

**An Examination Of The Way In Which Consultancy Can Contribute To Handling  
Conflict Situations In Christian Agencies**

**Susan Parnell**

**This dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted previously in support of  
any qualification or course**

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## Abstract

This research examines the way consultancy can contribute to handling conflict situations in Christian agencies. I came to this research as a Personnel professional having often dealt with conflict situations. The research explores whether guided reflection, analysis and design can help individuals to handle conflict they are facing in a positive manner.

Action research was most appropriate for this research and I acted as both consultant and researcher using participant observation. In order to analyse and evaluate the research I designed six indicators which were based on the attitude and behaviour of the consultants. They covered consultants feelings, evidence, action, effectiveness, learning and critical evaluation. Four consultancies, with individuals working in both paid and voluntary capacities in voluntary agencies, were undertaken. These consultancies were based on my model of consultancy as I worked with each consultant to resolve their situation. I studied literature related to my model of consultancy, conflict and Christian agencies, and examined issues of power, reconciliation and the Kingdom of God.

The research was analysed and evaluated in relation to the directional changes made by consultants towards the purpose of each indicator. The extent of these changes could not be quantified, but each consultant expressed how the consultancy had helped them in their situation. The evidence of this research would support that consultancy can be a positive factor in helping someone to handle their conflict situation.

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## **Introduction**

Working in Personnel means involvement in conflict situations where one acts as a listening ear, mediator, arbitrator or advisor. The purpose of this research was to examine critically the ways in which consultancy could contribute positively to handling conflict situations in Christian agencies. Conflict situations in these consultancies were where there is, according to the consultor, current conflict. As consultant I brought to the consultancy sessions my Personnel expertise. I wanted to explore whether consultancy could contribute positively to handling conflict situations and whether the Christian ethos of the agency contributes to good practise in dealing with conflict and if so how. In my experience Christian employers often do not adequately address employee issues, which result in a worker being unaware of problems with their work until it becomes too difficult for the supervisor concerned to handle and deal with.

In chapter one I explore my research design and methodology and show how action research was most appropriate. I have designed six indicators in order to analyse and evaluate the research; these are detailed in this chapter. In chapter two I examine literature related to consultancy, conflict and Christian agencies; this chapter includes a description of the model of consultancy used for this research. Chapter three describes the fieldwork that was undertaken with consultors and their feelings and actions in relation to the indicators. Finally in chapter four I analyse and evaluate the research in relation to the indicators I designed and my original assumptions and hypotheses. I am writing in the first person because I am the practitioner and reflector in this research, however this is written in a crisp style.

There were a number of assumptions and hypotheses I wanted this research to test. These were:

- That guided reflection, analysis and design with someone with expertise in the discipline can help an individual to handle conflict they are facing.
- That it is possible to equip people to handle conflict positively.
- That although there are general personnel policies and procedures that provide basic guidelines on how to act and principles to guide us, the exact way in which one deals with each situation can vary.
- That people may use their Christian faith in a positive or negative manner when dealing with conflict.

## Chapter 1

### Research Design and Methodology

#### 1.1 The Research

I set up consultancies with four consultors working in different Christian agencies, both small and medium sized, and in each case I was the consultant. The consultancies were live scenarios and involved face to face meetings with the consultor, although in one case there was phone or email contact between the meetings. The number of sessions was as agreed with the consultors and time allowed.

My research was evaluated through analysing the attitude and behaviour of individuals as they worked through a work situation that caused them conflict. I assessed in what ways, if any, attitudes and behaviour changed as a result of the consultancy sessions which then helped me assess the value of the consultancy sessions to each consultor. The situations worked on were all ones of conflict as defined by the consultor. Consultant and consultor were both active in the consultancy sessions and as researcher I also took the role of participant observer. The method of research I used had to enable detailed exploration of the situation. It was also important that the research gave the information needed, an accurate picture and be feasible in the time allowed which as Edwards says are important criteria for choosing the research method to use.<sup>1</sup> My research method had to help me explore my chosen territory.<sup>2</sup> As Hakim identified, research aims to get to grips with significant issues and should provide an addition to knowledge and understanding of the topic.<sup>3</sup> For this reason the research method chosen was qualitative action research.

## **1.2 Qualitative Research**

I chose qualitative research because it is concerned with participant observation and unstructured in-depth interviewing. It enables the researcher to get close to people and analyse their own accounts of their attitudes, motivation and behaviour. I could examine actions and obtain information on the attitudes and behaviour of an individual from which values and changes can be assessed. Qualitative research gives opportunity to observe behaviour through body language, tone of voice and facial expressions which can help the researcher to take appropriate action, for example a change of direction in advice or questioning. The value of a qualitative research strategy is that it is, in essence unstructured, and as Bryman says it is then easier for the researcher 'to encounter the unexpected and change direction'.<sup>4</sup> This does not rule out a format for interviews that form part of the research but allows for these formats to be open to change.

## **1.3 Action Research**

Some researchers do not think the research design I am following, namely action research, is valid because it is not logical and scientific enough. A large number of those involved in research would however disagree, among them Reason, Edwards, Hakim, Bryman and Kane all of whom argue for the validity of this research method.<sup>5</sup>

Action research involves the interplay between action and research and is about contemporary events which are studied in order to determine how to affect desirable change.<sup>6</sup> In this research consultants were being helped by me to make decisions and take relevant action. Action research is participatory and puts emphasis on establishing a dialogue between the

researcher and those involved in the research.<sup>7</sup> My research was dependent on the interactive dialogue between the consultant and consultor, since it was through this dialogue that I helped the consultor to make decisions and take actions.

