of objectively-derived solutions, organizational members cast disputes arising from transgressions as impersonal, objective issues. Yet, by apologizing, employees acknowledged the personal dimension of transgressions and partnerships as well.

Together, these features suggested that members at YE ascribed to a partnered restorative justice model. In general, this model illustrated several features consistent with the restorative model of justice. Namely, employees spoke directly to one another, listened to each other, refrained from casting blame onto the other person, and apologized for their roles in the conflicts. However, this model differed from a pure restorative justice model in the level of detachment between the parties and in the cursory cost-benefit analysis conducted by participants following a transgression. Together, these features suggested an interest in coming to joint agreements and emphasizing the value of professional responsibility rather than asking an administrator to address an issue for them.

A dispute that arose among teachers within one of the grade levels at YE last year illustrated this partnered restorative model of justice. The dispute emerged over opinions regarding parental involvement on field trips. One of the teachers on the team became angered by some of her coworkers' actions which suggested that they did not care about her ideas and suggestions. The teacher began to avoid conversations with some of her colleagues on the team, preferring instead to talk with a coworker who agreed with her ideas. This pattern of avoidance continued until the teachers sat down and worked out a compromise agreement among themselves. The teacher who related this story indicated that, although the relationships among the teachers improved as a result of working through the conflict, of greater importance was that the agreement enabled the teachers to carry out their professional responsibility of taking the children and their parents on the field trips.

The dispute exemplified a number of features of the organization's justice model, including direct communication, listening, and joint solution-seeking. Yet, it also highlighted the negotiation of attachment and detachment among employees encapsulated in the implied professional threshold of confrontation. For example, the teacher indicated that she chose not to talk with her teammates because, even though the conflict related to professional responsibility and was recurring, she believed that the confrontation would not lead to an agreement. In other words, she did not *trust* that her teammates were willing to work with her. Thus, the detachment implied by a professional threshold was grounded by a lack of trust. This choice was grounded in the belief that participants shared a sense of professional responsibility. In other words, the value of professional responsibility bridged a potential lack of trust that resulted from transgressions which motivated teachers to work through the problems themselves. In doing so, the teachers re-established trust in one another regarding their professional responsibility. Thus, professional responsibility emerged as the unifying value that fostered the ideal of moderated partnership linked to the organization's justice model.

In short, the justice ideology at the school was best considered a partnered restorative model. The school's approach to conflict management differed from TE's and PE's in that, rather than only espousing the restorative model, the school put it into practice. This model illustrated a number of restorative elements, as enacted in practices of direct communication, apologizing, and joint solution-seeking. Yet, the model differed from a "pure" restorative ideology in the degree of detachment among the parties.

Christian Education

Participants at Christian Education grounded their approach to conflict management in their religious beliefs. As stated in its handbook, the school is "an evangelical Christian school whose mission, trustees, teachers, and methods center on an unabashed commitment to the grace of God in Christ and the authority of the Bible." This "unabashed commitment" influenced not only the values and beliefs held by organizational members regarding conflict management, but also the resulting norms and practices for handling a dispute.

Conflict Values and Beliefs

The Christian Bible provided many of the values that reflected CE's approach to conflict management. These values highlighted the importance of relationships, as indicated throughout the School Handbook. Although many ideals emerged, four seemed most important: unified community, humble grace, accountability, and deference to authority.

At the core of CE's conflict ideology was the ideal of community characterized by close personal relationships unified by a set of common beliefs that transcended a particular project or job-related task. Whereas partnership implied a co-identification in a particular *organizational* relationship, community suggested a common identity based primarily on close, personal relationships. As Charlotte said:

> The academics are not the most…They're important. That's why we're here, but that's not the most important thing at our school. It's the unity and the body of Christ. That is the driving force, and I think that's what makes this school so incredible.

Community also implied a closer relationship than connectedness in that its shared characteristics extended beyond identifying with a common workplace. The objectives identified in the School Handbook spoke directly to this community ideal. CE indicated that it "values and nurtures [Christian Education] as a *community* of faith and learning" and that it was a "Christian community which sees our students first and finally as children of God." This emphasis on community highlighted the importance of unified personal relationships. Charlie emphasized the greater importance of relationships over other concerns, saying "People last – people in relationships last." In other words, the school valued the creation of close, personal relationships bonded together in a community of faith.

Humble grace, or merciful compassion grounded in modesty, was a value tied to a community approach to conflict management. Both concepts – humility and grace – formed together at CE to suggest that people extended mercy to one another because they recognized their own need for mercy. Nolan indicated that humility was a core Biblical ideal. "I mean, and that's the Biblical model, it's that, you know, we are… humble because we are fallible."

Another teacher indicated that humility was an important element of Christian behavior. "The verse that I used to always talk to them about is from Luke in chapter two where it says 'Do nothing out of selfish ambition, but in humility consider others more important than yourself.'" The ideal of grace essentially involved not holding an offense over someone's head. The School Handbook highlighted the importance of grace. "We want to foster relationships with students and their families as well as among faculty and administrators that *reflect the grace of God in Christ* embodied in a safe, caring, and loving environment." As Charlotte said, "I've seen people here talk it out and there's a lot of grace. There's a lot of grace given to each other."

Another teacher indicated that she tried to exhibit grace to her students by "wiping the slate clean" every day when students behaved poorly in her class. In doing so, students "know they are still a part of this family, they are still embraced [and] loved." In other words, humble grace allowed people to feel like they were still a part of the community, even when they violated the community's rules. Grace, however, did not involve an absence of punishment. Instead, as Rachel noted, grace involved restoration *following* punishment. Humble grace, in other words, was a key ideal that influenced the process of helping transgressors feel like part of the community.

Accountability also emerged as an important community value. Accountability involved being responsible or answerable to other organizational members for acting in accordance with the school's values. The school highlighted the importance of accountability in its Handbook's discussion of "peer discipline." "It is crucial that friendships at our school include the willingness to confront each other, and thus *be responsible for each other's growth in this way*." As the Handbook indicated, such discipline was appropriate because all members of the organization – students, parents, and employees – belonged to the CE community. Because everyone, regardless of role, was a part of the CE community, they also were responsible for the maintenance of that community. As such, because one person's actions could affect the larger community, people were responsible or accountable to each other for acting in a way that best suited the school. Another teacher indicated that accountability emphasized the extent to which all of the employees “have a common [mission], that the Lord calls for certain things out of all of us, [and] there ought to be a sense of embracing that.” Accountability, then, provided the glue holding together the community-based relationships.

Finally, deference to authority, or compliance to the wishes of people in power, emerged as a core value, in part because they believed that authority figures were placed there by God. As Lila said, “If you have an authority figure, you are to respect that person.” This respect involved deferring one’s wishes and yielding to their directions. Miles also emphasized the importance of compliance with authority figures. “I’m not the one who got paid to do his position you know. I got paid to do my position and to be under their authority.” Thus, when conflicts emerged, people believed that the administration was the final decision-maker and had the authority to direct people to take certain actions to end the conflict. In other words, participants held fast to the ideal of deference to authority.

Essentially, participants at CE advocated several values that highlighted the importance of relationships among colleagues. These included unified community, humble grace, accountability, and deference to authority. These values formed the basis for conflict norms that emphasized the re-establishment of close, personal relationships following transgressions.

Conflict Norms

A number of norms regarding appropriate conflict interactions and procedures emerged at CE. For example, like at the other schools, participants indicated that people should control their emotions and focus on facts. Additionally, participants indicated that organizational members should follow appropriate procedures by approaching one another directly first rather than approaching administrators, refrain from gossip, and seek reconciliation and unity through forgiveness.

Of the four schools, CE was the only school that offered its employees (and parents) extensive training and guidance on conflict management. The core expectation of this training was that people should follow the “Biblical model” of conflict management. According to the respondents, the Biblical model comes from chapter 18 of the book of Matthew in the Christian Bible.

> If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, *just between the two of you*. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, *take one or two others along*, so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, *tell it to the church*; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, *treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector*. [emphasis added]

This model implied the presence of four stages: direct communication between parties, direct communication together with an outside party, communication using a larger body of people, and finally excommunication if all else fails.

The role of the Biblical model was evident in participants’ description of appropriate conflict practices. As one teacher indicated, “If I have a problem with teacher X…I need to go talk to [that person]. There’s a Biblical model – it’s the New Testament. Go and talk to her and if I still have a problem, I need to grab [a supervisor].” Cheryl also emphasized the need to follow the Biblical model by talking with the other person first. Additionally, Nolen suggested that the Biblical model embodied the values of humility and community. In other words, following the Biblical model by communicating directly with the other party was a core expectation of conflict management at CE.

In addition to norms of direct communication, CE embraced an expectation to refrain from talking about people behind their backs. In fact, during their interviews, two participants were very reticent to talk with me about conflicts that they had seen at the school because they felt that doing so would constitute gossip. Even when I probed about "simple disagreements," the respondents were very careful not to mention names and to remain vague in their responses. As Nolan said, "I think that's one of the biggest things is that we have a Biblical model that we try to follow…and the one thing we really try to avoid…is gossip." Another teacher indicated that people "don't need to gossip…, because we are now causing other people to get involved in the situation that could have been resolved." Miles also argued that gossip could lead to alienation by those who became aware of the situation. In other words, there was a strong expectation at CE not to talk about one's colleagues to other people in a way that would reflect negatively on them.

When addressing the transgressions, the school developed a normative expectation to seek unity through reconciliation as a first step. As Addison said, "I mean reconciliation, I would say, would be the ultimate goal." Charlie agreed, indicating that the "ultimate goal [was] peace and love," requiring people to "work together to accomplish that peace." Micah also said that reconciling was the appropriate way to manage transgressions. “I want everyone to walk away with respect for one another without a broken relationship between one another.” In other words, participants indicated that people in conflict should attempt to reconcile their relationship and remain part of the community.

As part of reconciling, participants indicated that employees should forgive. Addison indicated that Biblical beliefs and values supported this expectation to forgive one another. “As Christians, we’re *called to forgive* even if forgiveness isn’t asked of us.” Charlotte agreed, saying that “having that forgiveness, knowing that as a Christian, *we are called to do that* I think helps us to succeed. That's not to say it's not hard.” She pointed out that forgiveness was necessary to keep relationships in the workplace healthy. “In order to keep [the body] healthy, we have to operate in forgiveness.” In other words, forgiveness emerged as a normative expectation for managing conflicts at CE.

In effect, the school held several expectations of appropriate conflict behavior. People should follow the Biblical model by speaking directly with one another and avoiding the practice of gossip. Moreover, people should attempt to reconcile with one another. Finally, as part of the reconciliation process, people should forgive one another. These norms reflected several underlying values, including community, grace, and accountability. They also influenced the conflict behaviors of members of CE.