Action research is a sub-category of practitioner research which is any piece of research carried out by a practitioner which has as its focus the concerns of that practitioners' profession.<sup>8</sup> Edwards suggests the central role of the self-evaluating practitioner is a key factor in defining whether the research is action research.<sup>9</sup> According to Griffiths and Tann there are five levels of reflective practice but only when the research consists of critical reflection that leads to re-theorising is this reflection on action, rather than in action, which he says is crucial to action research.<sup>10</sup> Action research is more than thinking about what one has done 'it includes drawing on relevant theory and the work of other practitioners, examining its relevance for your practice and modifying widely held views to fit your practice'.<sup>11</sup> It includes observation but observation that affects and changes practice as it involves dialogue with the practitioner on their action.

Action research can appear an intrusion into the lives of others, but it allows for a deeper understanding and sense of participation. Unlike quantitative research it allows 'for interaction with the context to be observed' and for a sense of contextual understanding because of the dialogue between the consultant and consultor.<sup>12</sup> It is people centred and alongside observation of the consultant there is ongoing evaluation which enables those involved to learn from their experience. Action research puts the emphasis on institutional and personal change and allows for observation, and in the case of this research participative observation. All of this is in contrast to quantitative research where there can be a lot of information but the data sought is reasonably specific and familiar to the respondents.

Action research was appropriate since as a Personnel professional I was actively engaged in working through specific situations with individuals.

#### **1.4 Constraints**

Action research cannot deal with large numbers of people as quantitative research can in the same time frame. It is not likely to be so useful if one is looking for conclusions that can be used for generalisations in the future. My results may be applied to the consultors involved but as the numbers that participated were small the evidence can only point to the fact that something may be a factor in similar situations. As this research meant me as the consultant and researcher being actively involved, the danger was that I may not be as objective as I could in its evaluation, impartial data analysis could be difficult and limitations of my consultancy skills may go unnoticed. To help combat this I obtained each consultors evaluation of the consultancy.

Time constraints were also a factor in planning the research and the number of individuals involved were necessarily small so results cannot be taken as representative of the whole. Action research is time consuming involving working through a process and going into detail about a situation with those involved. Having said that, qualitative research is important for studying events through the subjects eyes, examining what is happening and why, as well as underlying attitudes and values that affect our behaviour. All of these can help in guiding future practise in consultancy and is valuable research.

In designing this research there were also ethical considerations as I was working in a Personnel department where much of the work is confidential. The topic and context needed to be such that those involved could not be identified. For this reason the situations had to be new and I could not use current or past situations. Those involved in my research agreed on the basis that neither they nor their agency would be identified. There was need for the research to convey a sense of the information whilst respecting the right of the individual involved to privacy and protecting their dignity, feelings and rights. For this reason the consultors came from different Christian agencies and in order to help ensure confidentiality I changed names and other non-essential information. As Kane suggests, I wanted to act as if those involved have chosen not to and so take every precaution to protect privacy.<sup>13</sup> Having a wide remit as far as Christian agencies were concerned meant that to avoid too wide a research brief the topic for consultancy had to be narrow and one in which Personnel practitioners are involved. The field chosen was that of handling conflict.

### **1.5 Assessment of the Consultancy**

For the research I acted as consultant in four consultancy situations. The consultancy situations were ones in which the consultor was experiencing conflict and I was giving support and help. The value of the consultancy had to be assessed and for this I formulated a number of affective and behavioural indicators which examined any changes in feelings and behaviour.

Each consultancy involved three or four face to face sessions and in one instance there was phone contact between the sessions. The number of sessions depended on the consultors assessment of their needs and the help they wanted. I did not see the consultors at work; the

contact was through the consultancy sessions. The research was assessed through studying behaviour and changes in behaviour and feelings, which were observed through participant observation during the consultancy sessions, and obtaining the views of the consultor on the value of the consultancy sessions to them. The consultors views were sought through a series of questions about the consultancy and its value in helping them in their work situation. Each consultor evaluated the consultancy in the light of the same questions but I envisaged different information would emerge according to their situation, perspective, experience and my probing of their answers. The questions (see Appendix) asked the consultor about changes in feelings, how they understood their behaviour, to identify changes in their behaviour and to establish how others observed any changes in behaviour. The questions explored areas covered in the affective and behavioural indicators and gave opportunity to explore any other issues raised in the consultancy. The indicators assess changes in the behaviour and feelings of the consultor in relation to the topic that was the subject of the consultancy. They were the means by which I analysed and evaluated the value of the consultancy in contributing to the handling of conflict situations.

## **1.6 Affective and Behavioural Indicators**

An indicator is a symptom of personal or social change that can be observed, classified, labelled and possibly quantified and which points to changes in people. These changes are also in attitudes, ways of thinking and feeling and the quality of personal relationships, things that are not open to direct observation.<sup>14</sup> Behavioural indicators are like behavioural objectives which describe something that a person would do and clearly state the method by which its achievement can be assessed.<sup>15</sup> I needed to assess the behaviour of consultors in order to infer whether learning had taken place and that inference had to be based on facts,

skills and attitudes. As with behavioural objectives, behavioural indicators have to communicate the conditions under which behaviour is performed, include verbs describing observable behaviour and give criteria that describe how well the behaviour has been performed.<sup>16</sup>

Through the indicators I examined changes from both an objective and a subjective viewpoint. This meant examining the affective and behavioural changes of the consultor.

The indicators are as follows:

- The affective indicator looked at changes in feelings, examining in what ways the consultor felt more confident and is able to support their viewpoint.
- Behavioural indicator 1 looked for evidence that the consultor was thinking about conflict. This involved acknowledging its presence, analysing the situation and designing and planning action to take.
- Behavioural indicator 2 is based on evidence of application through the consultor having adopted improved methods of working, and applied what they have learnt to these methods. In addition to the consultor giving evidence that their behaviour has changed this evidence may come from what others, such as colleagues, supervisors and myself, have observed and stated.
- Behavioural indicator 3 assesses the effectiveness of the consultor in working with conflict in relation to their own beliefs and purposes. This indicator examined evidence of behaviour that would indicate the consultor had achieved their goals whether set at the beginning or amended or extended during the process. It also assessed whether the personal beliefs of the consultor affected their decisions.