Conflict Practices

Employees at CE largely put these normative expectations into practice. Specifically, people approached one another directly, stayed calm, and apologized. For the most part, participants usually communicated directly with the other party in the conflict about their frustrations. One teacher, for example, reported confronting another teacher about what she felt were untrue statements that her co-worker said about her. Another teacher indicated that, although she was hesitant to broach an issue with her supervisor, she had grown more comfortable with the idea over time. However, direct confrontation did not always occur. Instead, some people simply dropped the situation altogether, even though it was hurtful. Micah, for example, indicated that he "moved past" a conflict involving a superior. Betsy, likewise, indicated that, because she was did not always feel comfortable with confrontation, she would at times avoid the situation. Ironically, even though direct communication was grounded in the value of unified community, participants generally reported avoiding conflict because they did not want to "rock the boat" or disrupt their relationships. In avoiding the situation, though, participants generally did not talk about the situation with others. Instead, they lumped their emotions, preferring to stay quiet rather than approach others about the situation.

Participants also reported efforts to calm down before approaching the other person. Lila, for example, said that she likes to "just [be] calm, sit down by myself, talk it through with God, you know, remember I am a sinner too and try to be mature about it." Jenna also suggested her preference for calming down before approaching the other.

> I think for me, first off for me if I am frustrated I go calm down… So I go calm down and make sure that what I heard or how I was feeling [was appropriate]. Was I being over sensitive to whatever was said?

She indicated that remaining calm helped people manage the conflict better by not impeding the chance to have a calm conversation that would lead to agreement. “[I] just go calm down to get perspective and then I can deal with it better than if I go in angry. If I go in angry then it’s going to tend to cause anger but if I can go in calmly then we can have a calm conversation.” Other participants reported crying on each other’s shoulders. One teacher, for example, after receiving a very hurtful remark from a colleague, indicated that she found another of her coworkers and cried on her shoulders. However, because the school warned its teachers so strongly against gossip, venting to one another or crying on coworkers’ shoulders about a transgression from another colleague seemed to be minimal.

When participants did approach one another, they generally offered apologies for their role in the conflict. As Micah said, “I’ve apologized to [the other teachers that I work with] more than once. We encourage it with the kids if there are situations going on with them. You know, we’ll pull them in and you know and encourage it with them as well.” Jason indicated that teachers usually apologized for their mistakes. “The teacher will respond and go, ‘I really didn’t know that I came across that way. I apologize. Let me work on that.’” Following a rebuke at the hands of a coworker, Rachel indicated that she “apologized for overstepping my bounds even though I didn’t realize I had.” In short, when confronted with a transgression, people generally apologized for their role in the situation.

To summarize, when conflicts occurred, people generally approached one another directly, stayed calm, and apologized for their problematic behavior. Direct communication, for example, was associated with the organization's emphasis on establishing a Biblical community grounded in accountability. The administration's frequent cautions against gossip and talking behind each other's backs further reinforced the importance of a unified community. Thus, conforming to the Biblical model and not talking behind each other's backs also implied deference to the administration's wishes for how to manage a conflict. Additionally, staying calm appeared to be grounded in expectations of maintaining unity. By avoiding emotional displays that impeded productive conversation, participants attempted to facilitate the process of coming to an agreement that improved their personal and workplace relationships. Finally, the practice of apologizing fostered values of community and humility by communicating regret for hurtful behavior and a desire to restore the sense of unity that may have been damaged by a transgression. These behaviors, in other words, fostered organizational values of unified community, humble grace, deference to hierarchical authority, and accountability.

Justice Ideology

Based on the values, norms, and practices discussed above, several features of conflict management emerged. For example, rather than seeing relationships as a means to more effective teaching performance, participants generally saw the establishment of close, personal relationships as the primary goal of forming a school community. Because they saw relationships as intertwined rather than separated, they often approached one another directly, taking control over the situation, and relying on direct negotiation to achieve consensus and restore relationships.

Additionally, the practice of direct communication suggested a personal negotiation of conflict issues in which participants retained control over the dispute. Instead of relying on an administrator to render a decision, employees generally worked out an agreement between themselves. Although the system provided an opportunity to appeal decision to administrators in the organizational hierarchy, participants rarely reported taking disputes to their administrators; instead they preferred to work out agreements with one another through sharing information and apologizing to one another.

Finally, the organization's values of unified community and humble grace suggested that the school emphasized the restoration of close, personal relationships following transgressions. Multiple participants indicated that the establishment of relationships was their primary goal during conflict and non-conflict situations. Additionally, the organization's handbook reinforced the importance of community and reconciliation.

The presence of these features suggested that, although elements of the legalistic model were present, the dominant ideology was community restorative justice. Specifically, the organization emphasized restorative features such as reconciliation; managed relationships; internal locus of control; and trust in each other. Unlike the other three schools, the ultimate goal of the justice system at CE was relational reconciliation rather than classroom effectiveness or professional responsibility. In other words, the organization's emphasis on unified community, which implied the establishment and maintenance of close, personal relationships, distinguished the ideology from YE's *partnered* restorative ideology, which implied relationships that were less close.

Although the discussion suggests a relatively coherent justice model, several contradictions appeared in the system. These contradictions were evident in a large legal conflict that engulfed the school several years ago. Several families attempted to confront the administration about a grievance with a teacher. However, the administration, citing the School Handbook and the Biblical model, refused to talk with them because they had not first spoken with the teacher about the matter. Rather than approach the teacher, the families took their claims to the media, where it became a story in the local newspaper for several days. Eventually, the school attempted to expel the students in these families, which prompted a lawsuit from the parents. The school attempted to defend itself in the trial proceedings by arguing that the families had violated the official conflict management procedures by circumventing the teacher. The situation concluded with the departure of the families from CE at the end of the school year.

Although this case was extraordinary, it illustrated two inherent contradictions in the school's approach to conflict management. First, the school's enforcement of its official conflict system contradicted the internally-driven nature of the restorative system. In effect, the school's justice ideology created a condition in which official regulations, backed by the value of deference to authority and the threat of punishment, required that employees approach each other out of a personal desire for community. That is, the school set up an official system of restorative justice that became regulated and enforced, thus enacting an external locus of control for restorative relationships. This requirement, then, contradicted a key feature of the restorative model which rested on *internal* motivations for confronting others, apologizing, and reconciling relationships. Thus, the school reaffirmed its regulatory legitimacy and the value of deference to authority by requiring them to follow a Biblical model.

Second, the school's reliance on the Biblical model suggested an inherent tension between grace and punishment. For example, the situation above suggested that punishment through expulsion / excommunication was a valid outcome, despite the school's expectation for people to forgive and reconcile. Forgiveness and reconciliation emerged as appropriate responses in conflicts between community members but it did not necessarily apply to conflicts with outsiders. Thus, in this example, the school *positioned* the families as outsiders, ex-communicated them, and failed to offer them forgiveness. In other words, by not extending forgiveness, the school cast the parties as non-community members who merited punishment rather than grace.

In short, a community restorative ideology emerged at CE. The ideology was associated with the values of unified community, humble grace, deference to authority, and accountability. These values created two inherent contradictions within the school's justice ideology between personal initiative and regulated actions and between grace and punishment. Employees attempted to enact this ideology through several conflict practices, including communicating directly with each other, listening, apologizing, and forgiving. In fact, forgiveness emerged most consistently as a conflict management practice at CE. The following section discusses this phenomenon and explores how the schools' respective conflict ideologies influenced the likelihood and practice of forgiveness in the workplace.

Summary

In sum, the data analysis indicated that both YE and CE emphasized the importance of the restorative justice model when addressing conflicts in the workplace. Yet, differences in the relationship *closeness* advocated by each school as well as the expected conflict outcome suggested the emergence of different ideologies. Namely, whereas YE advocated a *partnered* restorative ideology, CE emphasized a *community* restorative ideology. Whereas CE's ideology held up restoration of close, personal relationships as the desired end of a conflict, YE's ideology emphasized the re-establishment of partnered relationships that fostered the accomplishment of employees' professional responsibilities. YE's advocacy of partnered relationships suggested greater detachment among employees than CE's advocacy of community relationships.

The similarities between the ideologies were apparent in the emergence of several identical conflict norms and practices. For example, both schools emphasized the importance of communicating directly, apologizing, and listening. Both schools also highlighted the importance of maintaining relationships in the workplace. However, the difference between the models was evident in that, while a norm of forgiveness emerged at CE, no such norm emerged at YE. Instead, YE emphasized the expectation to arrive at a *compromise* agreement or to agree to disagree, neither of which focused on the relationship dimension of conflict per se. Additionally, the norm at YE to "move on" suggested that the more appropriate focus was on teachers' professional responsibilities rather than on relationship-building itself. In short, analysis of the data suggested the emergence of two types of restorative ideologies.

General Summary

The analysis offered in CHAPTERS IV and V pointed to a complex interrelationship between elements of two types of justice ideologies: the legalistic and restorative models (RQ_1). Even though each organization seemed to favor a particular type of ideology, the extent to which they enacted it differed across the four schools. Namely, PE emphasized the legalistic model, TE adhered to a balanced model, YE advocated a partnered restorative model, and CE held to a community restorative model. This blending of the models was evident in the values that the participants advocated (RQ_2). Specifically, values linked to the legalistic ideology of justice included a level of detachment, rule enforcement, thoughtfulness, objectivity, and classroom effectiveness. Together, these values implied a standardized, logical processing of treating each party fairly, reinforcing formalized expectations regarding proper workplace behavior, and focusing on individual work responsibilities.

The restorative ideology, however, was associated with values of attachment (to differing degrees), accountability, humility, and accountability. Moreover, the different expectations regarding relational closeness seemed to be associated with the emergence and salience of restorative features. For example, TE, which exemplified a balance between legalistic and restorative ideologies, advocated helpfulness between colleagues, which involved task-based assistance. YE, which advocated a moderated partnership involved co-identification through professional responsibility. CE, which illustrated the community restorative model, advocated unified community, which involved close, personal relationships based on deeply held religious beliefs. In short, the strength with which organizations advocated their restorative ideologies was grounded in the importance afforded to relationships in the workplace.

Several conflict norms and practices were associated with each of these ideologies (RQ_3). Specifically, the legalistic ideology emphasized following proper procedures, thoughtful processing assisted by emotion control, and focusing on work responsibilities. However, the common practice involved taking the conflict to an administrator rather than to the other disputant. Additionally, disputants focused on maintaining a public appearance of emotional control by venting behind the scenes to friends or spouses. The purpose of venting and approaching administrators seemed aimed at restoring one's focus on teaching.

In the restorative ideologies, norms and practices emerged which highlighted information sharing and collaborative conflict management. For example, TE, YE, and CE emphasized the importance of direct communication and listening. Additionally, YE and CE indicated that employees should apologize for their actions. Each of these expectations suggested an internal locus of control and an emphasis on managing relationships in the workplace. However, the extent to which participants conformed to these expectations was associated with the relative prominence of the restorative ideology in the organizations.   For example, at TE, even though participants indicated that employees should communicate directly and listen, people did not always conform to these expectations. Instead, people typically took their problems to administrators, thus minimizing the likelihood of direct information sharing. However, at YE and CE, employees typically spoke directly with one another, listened to each other, and apologized. During these in-person conversations, disputants gave and received information about the situation and (re)negotiated their interpretations of the situation to account for the new information. By sharing information and arriving at a negotiated agreement, participants built trust with one another, reinforced their personal attribution of each other as partners or community members, and accomplished their desired results of focusing on either their professional responsibility or relationship restoration. In essence, the restorative ideology was associated with norms and practices that fostered relationship-maintenance and trust-building through directly sharing information.

CHAPTERS IV and V examined the values, norms, and practices linked to the justice ideologies for each school, particularly the subtle ways that these ideologies interrelate. These findings are summarized in Table 6. CHAPTER VI addresses the practices related to coping with the conflict, specifically the role of forgiveness in the norms and practices of each organization.

Table 6 Conflict Management Values, Norms, and Practices

	Prep Education	Teen Education	Youth Education	Christian Education
Ideology	Dominant Legalistic	Balanced	Partnered Restorative	Community Restorative
Values	Classroom effectiveness	Classroom effectiveness	Professional responsibility	
	Connectedness	Helpfulness	Moderated partnership	Unified Community
	--	Conformity to chain of command	--	Deference to authority
	Respect for individual authority	--	--	--
	--	--	--	Humble grace
	--	Thoughtfulness	Objectivity	--
	--	--	--	Accountability
Norms	Communicate directly	Communicate directly	Communicate directly	Communicate directly
	Private communication	Private communication	--	Refrain from gossip
	Be calm	Be calm	--	Be calm
	--	Listen	Listen	Listen
	RRO	--	Apologize	--
		--	Do not blame	--
	Move on	Let it go	Move on	Forgive
	--	--	--	Seek reconciliation
Practices	Go to administration	Go to administration	Cost-benefit analysis	--
	--	--	Communicate directly	Communicate directly
	--	Go to supporters	--	--
	Limited use of RRO	--	Lump it	Lump it
	Be calm	--	Vent	Be calm
	--	--	Apologize	Apologize
	Move on	Move on	Let it go; Do not take it personally	Forgive

CHAPTER VI

COPING PRACTICES WITHIN THE FOUR ORGANIZATIONS

The preceding chapters illustrate the emergence of several conflict management values in each organization. These values suggested the presence of four types of justice ideologies: a dominant legalistic model, a balanced justice model, a partnered restorative model, and a community restorative model. These ideologies lay at the root of participants' expectations regarding appropriate conflict procedures and outcomes. For example, several participants indicated that they should manage conflicts in ways that allowed them to focus on their work and/or to restore their relationship with one another.

In actuality, participants engaged in a number coping practices to manage the negative consequences resulting from transgressions. Some employees, for instance, said that they did not take transgressions personally. Other participants coped by "moving on" or "letting go." Still other organizational members indicated that they responded by "forgiving." In fact, 21 participants mentioned that they coped with hurtful actions by forgiving their transgressors. Analysis of the interviews and the emerging justice ideologies suggests that the practice of forgiving was associated with certain ideological features rather than personal convictions. This chapter explores the ideological roots of the likelihood of using forgiveness (RQ_{4A}) and the forgiveness patterns (RQ_{5A} and RQ_{5B}).

This analysis, however, departs from previous scholarship by distinguishing forgiving from practices such as "moving on" or "letting go." Although researchers to date have used such colloquial terms to describe forgiveness, employees' statements suggested that the practices were distinct from each other. This chapter, then, explores the similarities and differences among the coping practices of "not taking it personally," "moving on," "letting go," and "forgiving." Additionally, this chapter uses pure conceptualizations of the legalistic and restorative justice models as lenses to discuss the ideological foundations of each practice.

Not Taking It Personally

Janet indicated that one of the lessons she had learned about coping with transgressions is that "you just have to be a little bit thick skinned and…not take it too personally." In fact, several participants reported that they resisted the urge to take hurtful actions personally when they occurred. By refusing to take an action personally, participants (re)defined the action as a possibly unintentional event motivated by or directed at an object or condition other than themselves. For example, several participants indicated that their conflicts with teachers weren't "anything personal," but rather were "professional disagreements," "simple miscommunications," or "personality conflicts" that were directed not against the *teacher* but against the teacher's *ideas*. As such, because it was non-personal, participants were able to "brush it aside" and return their focus to their work.

Refusing to take a transgression personally involved several characteristics. First, the practice was inherently cognitive in that it involved a change in the way people thought about the action from personal to non-personal and from hurtful to meaningless. As one participant from CE remarked:

> If somebody did a personal attack on me and my character, I think that would be something that I would have a hard time letting go… If it's a personal attack versus just 'I don't think your class in this way is fair,'…I would have a hard time with letting that go.

This statement suggested a separation between one's *actions* and one's *self*. Essentially, refusing to take an action personally involved (re)interpreting an act as innocuous or not directed at oneself. Second, the practice was both self- and other-oriented in that it involved, on the one hand, a protection of one's sense of self or one's ego and, on the other hand, an attribution of the other person's intent. Several participants indicated that they actively chose not to take an action personally because they did not believe that the actor engaged in it to hurt them intentionally. In other words, refusing to take an action personally involved protecting oneself and interpreting the intent of the other person's actions.

Finally, the practice was inherently active. That is, rather than simply ignoring a potentially hurtful behavior by others, refusing to take the action personally involved an active effort of redefining it or redirecting one's thoughts about it. An administrator at PE, for example, indicated that she trained her employees not to take parents' comments personally, implying that the act of taking it personally was an active choice made by the recipient of the comments. In all, refusing to take an action personally was an active, self- and other-directed coping practice in which people (re)interpreted the basic meaning and intent of the behavior as rooted in or directed toward something or someone other than themselves.

Ideological Foundations

The practice of not taking an action personally appeared with relative consistency throughout all four schools. Its frequency suggested that, rather than being tied to either the legalistic or the restorative models, it was associated with elements from each one. As the name suggests, refusing to take an action personally implied an impersonal approach to conflict management. Several participants distinguished between actions directed at them versus behaviors directed at their thoughts or practices. For example, Julia explained, “Whenever she’s telling me that I’ve got a parent problem, that’s my *job*. That’s my *career*. That’s *not a personal* thing, that’s a career thing.” In other words, not taking it personally was grounded in the belief that the personal and professional were separate concerns. By not taking it personally, employees approached actions as being *external* to them or not directed at their character.

Refusing to take a behavior personally also suggested that the recipient of the action trusted the other person. One employee from TE indicated that she told her younger coworkers that, when faced with “some things, you just need to stop and breathe and not take it personally. Everybody has their bad days.” In other words, not taking an action personally also involved giving one another the “benefit of the doubt” rather than making an attribution regarding the other person’s character. Not taking an action as a personal affront implied that the parties could trust one another and treat each other with respect. Thus, the practice implied that trust was present between the parties.

Furthermore, not taking an action personally suggested a concern for maintaining at least a professional connection between employees rather than protecting oneself. As

Grovier (2002) notes, transgressions often imply a lack of respect or concern for the recipient of the action, which in turn can negatively affect the sense of connection in the workplace (Goffman, 1971). However, by refusing to interpret an action personally, parties suggested that their primary concern was protecting their feeling of connection from being violated by a hurtful behavior. That is, not taking it personally reinforced the importance of connection.

In effect, not taking an action personally reflected an attempt to balance features of the legalistic and restorative models. On the one hand, participants expressed their trust in their colleagues by refusing to take their actions as personal attacks. Instead, employees believed that they were “partners,” “community members,” or “helpful colleagues” who were looking out for the interests of the schools. On the other hand, by refusing to take actions personally, participants ascribed to the legalistic ideal of defining issues impersonally. In this way, employees approached actions as impersonal problems rather than relationship transgressions, thereby effectively delegitimizing feelings of hurt and eliminating the need for apologies. In other words, the approach implied a dualistic interpretation of actions as *either* being a personal transgression *or* being an objective problem. Thus, in trying not to take an action personally, employees created a bifurcation between the “personal” on the one side and the “professional” on the other. Essentially, refusing to take an action personally represented a *balance* between the legalistic and restorative models in which parties attempted to approach situations objectively yet not threaten their attachment to one another.

In short, refusing to take an action personally characterized a balanced approach to the legalistic and restorative models. By redefining an action as non-personal, employees effectively reinforced a view of the workplace as impersonal or objective while at the same time attempting to maintain their relationships with one another.

Moving On

While some employees indicated that they tried not to take actions personally, there were times when such a coping practice was untenable. For example, when employees felt personally hurt by a colleague's actions, they were faced with a situation in which they needed to cope with the negative thoughts and emotions resulting from those actions. Several participants indicated that they chose to "move on" instead of dwelling on the actions. As John said, "you just kind of move on and go to the next thing, and don't let it wear you down." Moving on entailed refusing to think about the personally hurtful event and concentrating on future responsibilities.

Moving on had three main characteristics. First, it involved focusing on one's future responsibilities rather than on the past. As Peter said, "You waste too much energy on something that is already past…There's nothing you can change. What you can change is the future. You cannot change the past." In other words, moving on implied a sense of *acceptance* of one's current state. Because there was nothing to be done about it, moving on enabled people to think about what was to come rather than what was at hand.

Second, moving on implied no longer thinking about an issue. Mary commented that after she was deeply hurt by a colleague several years ago, she felt she "had to move on and not dwell on it." Another teacher suggested that moving on enabled people to "start fresh." To her, "starting out fresh" involved not thinking about or ruminating about improper behavior.

Third, moving on was inherently self-directed in that it did not imply that people actually addressed the issues in question. Rather, moving on was a separate activity from taking the issue up with the other disputant. Lucas, for example, indicated that he moved on because he did not have the time or desire to talk about a transgression with the person who hurt him. In short, moving on was a self-directed, future-focused coping practice in which people stopped thinking about a hurtful behavior.

Moving on differed from taking it personally in its fundamental treatment of problematic behavior. Namely, not taking it personally involved a basic redefinition of the behavior in question from a personal to an *impersonal* problem while moving on implied that the event was *inherently* personal and hurtful. Several people indicated that they had known colleagues who were not able to move on from hurtful actions, and that this caused them to become bitter and negative. This negativity emerged from a basic definition of the action as a *personal* rather than an *impersonal* offense. In effect, whereas not taking it personally involved redefining an action, moving on involved seeing the action as personal but choosing not to think about it or to spend time addressing it.

The practice of moving on occurred in all four organizations, particularly at PE. Several members of PE indicated that they generally "moved on" from situations because they were too busy to manage them. However, participants from other schools indicated that they moved on as well. One teacher from YE, for example, indicated that she liked to move on from conflicts "because there [are] more things to do than [worry about disputes]." Likewise, Charlie at CE indicated that he "sees disagreements between people, and they work it out and move on." In other words, moving on in several organizations suggested a refocusing on one's work responsibilities.