- Behavioural indicator 4 evaluates what the consultor learnt from the consultancy and the application of that knowledge.
- Behavioural indicator 5 is based on the critical evaluation of the consultancy session by the consultor through assessing its value to themselves, and in making critical comments as to its value or the form it took.

*The affective indicator is as follows:*

**1. The consultor feels more confident to deal with conflict situations.**

- The consultor has expressed that they feel more confident.
- The consultor's actions imply that they feel more confident.

*The behavioural indicators are as follows:*

**1. The consultor is more actively involved in facing up to and working through the conflict.**

- The consultor has communicated with the consultant, explained what is happening and actions they propose to take.
- The consultor has communicated and explained about the conflict with individuals involved.

**2. The consultor has adopted improved methods of working.**

- The consultor has applied knowledge of ways of handling conflict to their behaviour.
- The consultor can explain why they have taken this action.
- The consultant has seen a change in the consultor's behaviour in addressing conflict.
- The consultor has taken action not discussed in the consultancy sessions.
- Others have commented that the consultor has changed their behaviour.

**3. The consultor is effective in working with conflict in relation to their beliefs and purposes.**

- The consultor perceives that they have achieved their goals.
- The consultant has observed evidence that the consultor has achieved their goals.
- The consultor talks about how their beliefs and values have affected their decisions.

**4. The consultor is learning from their experience.**

- The consultor can identify what they have learnt about conflict and the different ways of dealing with it.
- The consultor has strategies for resolving future conflict and can explain them.

**5. The consultor has evaluated the consultancy.**

- The consultor has assessed the value of the consultancy to themselves.
- The consultor has critically evaluated the consultancy.

As these were indicators I could not quantify the changes in attitude and behaviour, but it was possible to show that change had occurred in relation to the purpose of the indicator. This meant my evaluation had to be based on an assessment of directional change.<sup>17</sup> When analysing and evaluating the research I will examine whether the results are in the direction of the purpose of each indicator.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

There are many areas that can be explored in connection with this consultancy. For the purpose of this research I am going to concentrate on those below and expand on them as appropriate in my analysis and evaluation.

#### **2.1 The Nature of Consultancy**

The essential nature of my consultancy is working in collaboration with the consultor through a process that is non-directive. This process includes exploring the consultor's view of themselves, their vocation and work, and is based on their work situation. Although it can develop and explore a consultant's perception of work, my consultancy must not drift to focus on the consultant's rather than the consultors view. The consultant is an enabler, allowing the consultor to act.<sup>18</sup> Consultancy gives opportunity for exploration by analysing the situation and then designing the way forward. This has to be within the practicalities of arrangements, contracts and time allowed for the consultancy. An agreed foundation of roles and responsibilities between the consultor and consultant and the relationships within the consultancy contribute to the success of a consultancy.

Consultancy does overlap with other disciplines such as mentoring, appraisals, counselling, spiritual direction, facilitating and supervising. A key aspect of consultancy is that, unlike some of the above, it has to be in the work domain, whether that be voluntary or paid. In consultancy the consultor takes ultimate responsibility for decisions, unlike appraisals which

are a management tool for reviewing work. Even where consultancy is directive it is still the responsibility of the consultor to act on the recommendations of the consultant.

I will look further at supervision as that is relevant to one of the consultancies. Supervision is a place where someone working with a client can look objectively at the relationship between that person, the client and what is being worked on. Hawkins assesses supervision as supportive, educational and managerial.<sup>19</sup> Whilst the first two are factors in consultancy the third is not, as the direction taken is the responsibility of the consultor. The supervisory model described by Hawkins is the seven-eyed model of supervision that recognises the different relationships when someone is working with a client.<sup>20</sup> He puts the relationship of each of the worker, client and supervisor with one another alongside a knowledge of themselves and their style of interaction and in the context of a developmental model as people discover their skills and develop them. These relationships are based in the wider context of work, family, professional and social norms and expectations.

## **2.2 The Consultancy Model used for the Consultancies**

I began to develop the model of consultancy used for this research during the second year of the CMM course and it is still developing. It can be seen in Figure 1. It draws on the knowledge of models of consultancy, focussing on non-directive and process consultancy, alongside my expertise in Personnel and Training. My approach was one of a process of working through with each consultor different perspectives and knowledge related to their work situation. Schein describes process consultancy as a 'set of activities on the part of the consultant that help the client to perceive, understand and act on the process events that occur in the client's environment in order to improve the situation as defined by the client.'<sup>21</sup> These



consultancies were in the context of confidentiality to the consultancy and the consultor making any decisions related to their situation. My responsibility as the consultant was to give information and expertise, usually through questioning, in order to help the consultor in their decision making process. In my model I wanted to introduce relevant material for critical consideration in a non-directive manner. Lovell argues that non-directive consultancy is facilitating other people to think for themselves about their own and other people's ideas.<sup>22</sup> As consultant I wanted to help to give the consultor insight into what was going on around them, within them, and between them and other people.<sup>23</sup>

The consultancies I undertook were all in the private domain with the consultor usually acting in public on decisions they had often taken in private. The consultor was at work in two domains, both public and private.<sup>24</sup> Private arrangements mean the consultant works from one side of the situation so has to be careful to work objectively and not enter an alliance with the consultor against those they are working with. The private setting gave opportunity for the consultor, in relation to their work and in a safe setting, to reflect on their thinking and formulate action whilst also assessing implications of that action.