Interestingly, moving on also took the form of separation between disputants. Carla at PE, for example, indicated that she separated herself from the person who had hurt her so that she could move on. At TE, the principal helped two disputants move on by separating them from each other. This forced separation typically eliminated the interaction between the disputants, thereby helping the conflict to subside. As Maria said, "I mean, let's face it. If you don't have to work together any longer, it's a non issue." The principal indicated that, by separating disputants, the employees were able to return to focusing on their work rather than being caught up in a dispute that had affected the entire team. In other words, moving on involved not simply refusing to think about an issue but, in some cases, no longer interacting with the actor.

Ideological Roots

The practice of moving on was associated closely with features of the legalistic ideology. Yet, at the same time, the practice reflected values and features of the restorative model as well. Consistent with the legalistic view, moving on as a self-focused coping technique treated individuals in an organization as separate entities. Because moving on did not necessarily involve an attempt to restore a relationship with the transgressor, it reinforced the idea that employees were individual actors who were responsible for their own well-beings. Moving on was also a feasible coping strategy if parties chose to take grievances to administrative figures rather than to one another. Moving on enabled employees to leave their problems in the hands of the authority figures, trusting that they would address the situation with the transgressor. Finally, moving on emphasized looking ahead to the future rather than looking backward and attempting to work out a problem. Deborah, for example, indicated that she moved on because she “had to continue with [her] life” and uphold her teaching responsibilities. In other words, moving on reflected elements of the legalistic ideology in its implication of self-focused, future-directed coping.

However, moving on was not incompatible with the restorative justice ideology. Several participants indicated that they typically “deal with problems and move on.” In other words, although moving on was a self-focused coping strategy, it did not mean that parties had *no desire* to interact with the other person. Rather, moving on allowed people to determine for themselves whether or not they wished to maintain a relationship with the other person. Additionally, moving on suggested a sense of personal control over the situation. By moving on, employees were able to control the duration of the transgression’s effects. Moving on enabled a third party authority figure to take charge of the situation by addressing it with the transgressor, thus allowing parties to regain a sense of control over their thoughts and practices.

Even though moving on reflected characteristics of both the legalistic and restorative models, the practice appeared most consistent with a legalistic ideology. Given its self-directed focus, its emphasis on carrying out one’s future work-related responsibilities, and its silence regarding relationship restoration, moving on aligned with a dominant legalistic ideology. In fact, moving on emerged as the most frequent coping practice at PE, which practiced a dominant legalistic ideology. Participants at PE indicated that moving on was a useful coping practice because it enabled them to focus on their classroom effectiveness and because it did not require them to interact with the other person. Moving on also enabled them to “put on a happy face” and control their emotions by not ruminating about the hurtful action in their minds repeatedly. In other words, moving on reflected a dominant legalistic approach to managing transgressions in the workplace.

Letting It Go

In addition to coping with transgressions by not taking them personally and moving on, employees also indicated that they attempted to let them go. For example, Keira suggested that she tended to “just kind of rip the chair back and just let it go.” Essentially, letting go was a self-focused (and possibly other-focused) coping practice in which individuals, acknowledging the hurtful consequences of transgressions, released emotional and cognitive negativity.

There were several important characteristics of letting go that emerged from the interviews. First, similar to the coping practices described above, letting go was generally self-directed in that it involved helping oneself by releasing internal negativity that resulted from thoughts and emotions regarding transgressions. However, letting go also implied a release from confrontation with the other person. As Keira said, “You’ve got to just let it go, [because] if you hold that grudge in there, [it] doesn’t do anything but harm everyone." In other words, by letting go, employees were able to release themselves and possibly the transgressor from future harm resulting from letting the negative consequences "simmer."

Second, also similar to the other coping techniques, letting go did not imply or necessitate any interaction or future relationship between the disputants. For example, an employee at CE suggested that letting go was her preferred way of coping with transgressions because she disliked confrontation. Letting go enabled people to release their cognitive and emotional hold over the situation without having to talk with the other person about it.

Third, like moving on, letting go implied that an event was both hurtful and personal. The practice rarely emerged when people indicated that they attempted not to take situations personally. Instead, people talked about letting go of negative consequences that resulted from the personally hurtful action.

Fourth, unlike both not taking it personally and moving on, letting go implied both a cognitive and an emotional dimension. For example, Patricia indicated that she had "learned how to let it go a little bit in my head and not constantly revisit it." She indicated that mulling over issues had caused her to become upset because she essentially re-experienced the conflict.

Fifth, letting go was both present-focused and future-focused. On the one hand, the practice facilitated a release of negative feelings in the moment so that people could feel better immediately. On the other hand, letting go *facilitated* concentration on future obligations, even though it did not necessarily draw people's attention to those responsibilities. Together, the practice involved a release of negativity so that it did not burden people's future pursuits.

In other words, letting go involved releasing emotional and cognitive negativity. By letting transgressions go, employees were able to redirect their energy from feelings of hurt back toward their classroom responsibilities.

Ideological Foundation of Coping Practices

The practice of letting go generally reflected tenets of the restorative ideology. Unlike the previous practices which aligned with the legalistic ideology or reflected a balance between the models, letting go exemplified characteristics of a partnered restorative ideology.

Letting go typically facilitated repair to the disputants' relationship. Whereas moving on took place either with or without confrontation, letting go generally occurred after the parties interacted. These interactions typically facilitated the release of negative thoughts and emotions because individuals were able to talk them out with one another and understand why the situation had occurred. Releasing the emotions allowed people to keep from rehashing the situation in their mind and, instead, to look forward. Letting go, in other words, allowed relationships to be reconciled if the parties desired.

In addition, by acknowledging the importance of releasing negative emotions, the practice implied a personal interpretation of transgressions. Unlike the legalistic ideology, which advocated an objective interpretation of personal hurts, the practice of letting go acknowledged that transgressions also carried emotional dimensions (Grovier, 2002). In other words, hurtful actions were not simply objective problems to be solved, but rather were events to be managed.

Furthermore, letting go implied an internal control over the situation in that people actively chose to release their frustrations. Whereas the legalistic ideology implied a dependence on an external authority to regulate the situation, letting go was associated with an internal attempt to manage the consequences of transgressions. By letting go, people took control over whether the transgression had any lasting effect on them.

Essentially, the characteristics identified above suggested that the practice of letting go was associated with a restorative ideology that did not mandate complete reconciliation. Such an ideology was evident at YE, where a majority of the participants identified letting go as a conflict practice. Letting go enabled them to address the emotional, personal nature of disputes, but kept their focus on their professional responsibilities both in the classroom and with each other. Letting go allowed them to address the causes and consequences of hurtful events, and not hold the consequences against transgressors. Letting go also did not imply an active attempt to rebuild and restore relationship strength. Such an emphasis on relationship rebuilding was evident at CE, where forgiving emerged as the dominant coping practice.

Forgiving

In addition to the other three coping practices, participants also reported coping with transgressions by forgiving people who hurt them. Forgiveness represented a coping practice in which individuals suppressed their negative thoughts about the other person by “forgetting” the transgression, eliminated their negative emotions, and opened the possibility for re-establishing relationships in the workplace.

Across all four organizations, several characteristics of forgiving emerged. Specifically, the practice involved “forgetting” about the offense by not thinking of the other person in terms of the transgression. As Patricia said, “Once I forgive, I try not to go back and use that as a point of reference when I talk with that person ever again.” Colton also said, “Basically, if I were to forgive you for some wrong that I felt that you did for (sic) me, it’s basically like washing it out. There is a record of it, but in my mind, there’s not a record of it.” Essentially, forgiving involved releasing one’s memory of the event and no longer thinking of the transgressor in terms of the hurtful action.

In addition, forgiving involved releasing negative emotions that resulted from the transgressions. Parker, for example, said that he forgave, “because there's no need to keep hatred in me.” Reagan also indicated that, by asking for forgiveness, she was able to rid the tension from her relationship with a coworker. Other teachers also suggested that forgiveness was a way for them to release their negative emotions regarding transgressions. Essentially, by forgiving, people rid themselves of their feelings of anger or frustration.

Moreover, unlike each of the practices mentioned earlier, participants indicated that the purpose of forgiving was to re-forge at least a superficial working relationship with the transgressor. As Ann said,

> I would say yes, [forgiveness] does [involve reestablishing a relationship]. My first response is yes it does. And then I move into trust with caution. In repairing

> a relationships, [it] doesn't mean that you're friends, but it means that you can speak to that person without malice. You can refer to that person without bringing back all of that junk from the past. Repairing the relationship is making a respectful working relationship again.

Colton indicated that "you have got to figure out a way to forgive that person or overcome that and still grow a relationship." Patricia likewise indicated that forgiving was beneficial because it kept the relational environment among teachers healthy. In other words, forgiving involved laying groundwork for the reestablishment of a relationship with the transgressor.

Finally, forgiveness involved identifying actions as wrongs (Veenstra, 1992). Ann noted that this creates hurdles in the practice of forgiveness, particularly among students. "When you approach [students] and say what you did was wrong and you need to apologize to this person and you need to ask them to forgive you – the words I use – that becomes very difficult for them." She attributed this difficulty to a general unwillingness to confess wrongdoing. In general, then, the practice of forgiveness involved "forgetting" about the offense, seeing the transgression as a personal wrong rather than an impersonal or objective problem, and potentially re-establishing a relationship with the person who engaged in the violation.

Forgiving differed from the previous three coping practices in several ways. Namely, it differed from the practice of refraining from taking an action personally by continuing to see the transgression as a wrong rather than a non-personal action. That is, whereas not taking it personally involved choosing not to think about it, forgiving involved recognizing an action as hurtful and taking time to process its negative effects. Furthermore, forgiving differed from not taking it personally in its emphasis on *emotional* coping. Whereas not taking it personally emphasized only a cognitive refocusing, forgiving involved eliminating both negative thoughts and negative emotions about an event. In other words, not taking a transgression personally differed from forgiving in how it defined the transgression and how people processed it.

Forgiving also differed from moving on. Whereas moving on suggested that people chose to refrain from thinking about an issue *in the moment*, forgiving implied restraint from bringing the issue back up *forever*. Although this did not suggest that the person literally never remembered that the situation occurred, it did mean that the person chose not to think about the situation actively. Additionally, whereas moving on was generally more focused on the self, forgiving was both self- and other-oriented in that it involved re-establishing a relationship. People who chose to move on were not necessarily motivated by a concern to reestablish a connection with the transgressor. Forgiving also differed from moving on by emphasizing both cognitive and emotional coping. While forgiving involved a release of negative thoughts and actions, by moving on, people simply redirected their thoughts, leaving the emotions untouched or unprocessed. In all, forgiving appeared to be a different coping practice than moving on. Grounded in a willingness to restore a strained relationship, forgiving involved no longer seeing the other person in light of the wrong committed.

Forgiving also differed from letting go, although the distinction was slight. Both processes involved cognitive and emotional release. Both also involved relinquishing the desire for punishment. However, forgiving differed from letting go in its emphasis on restoring relationships. Whereas letting go implied a focus on one's individual responsibilities, forgiving suggested an emphasis on one's relationship responsibilities. Nolan, for example, said:

> By not breaking off either the friendship or the relationship is a way of, I think, of showing forgiveness and they may not even know it. You're not forgiving if you hear something and you decide, 'Oh yeah, I'm just going to let it go,' but then you basically have broken off a relationship in some kind of way. It's not really forgiving them.

Thus, the two practices, though fairly similar, were different. This difference can explain why letting go was a more common practice at YE than was forgiveness.

Forgiveness, then, represented a way for people to address emotional, relational, and cognitive issues of a conflict by eliminating negative emotions, putting the offense out of their minds, and enabling the reestablishment of a relationship between them and their transgressors. It differed from other coping practices mentioned previously in its emphasis on relationship restoration as well as its acknowledgment of the emotional consequences of transgressions. However, forgiveness was not a frequently practiced coping practice.

Ideological Foundations

The likelihood that forgiveness would emerge as a coping practice appeared to be related to the features of the justice ideologies emphasized in the organizations.

Specifically, forgiveness was associated primarily with features of the restorative ideology. Additionally, these features shaped the way that people practiced forgiveness.

First, forgiveness was associated with a view of relationships in the workplace as close rather than separate. Forgiveness was most likely in organizations that fostered a sense of *community* rather than simple *connection*. As McCullough et al. (1998) suggest, forgiveness is most likely in relationships that are “close, committed, and satisfactory.” While the values of connectedness, helpfulness, and partnership suggested different levels of relational association, they did not imply commitment or closeness. The value of community, however, suggested not only that parties were close because of their multiple, shared personal characteristics, but also that they were committed to maintaining that sense of closeness.

This difference became evident when comparing the likelihood of forgiving at YE and CE. The value of developing a moderated partnership emerged from the data at YE in which participants indicated that they valued their relationships with each other as part of a larger professional responsibility. Although they were somewhat close to one another, they also maintained a level of detachment through personal boundaries. Although their relationships may have been *satisfactory* and possibly even *committed*, they were not necessarily *close*. At CE, however, the value of developing a unified community suggested a level of closeness tighter than at YE. Their bonds extended beyond having a common workplace identification to having common *religious* identification. The school’s similar religious mission reinforced the importance of advocating and protecting these beliefs, thus enhancing a sense of commitment and closeness. In other words, forgiveness was not associated with the *restorative* ideology per se, but rather to the types of relationships fostered by the ideology.

Second, forgiveness was associated with value of humility, reinforced though the practice of apologizing. As Ann indicated, apologizing was difficult because it involved "[putting] yourself in a lower position in admitting [responsibility]." However, such lowering was necessary in order to counteract the consequences of transgressions, which carried an implication that the other person was of little importance to the transgressor (Grovier, 2002). By lowering oneself through apologizing, the transgressor effectively communicated care and concern for the recipient, suggesting that the relationship between the two individuals was important. However, forgiveness was not necessarily associated with the *act* of apologizing. If it had been, forgiveness would have occurred with similar frequency at YE and CE. Instead, forgiveness occurred less often at YE in part because the operating value was not relationship restoration as much as it was professional responsibility. In other words, apologizing was a matter of abiding by the professional obligation to communicate appropriately with coworkers. At CE, however, apologizing was a matter of communicating humility to the other person in order to show care for the relationship. Thus, forgiveness was associated, with the message of humility and unity implicit in an apology rather than with the apology itself.

Third, forgiveness was aligned with the value of grace. Grace typically involved a willingness to release transgressors from "paying" for the interpersonal debt created by their actions. Charlie, for example, indicated that forgiving involved a refusal to "collect" on what the transgressor owed by virtue of the hurtful action. Forgiveness effectively canceled the debt, even if the party did not deserve for it to be canceled. In other words, forgiveness occurred despite the other party's actions.

In short, forgiveness emerged most frequently with values associated with a dominantly restorative justice ideology. Namely, whereas PE, TE, and YE promoted a sense of detachment and focused on individual classroom performance, CE fostered a concern for developing "close, committed, and satisfactory" relationships through values of community, grace, humility, and accountability.

Interestingly, although the parties did agree that forgiveness involved forgetting the transgression, overcoming negative emotions, and potentially reconciling, it did not necessarily involve having *positive* emotions toward the harmdoer. On the one hand, participants at CE suggested that forgiving involved feeling "love" or closeness toward the transgressor. This type of forgiveness was similar to what Bright et al. (2006) termed the *positivist* approach to forgiveness. On the other hand, participants at the remaining three schools ascribed to the *neutralist* position, which implied that forgiveness simply involved the release of negative affect and cognition. These differences can be traced back to the schools' respective emphasis on levels of connection. For example, the three schools that employed a neutralist type of forgiveness maintained a level of detachment among employees. This was evident in ideals of connectedness, helpfulness, and partnership. However, CE advocated a closer relationship distance in which employees were to see themselves as "a body" or an integral part of a larger unit and employed a positivist approach to forgiveness. Employees fostered this sense of closeness through sharing emotions during times of prayer for one another. These prayers and positive interactions, thus, formed an emotional *baseline* within their relationships. At CE, in other words, the emotional baseline was positive, fostered by encouraging or uplifting practices of prayer and small talk. At the other organizations, the emotional baseline was more neutral, fostered by a focus on classroom effectiveness and a degree of detachment among the parties. Thus, the ideologies at work not only influenced the *likelihood* that forgiveness emerged as a coping practice, but also the *pattern* with which it occurred (Hook et al., in press; Sandage & Williamson, 2005).

In short, the practice of positive forgiveness emerged in a dominant restorative justice model characterized by an emphasis on relationship reconciliation through values such as community, grace, humility, and accountability. Additionally, these values influenced how people practiced forgiveness. In short, forgiveness emerged as a distinct coping practice from related actions such as "letting go" and "moving on."

Summary

In summary, several coping practices emerged within each organization. These practices included "not taking it personally," "moving on," "letting go," and "forgiving." Each practice was associated with elements of the models of justice. Namely, "moving on" was associated with a dominant legalistic ideology, "not taking it personally," was associated with a balanced ideology, "letting go" was associated with a partnered restorative ideology, and "forgiving" was associated with a community restorative ideology (RQ_4).

These relationships suggest that coping practices are rooted in an organization's conflict management values, including ideals of community, partnership, classroom effectiveness, and detachment. By blending, balancing, or weighting these values to different extents, employees are likely to practice certain coping behaviors. However, this is not to imply that these are separate practices that cannot be combined with one another. For example, some participants at CE spoke of how they usually "forgive and let go." Other people indicated that people need to "not take it personally and move on." The combination of practices suggests that each behavior involves certain areas of emphasis, such as emotional release, redefinition of the behavior, and relationship reconciliation.

In addition to influencing the types of coping practices used within each organization, the ideological features affected types of forgiving practices. Although several similarities emerged in the practice of forgiveness across the four organizations, the data suggested that the positivist approach was most apparent at CE, whereas the neutralist approach to forgiving surfaced at PE, TE, and YE. In essence, the nuanced ways in which people practice forgiving may change depending on the ideological features operating in a given context.

Together, the results from CHAPTERS IV, V, and VI highlight the role of justice ideology in shaping conflict norms and practices. These ideologies were associated with a number of values, from classroom effectiveness to respect for personal authority to unified community. Within each organization, individuals negotiated these values to socially construct ideas regarding appropriate conflict management behavior. People engaged in a number of conflict practices, including venting, avoiding, going directly to an administrator, and forgiving. These practices highlighted elements of the schools' respective ideologies. The following chapter explores the implications of these results further and highlights the role and function of ideology in the continued study of forgiveness in the workplace.

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Transgressions in the workplace can have a number of harmful consequences, such as creating feelings of resentment, fostering avoidant behavior, and hurting work performance. Employees can engage in a number of dispute practices to manage these consequences. For example, they may avoid the situation, lump their feelings, engage in “self-help” practices such as vengeance, or work through the situation with the other disputant (Bies & Tripp, 1996; Kolb & Putnam, 1992b). This study indicates that employees cope with transgressions by practicing forgiveness, as well as moving on, letting go, and not taking it personally (Bies & Tripp, 1996; Kurzynski, 1999; Tripp et al., 2007; Waldron & Kelley, 2007).

Proponents claim that forgiveness is a way for recipients of transgressions to manage the negative emotional, relational, and task-related consequences productively (Aquino et al., 2006; Bies & Tripp, 1996; Butler & Mullis, 2001; Kurzynski, 1998; Stone, 2002; Tripp et al., 2007; Waldron & Kelley, 2007; Yamhure Thompson & Shahen, 2003). Despite its benefits, however, forgiveness does not seem to be a common way to manage transgressions (Bies & Tripp, 1996). The purpose of this study was to explore whether the likelihood and practice of forgiveness was linked to conflict ideologies in the workplace.

The results of this study indicated that forgiveness did not appear to be a calculated, rational response to a situational analysis of a transgression and its characteristics. Instead, the practice of forgiveness seemed grounded in ideological expectations for what were *good* and *appropriate* ways to manage conflicts. Specifically, forgiveness was more likely when organizational members ascribed to relational rather than self-focused conflict management values and norms. This chapter summarizes the results of the study that were presented in CHAPTERS IV, V, and VI, as well as the theoretical, research, and practical implications of this work. This chapter also addresses limitations of the study and offers suggestions for future research on forgiveness in the workplace.

Exploring the Ideological Roots of Forgiveness in the Workplace

This study used three justice models found in the court-based criminal justice system – the retributive, restorative, and legalistic models – as lenses to explore the relationship between conflict management ideologies and the practice of forgiveness in four organizations. This study sought to understand whether and how these justice models were manifested in the workplace (RQ_1) and which values and beliefs were associated with their respective features (RQ_2). It also explored the procedural, interactional, and outcome-related norms associated with these models (RQ_3). Finally, this investigation explored the practices aligned with the justice models (RQ_{4A}), particularly the likelihood (RQ_{4B}) of forgiveness (RQ_{5A} and RQ_{5B}).

Research Question One

The results of this study revealed multiple conflict management features that were associated with the legalistic and restorative models, but not the retributive ideology. In fact, in each organization, features of both models discussed in CHAPTER

II appeared together, though to different extents. Although several features of the court-based legalistic model appeared throughout the organizations, elements of the restorative model surfaced with less frequency.

One feature of the legalistic model that appeared throughout all four organizations was the establishment of formalized, standardized dispute management procedures (Sitkin & Bies, 1994). Although employees followed these procedures to different degrees, each organization codified a dispute system which identified appropriate steps for managing disputes. These steps not only regulated the interaction of the disputants but also formalized an appeals process in which employees were able to voice their concerns to authority figures higher up in the organizational hierarchy (Bies & Shapiro, 1988; Konovsky, 2000).

Additionally, legalistic reliance on a third party to regulate conflict procedures and outcomes surfaced in the organizations (Braithwaite, 2002; Morris, 2002). Although all four organizations approached principals or administrators as final decision makers in their respective dispute systems, employees at Teen Education (TE) and the upper school of Prep Education (PE) relied to a greater extent on the administration to govern their disputes. In contrast, members of Youth Education (YE), Christian Education (CE), and the lower school of PE relied on administrative regulation as a last resort. In other words, administrators at TE and the PE upper school functioned similarly to judges and arbitrators in the court-based legal system.