The outworking of the relationship between consultor and consultant as they work through situations with their beliefs, values, expectations and practices will define the format of the consultancy. It was important that the consultor and I talked about the model of consultancy and our expectations, and agreed that we could work together. We both needed to guide the relationships and roles within the consultancy, aiming for openness and honesty alongside building the relationship. The level of trust that developed between us would determine the extent to which I was able to help the consultor to think through the situation and raise sensitive questions. Important in initial intervention with process consultation is genuine

curiosity and communication by the consultant but that one feels no obligation to own the consultor's problem.<sup>25</sup> This is particularly helpful when there is no previous relationship between consultor and consultant as it helps develop that relationship. In order to help it is important for the consultant to explore the consultor's view of work. The consultant enters the consultor's work situation through the consultor and then works with them towards a solution in the time frame and financial constraints available.

Helping is a key feature of my consultancy model. As Lovell says;

Consultancy is a process, primarily non directive, of seeking, giving and receiving help aimed at aiding a person, group, church or organisation to achieve their purposes in specific situations and circumstances in ways which express their personalities and beliefs.<sup>26</sup>

Within the context of helping, the consultant will always help the consultor in the light of their own experience and expertise. Expertise should not be withheld if that is needed, but the way this expertise is given is crucial in order that the consultor stays in control of making decisions. Todeva describes good consultancy as sharing experience and knowledge that can then be related to the consultor's situation.<sup>27</sup> Stating alternatives in question form helps the consultor to stay in the active problem-solving mode of deciding how to resolve their situation.<sup>28</sup> Consultants can raise issues and areas that they see as relevant to the consultancy and in which they have expertise but that are new to the consultor. In order to make and act on decisions a consultor needs to have hypothesis or plans, action and beliefs.<sup>29</sup> If one of them is missing problems will occur as without action nothing gets done, without plans there is no strategy and where there are no beliefs a situation is soulless. My consultancies were helping the consultor to make decisions with these in place. The 'working with' of consultancy implies equal partners, we not us, ours not theirs.<sup>30</sup>

It is important that the consultant makes the decisions for two reasons. Firstly the consultant who is inside the organisation has the most knowledge about its culture and hidden values although they may be unaware of this. Secondly when people make decisions, after considering the alternatives, they are more likely to own that decision and follow through actions to resolution and completion. As Lovell argues people are more likely to take responsibility for the consequences of things they decide for themselves.<sup>31</sup> This helps to ensure that one is working with the energy of the organisation that Tosey suggests is connected with related skills, beliefs and practices.<sup>32</sup> My research was with those in Christian agencies so Christian faith influenced underlying beliefs and practices. Tosey's research stresses the importance of the core force, usually the core purpose, that touches those in an organisation and ties them together.<sup>33</sup> Schein suggest that as well as espoused values and norms an organisation has basic underlying assumptions which are formed around human nature, activity and resources and the nature of truth and reality, time and space.<sup>34</sup> Someone in the organisation is the best person to identify these and consultancy can help in this as the consultant is helped to identify and analyse them. Schein concludes that by the end of the consultancy process the consultant should be more equipped to work on their own to improve the situation.<sup>35</sup> As consultant I was imparting skills that would help the consultant to resolve a similar problem in the future.

Cockman<sup>36</sup> describes four styles one can use in consultancies where the focus is on the consultant. Each can be used during the same consultancy depending on appropriateness at any one time. The *acceptant style* helps consultants to talk through issues, deal with self defeating reactions, explore, express, heal and come to terms with negative feelings and emotional reactions and to be released from unknown consequences.<sup>37</sup> For this style to work the

consultor has to be ready and willing to talk as it helps them to think clearly and its underlying premise is that they have the resources to find the way forward. The *catalytic style* helps the consultor to make sense of the data they have, assess extra data they need and make decisions. The *confrontational style* can only be used effectively where there is relationship as it helps people 'to see discontinuity between their stated intentions or beliefs and actual behaviour' and to look at the implications of this.<sup>38</sup> Finally the *prescriptive style* is based on the consultant giving advice which the consultor is then expected to follow. I used the former two in the consultancies.

There are many theological issues that I could reflect on in relation to this research. The Kingdom of God, the body of Christ, creativity and the prophetic all form part of the foundations for my model of consultancy. Lovell argues that the consultancy processes are theological in nature as they are incarnational, salvatory, revelatory, resurrectional, creational and sacramental.<sup>39</sup> Reconciliation and power may be a part of both consultancy and conflict. For the purpose of this research I will concentrate on reconciliation, power and the Kingdom of God.

### **2.3 Conflict Theory and the Consultancies**

Conflict is very common and a fact of life.<sup>40</sup> Lippitt describes conflict as a predictable social phenomenon that sometimes should be encouraged, tolerated and channelled creatively into effective problem solving.<sup>41</sup> Conflict stems from people having different perspectives, objectives and interests, belief systems and values.<sup>42</sup> In view of this listening to those involved is important for conflict resolution to occur. Conflict in itself is not good or bad, right or wrong but it can lead to positive results if handled well, bringing renewed motivation,

personal growth and maturity and an opportunity to vent feelings. Palmer uses Shawchucks definition of conflict describing it as when the actions of one party threaten the values, goals or behaviours of another.<sup>43</sup> Huczynski says that conflict is a process which begins when one party perceives another has frustrated or is about to frustrate some concern of theirs.<sup>44</sup> It is generally accepted that there are four types of conflict. Intrapersonal conflict is when a person has conflict within themselves and it comes as a result of inner stress, whilst interpersonal conflict is that between individuals. Intragroup conflict is between members of a group, and intergroup conflict between groups. My consultancies included elements of all four types although the former two were the main focus. Conflict is something that is present in Christian teaching and all types of conflict can be seen in the Bible.<sup>45</sup> As Holden says a level of conflict is essential in the church if we are to struggle with the pursuit of truth and grace.<sup>46</sup> Facing conflict in the early stages can help one to loose fear of it and manage it. Melamed defined conflict as falling into five categories.<sup>47</sup> Relationship conflicts which often occur because of negative emotions or behaviour, poor or miscommunication and misperceptions. Data conflict occurs when more information and facts are needed and conflict of interests when perceived needs are incompatible. Structural conflicts are caused by forces external to the people in the dispute. Finally values conflicts where there are perceived or actual incompatible belief systems which one side is trying to impose on another.