The schools also illustrated the legalistic system in their preference to define transgressions as violations of impersonal, organizational rules (Braithwaite & Morris, 2002). At TE and the PE upper school, employees generally approached transgressions as problems to be solved. Meanwhile, employees at YE, CE, and the PE lower school approached transgressions as both impersonal and relational rule violations, a finding that suggested an inherent contradiction in their definition of hurtful actions. In essence, the organizations mirrored the court-based legal system's approach to addressing transgressions as impersonal rule violations.

A fourth feature of the legalistic system that emerged was treating the parties as isolated, separate individuals. At both TE and the PE upper school, the administration typically approached conflicts as individual problems rather than relational matters. Thus, the central focus at PE and upper-level TE emphasized the central role of authority-based decisions, organizational rules, and separating the disputants rather than repairing relationships or meeting personal needs. However, at YE, CE, and the PE lower school, this positioning of employees as separate individuals did not emerge as strongly. Instead, employees identified fairly close relationships, ranging from a familial connection at PE to a moderated partnership at YE to a unified community at CE.

In essence, a number of characteristics of the court-based legal system emerged in the four organizations. These features included a reliance on administrators to govern the dispute process, the establishment of official conflict procedures, an interpretation of transgressions as impersonal rule violations, and a treatment of disputants as separate parties. Each of these features emerged to differing degrees, with PE and TE illustrating these characteristics most consistently. However, characteristics of the legalistic model were not the only features to appear. Elements of the court-based restorative justice system also appeared, including participation, reparation, and reintegration (Kidder, 2007).

The most common feature of the restorative justice model to appear in the organizations was the ideal of participation, which referred to direct control by the disputants over the conflict process. Participation was associated with the restorative justice characteristic of internal locus of control and active management of relationships. Each organization advocated participation to differing degrees. For example, although the upper school at PE advocated direct communication between the parties, employees took their disputes to administrators and avoided confrontation with one another. Although such avoidance also was common at TE, the administrator attempted to make disputants talk with each other in his office, even though he often closely governed the process. However, at YE, CE, and the PE lower school, disputants communicated with each other about their frustrations without going to an administrator. In other words, participation emerged most strongly at YE, CE, and the PE lower school.

A second feature of the restorative system, reparation, appeared with less frequency than participation. Reparation referred to the process of making amends to the harmed parties. Although such reparation did not appear at PE and TE, employees at CE and YE used apologies to repair the potential damage to their relationships. Apologizing was associated with the restorative system because of its implicit sensitivity to relational repair and its efforts to rebuilt trust (Alter, 1999; Darby & Schlenker, 1981).

A third feature of the restorative system, reintegration, appeared only at CE. Reintegration referred to the restoration of a close, personal relationship between the disputants as well as between the transgressor and the larger community (Kidder, 2007). Although YE's approach to professional responsibility implied a concern for relationships, reintegration emerged as a primary concern at CE with its emphasis on community. Reintegration generally took the form of forgiveness and reconciliation (Amrour & Umbreit, 2006; Braithwaite, 2002).

In essence, the elements of the court-based restorative system appeared, but to different extents in the organizations. Whereas the upper school at PE illustrated no features of the system, TE and the PE lower school evidenced the ideal of participation. Both participation and reparation emerged at YE, while reintegration also appeared along with the other two values at CE.

The presence within the same organization of features of both models challenged the claims that the ideologies were mutually exclusive (Braithwaite, 1999; Johnstone, 2002). Instead, as Daly (2003) suggested, the ideologies represented different value clusters which employees negotiated as they attempted to manage each dispute. In the four participating organizations, these models did not exist in "pure" forms. Rather, the combination of legalistic and restorative features suggested the presence of four ideologies: a dominant legalistic model at the upper school of PE, a balanced model at TE, a partnered restorative model at YE (and, to a limited extent, the lower school of PE), and a community restorative model at CE.

Although features of both the legalistic and restorative models were apparent, elements of the retributive model did not emerge from the data. Even though past research indicated that some employees engage in fantasies of revenge or outright vengeance in the form of sabotage to manage workplace disputes (Bies & Tripp, 1006; Greenberg, 1993; Kolb & Putnam, 1992b; Tripp et al., 2007), participants from the four organizations in this study did not describe or provide examples of revenge or other conflict practices that aligned with retribution. There are two reasons why the retributive model might not appear.

First, the desire to construct a favorable impression with coworkers might restrict employees from engaging in the act of revenge (Friedman, 1994; Goffman, 1959). Many teachers spoke of the importance of projecting a proper image of maturity, self-control, and cooperation – ideals not often associated with revenge (McCullough, 2008) – to students, parents, and each other. Thus, even when confronted by extremely hurtful transgressions such as bullying, participants reported avoiding the person who hurt them or holding their anger in until they could get out of the public eye, at which time they would vent their frustrations to colleagues. In other words, to maintain the appropriate image on the front stage, employees went backstage to "lose control" or let out their emotions (Friedman, 1994; Goffman, 1959).

Second, since teachers viewed their jobs as cooperative ventures, they might have seen retribution as an action that could inadvertently hurt them (McCullough, 2008). Game theory research suggested that when individuals suffered negative consequences as a result of their competitive (and vengeful) orientation against the other party, they were less likely to maintain that stance (McCullough, 2008). As a participant indicated, teachers generally refrained from undermining each other because they were likely to suffer the consequences themselves. As such, although vengeance could help a person get even by hurting the other person, it also could have resulted in harm to the avenger in the end. Essentially, whether motivated to maintain one's public image or to keep from hurting themselves, the respondents at any of the four schools did not mention features of the retributive model.

In short, four justice ideologies emerged from the data. These ideologies featured characteristics of both the legalistic and restorative models, but to different extents. These differences were apparent in the values associated with each ideology.

Research Question Two

In addition to exploring whether features of the three court-based justice models appeared in the organizations, the study also investigated what values and beliefs associated with the ideologies appeared in the schools. As Table 6 suggests, some values were evident in multiple conflict ideologies. Other values, however, were evident only in a single ideology. Together, the values illustrated the legalistic and restorative emphasis in each justice ideology.

The dominant legalistic ideology at PE – particularly the upper school – was characterized by three values: respect for individual authority, classroom effectiveness, and connectedness. Both respect for individual authority and classroom effectiveness highlighted the detachment between individuals. In fact, the teachers generally approached the *professional* responsibilities of classroom effectiveness as separate from their *personal / relational* expectations. In essence, these values reflected an emphasis on maintaining an orderly approach to workplace behavior. This value differed from TE's balanced ideology primarily on the basis of relational closeness implied by the values of connectedness and helpfulness. Whereas TE's other values of following the chain of command, classroom effectiveness, and thoughtfulness suggested a professional, legalistic approach similar to that of PE, its emphasis on a *helpful* relationships rather than a *professional* associations suggested that the school wanted employees to maintain relationships with one another that fostered classroom effectiveness. In other words, although both schools treated relational concerns as separate from classroom responsibilities, TE's ideology highlighted a task-based association between the two. Both ideologies, however, emphasized legalistic features of thoughtfulness and objectivity associated with the idea of professionalism (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007; Lammers & Garcia, 2009; Trice & Beyer, 1993).

The partnered restorative ideology at YE differed from the two ideologies discussed above. Its values – professional responsibility, objectivity, and moderated partnership – suggested a greater emphasis on the restorative approach while still highlighting legalistic features. For example, the ideal of professional responsibility at YE blended task and relationship concerns more than employees did at TE. Additionally, moderated partnership reflected a greater degree of association than simply professional alliances, similar to familial connectedness in the lower school at PE. Together, both professional responsibility and partnership highlighted the importance of personally managing conflict situations by addressing the parties' interests and needs in the dispute. In essence, unlike the legalistic ideologies, the three values signaled a shift toward the restorative model of justice in the workplace.

The values that constituted the community restorative ideology at CE – unified community, deference to authority, accountability, and humble grace – signaled a strong emphasis on the restorative model of justice. However, a number of similarities between CE's ideology and YE's model also surfaced. For example, the ideals of accountability and professional responsibility implied mutual ownership of the school. Yet, the degree of emphasis on unified community suggested a greater pull at CE toward restorative features. Whereas the ideal of moderated partnership at YE conveyed a level of detachment among partnered teachers, the notion of unified community emphasized close, personal relationships. In other words, CE's emphasis on participation, restoration, and reintegration differed from PE's focus on participation and restoration.

In short, a number of values exemplified the four ideologies that emerged in the schools. Together, these values highlighted their respective ideologies' legalistic and restorative features. The values also illustrated divergent attention to task and relationship concerns in conflict situations. Whereas the ideologies at PE and TE generally approached the two as separated or loosely related, the value systems at YE and CE treated both concerns as interrelated. In essence, the privileging of relational closeness in the workplace emerged as a central facet that distinguished the schools' ideologies. These values also shaped the norms that emerged in the four schools.

Research Question Three

Based on these values, a number of conflict norms emerged within each ideology. Several norms, such as direct communication and listening, were evident across all four organizations. In fact, norms regarding conflict management procedures and interactions across the schools reflected a similar emphasis on these features of restorative justice. Each school's development of a dispute system grounded in the organizational hierarchy also suggested a legalistic expectation regarding the use of an impersonal system to manage certain disputes. However, comparison of the norms also revealed important differences in the ideologies, particularly in the types of conflict outcomes expected.

The dominant legalistic ideology at PE fostered several procedural, interactional, and outcome-related norms. Procedurally, expectations for employees to communicate directly with one another and address conflicts in private suggested a restorative emphasis on personal management of conflicts. With regard to interaction, the expectation to be calm and use the RRO likewise suggested an emphasis on relationally sensitive communication evident in the restorative approach. However, the expectation for employees to take their grievances to the administration signaled a legalistic pull as well. Additionally, the RRO also highlighted the importance of individual rights and responsibilities which suggested legalistic detachment between the parties (Kolb, 1987). With regard to outcomes, the expectation to move on from transgressions implied an emphasis on maintaining order and focusing on the future that was evident in the legalistic model. In short, the norms associated with PE illustrate how the model was a strong, but not pure, legalistic ideology.

The balanced ideology at TE was very similar with that of PE. Both ideologies involved procedural norms that parties would first confront the other disputant before taking a grievance to the administration. At the interactional level, disputants were supposed to to communicate directly, speak in private, and remain calm, each of which reflected features of a restorative ideology. Additionally, TE's expectation for people to listen to one another suggested a view of relationships as partnered and an approach to fairness that required that disputants try to meet unique interests and needs. At TE, the expectation to "let it go," however, reflected a slightly more restorative emphasis than PE's norm of moving on. Namely, by emphasizing a practice which foregrounded both cognitive *and* emotional coping, the balanced ideology acknowledged the personal element of conflict to a greater extent that PE. In essence, the normative expectations at TE emphasized features of the restorative model to a greater extent than at PE, even though both schools espoused values that fit the legalistic model.

Moreover, the norms associated with YE's partnered restorative ideology resembled those at both PE and TE. Procedurally, for example, like at TE, the school expected employees to approach the other disputant with the problem. In terms of interactions, parties were expected to communicate directly and listen to one another. Additionally, like with the upper school at PE, the organization also expected people to move on from the conflict, an outcome expectation that aligned with the value of professional responsibility in the classroom. However, the YE's enhanced focus on restoring relationships introduced two additional interactional norms, expectations that disputants would apologize for any wrongdoing and refrain from blaming the other party. These norms suggested a care and concern for the relationship and a willingness to collaborate with the other person rather than appealing to a higher authority to make a ruling. In other words, YE's ideology embraced norms that placed them squarely in the restorative model.

The norms at CE reflected even more restorative justice features than did PE, TE, and YE.. CE's ideology emphasized procedural and interactional expectations to communicate directly with one another and remain calm. Additionally, like at YE, the school advocated the interactional norm of apologizing. However, its outcome-related emphasis on forgiveness and reconciliation spoke directly to the restorative model. In other words, whereas the other three schools advocated coping expectations oriented toward future responsibilities, the community ideology emphasized the importance of restoring working relationships through reconciliation and forgiveness.

In short, these norms suggested that all four organizations advocated procedural and interactional models of conflict management that paralleled restorative justice models. This emphasis is not surprising, given the trend in Western organizations to emphasize personal empowerment in conflict management (Baruch Bush & Folger, 1994; Kolb & Putnam, 1992b). However, the interactional and outcome related norms that surfaced in the organizations point to the differences among the models. Specifically, both YE and CE emphasized that disputants should apologize for wrongdoing, which communicated guilt and remorse for a shared loss created by the transgression (Alter, 1999; Fraser, 1981Goffman, 1971; Schlenker, 1980; Schlenker & Darby, 1981; Shuman, 2000; Tannen, 1998). Apologizing is also associated with restored social harmony (Alter; Darby & Schlenker, 1982), a key feature that separates the legalistic and restorative models (Armour & Umbreit, 2006; Braithwaite, 1999, 2002; Kidder, 2007). Additionally, all but the community restorative model advocated outcomes oriented toward individual-centered work performance. The community ideology, in turn, highlighted the role of reintegration in the organization, a feature that paralleled the restorative model (Kidder, 2007). In essence, the differences among the four organizations suggested that desired relational closeness was a key factor distinguishing the way the schools embraced different ideologies. This observation was reinforced in the conflict practices associated with each ideology.

Research Question Four

Even though all four organizations embraced norms generally associated with the restorative ideology, employees' practices signaled features that often contradicted these norms. Specifically, the ideologies varied in terms of first contact in a dispute, communication between disputants, and the management of emotions.

Specifically, PE's practices suggested a self-directed approach characteristic of the legalistic model. For example, people generally contacted the administration first without talking to the other disputant. Additionally, limited use of the RRO signaled an emphasis on administrative regulation rather than personal control. By moving on, employees also signaled that they were interested primarily in self-oriented values of classroom effectiveness than the value of connectedness. Essentially, despite norms that suggested a restorative model, the practices characterized a dominant legalistic ideology typified by the maintenance of social order, separating the parties, and exerting administrative control.

Practices associated with the ideology at TE also highlighted legalistic features. Like at PE, people generally contacted the administration first and avoided one another. Additionally, participants usually vented their emotions behind the scenes, suggesting an impersonal / non-emotional approach to conflicts that characterized the court-based legal system. However, in approaching friends in the workplace, participants highlighted *self*-support associations. In other words, relationships were helpful as disputants attempted to cope with transgressions on their own. This self-focused coping was evident in the practice of moving on once a dispute was addressed.

Practices at YE differed from behaviors at PE and TE in that the first contact person was usually the other disputant rather than an administrator. When talking with each other, the disputants listened and apologized to one another, thus highlighting the importance of relationship maintenance. Additionally, each of these practices suggested an emphasis on internal control over the conflict and a desire to maintain relationships. Yet, the practice of letting go signaled a somewhat legalistic approach to conflict in that it did not explicitly emphasize relationship repair. Together, the practices at YE signaled a mostly restorative ideology, but individuals remained somewhat detached from each other.

The practices at CE, however, were associated with the restorative model. Like at YE and the lower school at PE, disputants usually spoke to one another first instead of taking the conflict to the administration. Additionally, teachers apologized and listened to one another, practices that suggested an emphasis on restoration, participation, and control over the dispute process. However, the primary difference emerged in CE’s practice of forgiveness, which communicated a concern for the reintegration of close, personal relationships.

Forgiveness as a coping strategy emerged most often in the community restorative ideology. The results suggested that forgiveness was not associated with a particular practice such as apologizing. Rather, forgiveness appeared to be grounded in a number of values associated with the restorative model. First, forgiveness was associated with the value of community, which approached relationships as close, committed, and satisfactory (McCullough et al., 1998; Waldron & Kelley, 2007). As Kelley and Waldron (2006) note, the desire to restore trust and maintain closeness often motivates people to forgive their transgressors. Second, forgiveness was associated with the value of grace. People said that they forgave because they too had been forgiven; that is, others had extended them mercy after a transgression. In other words, they were able to empathize with the transgressor's position because they recognized they had been in a similar position previously (McCullough, 2001; McCullough et al., 1998; Takaku, 2001; Waldron & Kelley, 2007). Third, forgiveness was associated with accountability in the form of apologies. Several scholars have noted the relationship between apologies and forgiveness (Exline et al, 2003; Girard et al., 2002; Kelley & Waldron, 2005; McCullough et al., 2001; Takaku, 2001). However, the rarity of using forgiveness in organizations suggests that it is not the apology itself, but rather the fact that the apology restores the perception of a close, personal relationship (i.e., unified community). In other words, forgiveness was a community-oriented coping practice that addressed the interests and needs of both parties (Waldron & Kelley, 2007).

For the same reason, forgiveness was not associated strongly with features of the legalistic model because of the lack of alignment between the model's values and the characteristics of forgiveness. Instead, coping practices such as "not taking it personally," "moving on," and "letting go" were more likely to occur. Several reasons might account for this finding. First, by normalizing a focus on classroom effectiveness or individual job responsibility, the legalistic ideologies de-emphasized the personal dimension of hurts. In other words, participants may not have seen forgiveness as a proper response because they saw transgressions as impersonal problems rather than violations with personal consequences (Konstam et al., 2003). Additionally, by highlighting the role of rationality, the legalistic approach minimized the likelihood of empathy fostered through emotional expression (Miller et al., 1995; Zechmeister et al., 2004). Given research that indicated strong ties between empathy and forgiveness (McCullough, 2001; McCullough et al., 1998; Takaku, 2001; Wade & Worthington, 2003; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002), any approach that dampened the opportunity for empathizing also likely hampered the likelihood of forgiveness. Third, by advocating a more distanced relationship among employees, legalistic ideologies distracted from the motivation to forgive – restoring relationships (Kelley, 1998; Kelley & Waldron, 2006; Younger et al., 2004). Finally, in centering the role of a third party arbiter as the final decision-maker, the legalistic approach likely strained relationship repair that might result from direct negotiation and dialogue or the use of an apology (Alter, 1999; Darby & Schlenker, 1982).

Essentially, a number of similar practices emerged across the schools. For example, at PE and TE, parties generally approached an administrator first rather than going to the other party. In contrast, employees at YE and CE generally communicated directly with the other disputant first. Additionally, unlike at PE and TE, employees at YE and CE listened and apologized to one another. Employees at each school also coped with transgressions differently. Specifically, forgiveness emerged most often from the community restorative ideology at CE. Forgiveness, though, also emerged as an uncommon practice in the organizations. However, the way in which employees enacted it appeared to depend on the ideology that was dominant in their organizations. Together, these practices reflected important differences regarding persons of first contact, communication, and emotion management.

Research Question Five

Even though forgiveness was not a common practice, a handful of employees at each school reported using forgiveness as a way to cope with transgressions. However, their descriptions of the practice of forgiveness across the schools differed depending on the schools ideologies. These differences seem linked to the values associated with these models.

Although all the parties that mentioned forgiveness agreed that it involved forgetting the transgression, overcoming negative emotions, and potentially reconciling, their descriptions of it diverged in terms of positive or neutral emotions toward the harmdoer. On the one hand, employees at YE, PE, and TE suggested that forgiveness involved simply overcoming negative emotions. This type of forgiveness was similar to what Bright et al. (2006) labeled the *neutralist* approach that positions forgiveness as the elimination of negative affect, cognition, and behaviors. This practice fit the individual-focused values of thoughtfulness and performance effectiveness in PE and TE's rational approach to jobs. On the other hand, employees at CE suggested that forgiveness involved the replacement of negativity with positive emotions in order to restore a sense of peace and unity between them (i.e., the *positivist* approach) (Bright et al., 2006). This practice was associated with values such as community and humility (Hook et al., in press; Sandage et al., 2003; Sandage & Williamson, 2005; Sandage & Wiens, 2001).

One note about the practice of forgiveness is in order. Some may argue that the prevalence of the practice of forgiveness was a function of the *religious* differences between the organizations rather than justice models since forgiveness emerged most consistently in an explicitly Christian organization. However, the relationship between religiosity and forgiveness has received mixed support in studies to date (Konstam et al., 2003; Tsang et al., 2005; Worthington & Wade, 2003). A context-sensitive approach can explain why some employees who identify strongly with a "forgiving" religion do not mention forgiveness as a coping strategy.

Summary

In all, the results of this study indicated the emergence of multiple justice ideologies. Several values, norms, and practices were associated with each of these ideologies. Forgiveness, in particular, emerged as a common practice in the context of the community restorative ideology. The results indicated that, because the restorative and legalistic models surfaced together in the organizations, the likelihood of employees practicing forgiveness was contingent upon organizational members' emphasis on relational restoration.. Grounding forgiveness in contextual values and beliefs has a number of implications for the study and practice of forgiveness in the workplace.

Implications

The results of this study have implications for the theory, research, and practice of forgiveness in the workplace. On a theoretical level, this study supports the conceptualization of forgiveness as a social construction (Fincham, 2000; Waldron & Kelley, 2007). As a social construct, the meaning and practice of forgiveness in the workplace are rooted in organizational interactions. Individuals negotiate the meaning and practice of forgiveness by referencing what forgiveness means and the organization's ideals about how to respond to hurtful events. In other words, what forgiveness means in one setting may be different than what it means in another context (Kanz, 2000; Lawler-Row et al., 2007; Younger et al., 2004).

This study also offers partial support for the Negotiated Morality Theory (NMT) proposed by Waldron and Kelley (2007). NMT proposes that the desire to preserve certain values or "moral codes" can motivate people to forgive. This study suggests, however, that the motivation to forgive springs from the values or moral codes themselves rather than from an internal desire to preserve them. This study also points to the interactional and structural foundations by which values become sanctioned, shared, and embraced. This study further suggests that the practice of forgiveness plays an important part in the process by which individuals negotiate the organization's conflict values. In other words, forgiveness is not simply a *product* of conflict interactions or a response to a transgression; it also *produces* or shapes how people manage disputes in the workplace.