It is generally recognised that there are five styles of dealing with conflict, and that all are appropriate in certain situations.<sup>48</sup>

- *Avoidance or denial.* This is when conflict is not acknowledged, although strategic withdrawal can be beneficial to all.

- *Suppression or accommodating of conflict.* This occurs when either the differences are played down and the positive benefit of addressing conflict is not recognised or there is a thought out reason for accommodating.
- *Power or competing.* This happens when power is used to settle differences and which can be necessary in management and leadership.
- *Compromise.* This gives each party opportunity of winning. Its value depends on how it is applied and according to Elmer does not work well when a party has disproportionate power.<sup>49</sup>
- *Collaboration or 'carefronting'.* This is when parties explore together, modifying and developing their original views as work progresses, so that the solution is one seen as best by all those concerned.

It is generally accepted that the final one is normally the most effective. Elmer uses the word 'carefronting', suggesting approaches should be made in a caring way so that a win-win solution is most likely.<sup>50</sup>

Conflict can lead to empowerment, establish identity and unify a group. It is inevitable and resolvable and few situations are hopeless, in fact each side probably has a part of the truth and there can be similarity between opponents. As Leas<sup>51</sup> says the process in resolving conflict is key and this is where the consultant can have a positive input in helping to resolve the conflict. The consultant is someone who is impartial, objective, expert, a process person and external to the situation but not necessarily the organisation. To manage interpersonal conflict there must be a willingness to work on a situation. In resolution, the consultant can help the consultor to listen to and understand perspectives of others.

There is a difference between tension and conflict and as Adair says there is bound to be tension between productivity and human values at work.<sup>52</sup> Sometimes there is a thin dividing line. Fenton says there is a difference between concerned disagreement and conflict, conflict being when a group cannot move forward or make a decision.<sup>53</sup> As Baum says, communities must acknowledge and address differences if they are to plan realistically.<sup>54</sup> Conflict can be viewed positively as an opportunity for growth. Leas says that 'one hallmark of a healthy organisation is that it can deal with conflict when it arises and that conflict can bring with it growth.'<sup>55</sup>

It needs to be recognised that dealing with conflict can vary between cultures. In some cultures saving face is a very critical issue whilst in others personal honour must be protected.<sup>56</sup> In the West truth is most important whilst in much of the rest of the world relationships are more important.<sup>57</sup> In conflict situations mediation can be used. A mediator must inspire confidence in others, persist, be objective, respected and exercise self control. It is important that mediators seek understanding and are careful about making evaluative statements. In the Western world mediators are often only used when there is stalemate.<sup>58</sup> Mediators need to keep all parties participating by reinforcing success and planning contingencies. In mediation it is important to analyse the situation looking at triggering events, barriers, the role of the mediator, who is involved and what they need.<sup>59</sup> Change will usually result in some conflict but it is more likely to lead to positive growth where it is well thought out and introduced by stages. Mediation is a process that gives opportunity for perspectives to be aired and understanding clarified.<sup>60</sup>

## 2.4 Christian Agencies

The consultants all worked in organisations where the Christian beliefs and values were key factors in the foundation of their work. The Christian influence was evident in the mission and values of each organisation and in each case the Christian beliefs of employees and volunteers were essential in their work.

The organisations varied in structure although all are in the voluntary as opposed to private or public sector. One of the four received public funding and the others were funded through membership and donations. Weber defines an organisation as ‘the co-ordinated work of more than one person tackling the same task’.<sup>61</sup> Billis describes an organisation as ‘a group of people coming together to solve a common problem’.<sup>62</sup> The two types of organisations that have been the subject of much research are bureaucracies and associations. Bureaucracies have a clear hierarchy of officers, each with clear functions and subject to unified control.<sup>63</sup> Bureaucracies are often viewed in a negative light but Jaques<sup>64</sup> argues that one needs hierarchy for big organisations to be effective in the work they do. He suggests it is the only effective form of organisation when employing large numbers of people that will preserve unambiguous accountability for the work done.<sup>65</sup> In hierarchy there will be power factors but factors such as consensus, skill sharing, job rotation and delegated authority can diminish power.

Associations are formally organised with established procedures and scheduled meetings. Membership is through fulfilling criteria and members have to be consulted and are expected to contribute financially or in time towards the work of the association. Any staff would support the work of the association. Volunteers often work in associations and members can

also be volunteers. Members will often have greater expectations than volunteers and a greater sense of reciprocity and ownership of the association as well as their task. In voluntary associations productivity and efficiency are not the only factor by which success is judged but goals have to be evaluated to the appreciation of members and volunteers.<sup>66</sup>

Billis<sup>67</sup> identified a growing number of organisations that he called agencies. The dominant characteristic of agencies was the tension between the formal bureaucratic world and the more informal characteristics of the associational and personal world. These tensions were often expressed in such aspects as volunteers versus paid employees and the informal expectations of commitment through working long hours versus terms and conditions of employment. These agencies he found were usually in the voluntary sector and often started as associations. In defining organisations as agencies its roots are key as these are in associational characteristics such as members, mission and belief, funding by donations and legacies and fees.

In any consultancy the real problem may not be the presenting problem. It is important to explore the norms and policies which underlie problems in an organisation; this is referred to as double loop learning.<sup>68</sup> Single loop learning is when one looks only at the symptoms of problems. There are factors in an organisation that may need analysis through consultancies in order to help the consultor resolve their situation. These include approach to handling change, decision making, planning, roles, governance of the organisation, relationships between groups and individuals within the organisation and relationships between one organisation and others.