This theoretical positioning of forgiveness as a negotiated, organizational construct has a number of implications for the study of this construct. First, in studying forgiveness, researchers must attempt to understand how people define it in the given setting (Aquino et al., 2003). Enright et al. (1992), for example, suggest that people's definitions of forgiveness change as they age. Thus, studies that rely on a sample of college-age participants may find different definitions of forgiveness than do studies that sample older-aged participants.

Second, this study suggests alternative ways of studying forgiveness. Rather than relying on standardized scales that presume a common definition of forgiveness, this study suggests that scholars should understand the *practice* of forgiveness in a given context through an interpretive approach. The results presented here suggest that features of an organization's justice ideology shape how people define and practice forgiveness. Namely, whereas the neutralist approach was associated with the legalistic ideologies as well as the partnered restorative model, the positivist approach to forgiveness was characteristic of the community restorative approach. Scholars could take ethnographic or discourse analytic approaches to understand how people socially construct and enact forgiveness (Waldron & Kelley, 2007).

Third, this study suggests the need to explore the deontic approach to organizational justice (Cropanzano et al., 2003). The majority of studies of organizational justice have taken a largely instrumental or interpersonal approach to understanding how people make and process fair decisions. However, a deontic lens highlights the inherently value-based nature of justice, particularly in the workplace. In other words, people may not care about justice simply because it garners them tangible benefits or tells them something about their role in the community. Instead, people may care about justice because of how it reinforces or enacts other values associated with it (Gordon & Fryxell, 1993; Konovsky, 2000).

Finally, this study suggests different approaches to understanding dispute systems in the workplace. Rather than taking a prescriptive approach to the establishment of dispute systems, researchers can examine how the values and beliefs that undergird conflict management norms shape how individuals enact dispute management (Shapiro & Kolb, 1994). That is, researchers who study how people practice dispute management can explore not only whether people use strategies grounded in interests, rights, or power, but also how these strategies reflect ideals that transcend the conflict itself.

This study holds a number of practical implications as well. Given the possibility of incurring social costs by forgiving a personal transgression (Baumeister et al., 1997; Waldman & Luskin, 2006), I hesitate to encourage forgiveness or a particular type of forgiveness as a strategy for coping with conflict. Instead, this study suggests that people must choose for themselves whether they can practice forgiveness in a given situation.

If organizations develop ideologies that foster the practice of forgiveness, parties can focus on a number of steps to take. For one, they can emphasize the importance of employee relationships by taking proactive steps to strengthening the bonds that connect organizational members. For example, organizations can attempt to foster a space for individuals to express their emotions. Ideas of professionalism often involve a fundamental belief that people should control their emotions to help, but not hurt, workplace productivity (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993; Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007; Hochschild, 1983; Lammers & Garcia, 2009; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1987). However, limiting the ability of employees to empathize with one another through emotional expression may preclude the practice of forgiveness. Instead, by allowing (within reason) emotional expression in the workplace, organizations may reduce feelings of isolation, thus promoting a perception of relationship closeness associated with forgiveness (Putnam & Mumby 1993; Fineman, 2003, 2006). Additionally, organizations can take a critical look at the language people use to describe conflicts (Stutman & Putnam, 1994). By defining conflicts in legalistic terms, employees may be marginalizing important features associated with forgiveness in the workplace. For example, viewing each other as separate entities may promote a desire to cope by moving on but not by forgiving. However, if parties define conflicts as opportunities to express social support, they may be more likely to indicate the need for forgiveness (Konstam et al., 2003).

In effect, this study has a number of implications for the theory, research, and practice of forgiveness. By framing forgiveness as a negotiated construct grounded in personal interactions, this study suggests that the practice of forgiveness depends on organizational ideologies. This study also suggests that scholars should take caution in how they describe forgiveness in their studies because what forgiveness means to them may differ from what it means to the research participants. The results of this study indicate that terms such as “moving on” and “letting go” imply different approaches to cognitions, emotions, and relationships following transgressions than does forgiveness. Additionally, the results of this study suggest a number of ways to encourage the practice of forgiveness in the workplace. These findings, however, come with limitations.

Limitations

Although these findings address a gap in current research on forgiveness in the workplace, several limitations suggest caution in generalizing from these findings. First, because schools are fundamentally different from other organizations, it is difficult to generalize the results from an educational setting to business or non-profit organizations. However, as noted earlier, the workplace tensions between cooperation and competition (Kolb & Putnam, 1992a) found in these schools was similar to those found in similar types of organizations. Additionally, the dispute mechanisms and organizational structures were also similar to those found in business organizations. However, schools and businesses differ along several other dimensions, including interaction frequency and content.

Second, this study was not able to explore conflict management practices at a particularly competitive organization. This limitation may result from the way organizations self-selected into the study, meaning that schools in which competition and revenge were everyday practices may have opted out of the study. However, forgiveness may emerge as a conflict practice, even in organizations that adhere to a retributive model. For example, Tripp et al. (2007) suggest that forgiveness may follow revenge because people may feel that they have received the justice they deserved. Additionally, revenge may assist in the process of emotional release characteristic of forgiveness and may break down barriers to relationship restoration by removing the impediment caused by the transgression. As a result, forgiveness may still emerge in a retributive ideology. Thus, this study cannot argue that forgiveness surfaces only in organizations that embrace the restorative model rather than the other two ideologies.

Third the choice to collect information using interviews likely shaped the type of data collected. Namely, interviewing as a methodology does not necessarily unearth all relevant data. For example, participants may not remember vital information or may choose to limit the type of information that they share in order to generate a favorable impressions of their schools (Goffman, 1959; Waldron & Kelley, 2007). Even though probes were used to minimize this effect, interview data does not capture the enacted practices of conflict management. In all, even though this study attempted to minimize limitations of the results, the inherent problems of interviewing individuals about forgiving behavior in the workplace (Waldron & Kelley, 2007) may produce a handful of restrictions on the generalizability and applicability of these findings.

Directions for Future Research

Despite these limitations, this study suggests several directions for future research on forgiveness in the workplace. Future studies should explore forgiveness in organizational contexts and examine the relationship between forgiveness and other communication practices. First, future studies should continue to examine how employees practice forgiveness in the workplace. The results of this study indicate that people may practice forgiveness differently depending on the values and beliefs that their organizations espouse. For example, forgiveness in one organization may involve the restoration of positive feelings toward an offender whereas it may involve a simply willingness to be courteous toward a harmdoer in another organization. How might employees practice forgiveness in different types of conflict scenarios? How might the practice of forgiveness change over time? How might the practice of forgiveness change following direct versus indirect communication between disputants?

Additionally, research on additional contextual features may shed light on the practice of forgiveness in the workplace. For example, Tripp et al. (2007) suggest that factors such as relative position in the organization hierarchy may influence whether people practice forgiveness. However, this study suggests that hierarchy may not influence forgiveness as much as relationship closeness. How does relative position in the organizational setting as well as the structural layout of the organization affect the likelihood that people will forgive?

Additionally, are there types of conflicts in which forgiveness is more difficult to practice than other coping behaviors? For example, are peer-level conflicts easier to forgive than conflicts with subordinates or superiors? Do the issues or types of conflict matter? This study suggests that multiple types of conflicts occur within the school setting, including teacher-parent conflicts, teacher-student disputes, and teacher-administrator conflicts. Yet, no clear pattern emerged as to whether a particular type of conflict was more likely to result in forgiveness than other types.

An additional contextual feature that might shape the practice of forgiveness is the existence of friendship networks within the organization. This study shows that venting to friends and supporters helps people to move on and let go of conflicts. However, such networks do not seem to be associated with the practice of forgiveness. Are there characteristics of friendship networks that can foster forgiveness in the workplace? What roles do gossiping and venting in the workplace play in fostering or inhibiting the practice of forgiveness? Although venting appears to be a popular way to manage one's emotions of anger and frustration, how does this practice impact employees' perceptions of interactional justice?

Future studies also should explore the relationship between emotion work and forgiveness in conflict situations. The results of this research suggest that emotions occupy a central place in shaping the likelihood and practice of forgiveness. Putnam and Mumby (1993) argue that emotional expression can enable the development of a sense of community among organizational members. Are there particular types and processes of emotional expression that might foster forgiveness? Miller et al.'s (1995) model delineating empathic concern from emotional contagion may provide a useful lens to explore this process. The model suggests that empathic concern is more effective than emotional contagion at helping people cope with stress and burnout in the workplace. Empathic concern may signal the existence of close relationships associated with the practice of forgiveness. Pursuing these questions can help researchers to gain a better understanding of how and why people choose (not) to practice forgiveness in the workplace.

Conclusion

If we position forgiveness as an inherently moral activity (Enright et al., 1992; Enright & Coyle, 1997; Waldron & Kelley, 2007), we also must understand its ideological roots. Although previous research has concentrated on identifying situational factors associated with forgiveness in specific situations, little research has explored the influence of organizational values on the likelihood and practice of forgiveness, particularly in the workplace. This study offers an initial step in addressing this gap. The results shed light on the values associated with forgiveness, including community, humility, accountability, and grace. Additionally, this study sheds light on why the restorative models are more effective at promoting forgiveness than the current legal approaches to managing conflict. Finally, this study offers an initial exploration of the tenets of Negotiated Morality Theory. In all, this study provides a way for organizational members to understand how they can help themselves and their coworkers cope with the transgressions that characterized everyday life in the workplace. By unpacking the values and beliefs associated with forgiveness, this study offers insights into how employees can arrive at a sense of personal and relational peace following hurtful transgressions. As McCullough (2008) and others write, “No forgiveness, no peace; know forgiveness, know peace.”

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. I'd like to start by finding out about your time here. How would you describe what it's like to
work here at [School name]?

    a. What are your typical interactions like with your co-workers?

    b. How would you describe the way disagreements and differences of opinion are typically handled?

    c. What type of training do you go through for working with your co-workers?

2. Tell me about a time when someone you work with – a fellow teacher or staff person, a parent, or a student – did something that was (hurtful, offensive, insulting, angering) to you.

    a. Why was that (hurtful, offensive, insulting, angering) to you?

    b. How did you respond?

    c. Tell me about how the situation played out. What happened in handling the situation? How do you feel about this person now? How typical are these types of situations?

    d. How did you regard the process? Your personal treatment? The fairness of the outcome?

3. Let's move to a more general look at your school. What are the typical ways that people approach these types of situations? How do people here typically react when they feel (hurt, offended, insulted, angered)?

    a. Give me an example of when you saw that happen. How would you account for what occurred and why, what explanation of events?

    b. In this example, why do you think they responded that way? What values in your mind tend to shape how people act in situations like this?

    c. What other factors in the organization might affect the ways that individuals choose to handle hurtful situations?

VITA

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