I will concentrate here on some aspects of change as both consultancy and conflict will usually result in some form of change and an organisation's approach to this is important. Some organisations want consensus at any cost which Janis calls 'groupthink'.<sup>69</sup> Where this is important conflict will be squashed and suppression and concurrence become part of the organisational culture. The careful scrutiny of plans, objective analysis and reasoned questioning will not take place possibly leading to disastrous results. The consultant needs to help the consultor to scrutinise and analyse critically so they reassess and think about their situation. Each organisation has its people, structures and systems which are within a context of the culture of the organisation, its resources and goals.<sup>70</sup> Change in one will affect the others and change invariably brings conflict. Having said that, Gann suggests that the single distinctive feature of voluntary organisations is that they are value driven and consequently could be uniquely qualified to survive periods of rapid change.<sup>71</sup> These values underlay the conduct of an organisation and have to be represented in documents, policies, procedures and delivery of service.<sup>72</sup> The culture tends to be deeply rooted in people's hearts and minds and therefore cannot be easily changed.<sup>73</sup> Kubr reports on the research of Hearsey that showed that when there is change the length of time and increasing difficulties were related to what one was trying to change.<sup>74</sup> He argues that between knowledge, attitudes and behaviour, knowledge was the easiest to change, followed by attitudes whilst individual, group or organisational behaviour was not only more difficult to change but took longer. The consultancies in this research all involved some form of change in behaviour whether individual or organisational.

There does not have to be change though, rather one can stay within the tradition of an organisation or project. Salipante argues that non-profit organisations should value continuity and there is a role for tradition as well as for change.<sup>75</sup> Working through issues may result in a

decision not to change since as an organisation's basic identity will be affected if it loses sight of its mission and core expertise.<sup>76</sup> However, changes in the environment relevant to the organisation may mean changes have to occur for an organisation to survive.<sup>77</sup> Having said that, resistance to change often arises in response to threats to the traditional norms and ways of doing things.<sup>78</sup>

Relationships are important and there is often conflict between sub-units within an organisation. In order to bring together different perspectives and resolve conflict integrating devices can be developed that enable the work of units to be co-ordinated. Cameron refers to the work of Lawrence and Lorsch who found that some integrating devices were more sophisticated than others.<sup>79</sup> An organisation's culture will dictate through which mechanisms conflict is resolved.<sup>80</sup> Conflict resolution is an important skill for managers and Mintzberg includes it as one of his eight leadership skills.<sup>81</sup> Many agree with Makin who advocates that conflict may be resolved through better communication.<sup>82</sup>

## **2.5 Issues of Power**

There are issues of power in both consultancy and conflict. The consultant can have power to choose, act, influence and control others, cause others to act, make happen what they want to and get what they want.<sup>83</sup> They also have the power of information, asking questions, expertise, of collaboration and to think. The consultant can choose how to use their expertise and the control of how they use their knowledge and information gives power. If one has any responsibility or role in a relationship then one has the power to influence.<sup>84</sup> A consultant cannot avoid having power but the key issue is not the power but its use. In my model of consultancy the consultant uses expertise to empower others. This gives the consultor

increasing power, which as Morgan says reduces ones dependence on others.<sup>85</sup> Kubr describes the consultant as empowering the consultor by bringing new competence into the organisation.<sup>86</sup> Empowerment is when people feel they have contributed to decisions, are valued, are making significant contributions, have opportunity to grow and develop in their work and are competent to deal with challenges inherent in their work.<sup>87</sup> Handy describes the tension between trust and control and suggests more emphasis on one means less on the other.<sup>88</sup> The consultant has to trust the consultor and give away control of decisions. Cameron in her work refers to Hugman who suggests that the relationship between professionals and clients is a power relationship and communication between the two can be an avenue for exercising power.<sup>89</sup> It follows that in order to diminish power any apparent consensus between consultant and consultor must be explored rather than accepted at face value. Cockman suggests that the consultor can have the power of authority, reward, punishment, association, expertise and relationship. He says that powers of relationship and expertise are the two we should cultivate and the others only used to supplement expertise and relationship.<sup>90</sup>

Power can be liberating or dominating. Liberating power is that which the first humans were given when invited to rule the earth as seen in Genesis chapters 1 and 2.<sup>91</sup> It is empowering to give people a power that is liberating. We are aware of the creative power of God through which the world can be transformed. This transformation on a lesser scale can be experienced through consultancy as situations are resolved. But as Dorr says, 'those who wield power are accountable to God and they are answerable to the people on whose behalf they exercise authority'.<sup>92</sup> This leads onto saying that power is a reality and the exercise of it legitimate, but because it comes from God it can be transformed by Christ.<sup>93</sup> Prior suggests that the stress in Jesus' teaching and life is on power to serve not dominate or control.<sup>94</sup> He concludes that the

secret of Jesus' power and authority lay in his total submission to the Father's will, word, ways and works. Because Jesus was held firm in and by his Father's love, God was able to trust him with power which in anyone else's hands would have been abused and therefore lethal. Jesus exercised his power under the authority of the Father.<sup>95</sup>

French and Raven describe five bases of power through interpersonal influence.<sup>96</sup> Legitimate power is exerted by those seen by others as having the right to be influential. Reward power is dependent on the advantages or favours a person is perceived as being able to give. Coercive power carries the threat of punishment, expert power depends on the knowledge and skills of an individual and referent power is when one has a close relationship with the source of the power. Power in organisations is often exercised through management structures. In religious and voluntary organisations the addition of deeply held values can make conflict more likely. A manager has the power to manage staff in a collaborative, empowering and consultative way rather than rely on positions of power. Pfeffer suggests that authority is power legitimated and the exercise of influence is then expected.<sup>97</sup>

Within organisations the more projects controlled by one sub unit the greater the power of that unit within the organisation.<sup>98</sup> As organisations change so do the patterns of power within it. Conflict happens when interests collide and power can be the medium by which these conflicts of interests are resolved, or perceived to be.<sup>99</sup> An organisation's use of power will be influenced by whether it is unitary and uses leadership to suppress conflict or pluralist and uses conflict for change.<sup>100</sup> Power is always context or relationship specific and cannot stand by itself.<sup>101</sup> In an organisation people will influence others and the norms and expectations can make this exercising of influence acceptable. In any organisation there are those whom Mintzberg calls influencers, who may control decisions and actions of organisations.<sup>102</sup>

Decisions will evolve from the policies, procedures and rules of an organisation whether they are written or not; it is these that influencers seek to influence.<sup>103</sup>

The politics of an organisation are seen through its conflicts and power plays.<sup>104</sup> Morgan argues that organisations are always political whatever the style of leadership.<sup>105</sup> Conflicts of interests in organisations are often resolved through power. The sources of this power include areas such as authority, control of resources, decisions, knowledge, technology, the decision process, interpersonal coalitions, structural factors and any power one already has.<sup>106</sup> The broader the base of power individuals have the greater the power they exert.<sup>107</sup> Awareness of these sources of power enables the consultant to help the consultor to be more aware of the use of power in a situation. How an organisation handles power and conflict will be determined by its basic philosophy which Morgan says is based on one or more of three frames of reference in an organisation these being unitary, pluralistic or radical.<sup>108</sup> The unitary view is that power is through the authority, leadership and control of management and conflict needs to be removed. The pluralist view sees power as the medium through which conflicts are resolved and conflict as something that can be used positively. The radical view sees power as key but views it from the stance of power in society and conflict as part of a wider class conflict.

## **2.6 Reconciliation and the Kingdom of God**

I now turn to examine reconciliation which is different to conflict resolution although they can contribute to each other and both are looking for an agreed common solution. Resolution means finding an answer that brings those in conflict together.<sup>109</sup> Reconciliation, on the other hand, 'brings people to relational unity but not necessarily to agreement'.<sup>110</sup> Reconciliation is

part of the ongoing mission of Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit and therefore a part of the mission of the church.<sup>111</sup> The heart of the gospel is reconciliation and at the heart of reconciliation is the cross.<sup>112</sup> The power for this is beyond ourselves and comes from God as we are called to be reconciled to Him. From his research Lederach argues that truth, mercy, justice and peace all meet at reconciliation.<sup>113</sup> He suggests all are needed to resolve conflict as truth alone leaves us vulnerable and unworthy whilst mercy alone is superficial; without justice brokenness continues and without peace there is no harmony. Wells says there cannot be any reconciliation without justice as justice brings reconciliation and is a prerequisite of true peace.<sup>114</sup> Baum suggests conflict resolution can bring a change of heart and desire to forgive but it is not linked to faith so is not reconciliation.<sup>115</sup> Williams suggests that in conflict resolution it is sometimes better to use the word conciliation as reconciliation includes personal relations, relations with God and suggests new beginnings not a temporary ceasefire in a situation that remains basically unchanged.<sup>116</sup> Consultancy is helping to bring in new beginnings and when based in a Christian agency then relations with God in the situation are inevitable.

My consultancy is also about the Kingdom of God, which brings a new start, hope, healing and future. The Kingdom of God is whenever God is at work turning situations around, and Jesus is the clue to help us spot it.<sup>117</sup> That new life may come through light coming into dark places, which can in itself bring conflict. As Kirk describes, Jesus' teaching and actions raised conflict because of the way he interpreted his relationship to the Kingdom of God.<sup>118</sup> Many people may be agents of the Kingdom of God, some unknowingly, but one way the Kingdom of God is present is through the church. Ladd describes the church as the community of the Kingdom of God.<sup>119</sup> In consultancy as one reflects on an issue and decides on action the new life of the Kingdom of God can be there.

## Chapter 3

### The Consultancies

#### 3.1 The Process of the Consultancies

I arranged six consultancies but only four of them took place. In the other two, although people had indicated that they wanted to work through situations, in view of the potentially sensitive nature of the consultancy topic, after three reminders I decided not to pursue them. I also had a short time frame in which to complete the research.

In each of the four consultancies that took place the work was with individuals. The consultancies were to work with the consultors on a conflict situation in their work which they wanted help in resolving. For the purpose of this research a conflict situation was defined as one where the consultor perceived conflict. Although I did not observe any of the consultors in their conflict situation in three of the four situations I had previous knowledge of their working situation and had visited their work base. Each consultancy consisted of three or four face to face meetings, the last of which was primarily for us to explore the value of the consultancy to the consultant and their work situation. Variable factors in each consultancy situation are explained below.

The following is a record of each consultancy looking at relevant background information, the consultancy process with the consultors original goals, my reflections on the consultancy as it

progressed and a record from each of the consultancies as it related to the affective and behavioural indicators explained in chapter two.

Consultancies were with Linda, Jason, Anita and Tina. For the purpose of confidentiality I am not including the description of each consultancy. This chapter would include descriptions under the following headings.

- Background
- The consultancy and its goals
- Reflections during the consultancy
- Looking at indicators (both affective and behavioural) and evidence from the consultancy of the position of the consultor in relation to the indicator

## Chapter 4

### Analysis and Evaluation of the Consultancies

As we have seen in the previous chapter all four consultors made some directional changes in the direction of the indicators. The fact that all four said they found the consultancy helpful in working through their situation is supported by their changes in behaviour and feelings. The extent to which they were actual changes or directional changes is illustrated in table 1.

#### **4.1 Model of Consultancy**

The help I gave focused on sharing expertise through a questioning approach. The consultor could determine action they wanted to take through a process of analysing the situation and examination of options.

With reference to the affective indicator all four expressed that they felt more confident to deal with conflict situations, and from my perspective as consultant, their actions supported this and they all made a directional change in relation to the purpose of the indicator. As well as saying he felt more confident, Jason, by the time of the last consultancy session, had on his own initiative taken action in two other conflict situations so he had generalised what he had learnt. He said he had found it helpful to discuss his ideas for the training session and explore their advantages and disadvantages. Jason said he felt equipped to lead the session and arranged to talk with the person concerned about the conflict. As the consultancy developed Jason introduced his own ideas and I helped him apply his experience and knowledge to the situation. As his consultancy developed it became evident to me that Jason had resources to

**Table 1 Assessment of Indicators**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Anita</b>	<b>Jason</b>	<b>Linda</b>	<b>Tina</b>
Affective Indicator – Feelings				
1a	D	D	D	D
1b	D	D	D	D
Behavioural Indicator 1 -Evidence				
1a	D	D	D	D
1b	D	D	D	D
Behavioural Indicator 2 – Action				
2a	D	D	D	N
2b	D	D	D	D
2c	D	D	D	D
2d	Y	Y	N	Y
2e	N	N	Y	N
Behavioural Indicator 3 - Effectiveness				
3a	D	D	D	D
3b	D	D	D	D
3c	D	D	D	D
Behavioural Indicator 4 – Learning				
4a	D	D	D	D
4b	D	D	D	D
Behavioural Indicator 5 - Evaluation				
5a	D	D	D	D
5b	D	D	D	D
Summary of indicators				
Total D's	14	14	14	13
Total Y's	1	1	1	1
Total N's	1	1	1	2

D = the consultor has made a directional change towards the purpose of this indicator

Y = yes the consultor has met this indicator

N = no the consultor has not met this indicator

find the way forward but was unaware of them so I used the acceptant style of Cockman.<sup>120</sup>

Overall this style ‘helps people to unload troublesome thoughts, reactions and feelings and allows clients to be more objective about their situation’ which is what Jason did.<sup>121</sup> With the other consultors, as I knew them, there was already a level of trust in place so I used this style from the beginning.

Anita's actions also implied that she felt more confident because of the consultancy, although she said that she did not feel her ability to resolve conflict had developed. She said she had found the consultancy a 'helpful process to focus on an issue causing problems and look at ways of dealing with it'. Her style was to resolve conflict through putting systems in place and when left with unresolved issues she set up a face to face meeting with the college. Linda's actions supported her view that she felt more confident although she said she still found conflict hard. The idea for a communication workshop, through which she could achieve her third goal, was something she developed herself once I had introduced it and she had examined areas she could cover. Her situation reinforces that the consultant often has the information they need and needs help to realise that. Tina's situation was different in that the consultancy led to her feeling more confident in dealing with conflict situations but she was acting as mediator. From the research it would appear that all the consultants self esteem and confidence had been built up which as Schein suggests is one of the purposes of consultancy.<sup>122</sup>

With reference to behavioural indicator five, all the consultants evaluated and criticised the consultancy, although the extent to which this happened varied. Although they had made notes during the consultancy on any actions they were going to take, both Anita and Tina said they would have appreciated confirmation in writing on conclusions they had reached during each session. This is something I need to address in future consultancies as the contract is established and reviewed, but balance this with the consultant taking responsibility for their decisions. McEvoy emphasises the importance of the contracting process saying that it ensures the success of the consultancy by being clear about goals and expectations.<sup>123</sup>

Anita said she saw our relationship as akin to supervision. Supervision, as we saw in chapter two includes a level of accountability. I would have said that as in supervision there were supportive and educational elements to the consultancy but not accountability. I think that most aspects of Hawkins seven eyed model in chapter two can be incorporated into consultancy but the context of my model is different as it is work rather than family.

My position being external to their situation was mentioned by three of the consultors. All expressed they felt more freedom to speak because I was an external person. As Eden says the external consultant has more chance of resisting the undertow in an organisation and as in each case I was unaware of any undertows I could do that.<sup>124</sup> As an external person I could be more objective and detached, which I feel meant giving a greater breadth of expertise. Lindon compares an internal consultant's greater compassion to the greater detachment of an external consultant.<sup>125</sup> In these consultancies as the consultor made the decisions the internal compassion was not lost but more expertise had gone into the decision making than would have done without the consultancy.

There were practical aspects that affected the research. Due to the distance for us to travel, when Tina and I met we covered other work matters as well as the consultancy. Meeting in a busy public place was unsatisfactory as there was not the space for any quiet reflection. In future where there is more than one agenda for a meeting a definite break between the items for us to refocus roles and for the consultancy to be digested is needed.

## 4.2 Organisational Issues

As shown in Table 1 all the consultants made some directional movement towards meeting behavioural indicator one but the extent of this movement was different.

The consultants worked in organisations that were agencies although some had stronger associational features whilst others were more bureaucratic. All consultants gave time and possibly finance to help achieve the mission of the organisation, as is a feature of associations. Linda and Jason gave regular time in a voluntary capacity and both Anita and Tina gave additional time on an irregular basis. All consultants were in agencies with a clear hierarchy and except for Jason had contracts, were paid and subject to the policies and procedures of the agency. Jason, although not employed by the camp, was employed by the organisation that had overall responsibility for it.

The roles of the consultants in their agency were different. Anita as a manager was in a position to make decisions on what management systems to put in place. She recognised that she preferred to put systems in place and these changes fitted with the culture of her organisation, but by the end of the consultation had shown she would have face to face meetings if there were unresolved issues for her. Anita chose to implement structures that were conducive to early conflict management which Palmer suggests is important.<sup>126</sup> Through her systems Anita created integrating devices to improve communication within her staff team and between her and the college. An issue for Jason and other volunteers was one of value as they felt their role and efforts whilst being affirmed and valued in the past were not at present. Proposed changes would alter the culture of the camp and as such would affect the people involved as well as the structures and systems of the camp. Most of the first two consultancy

sessions with Jason were spent analysing his situation and designing the training session. Jason initiated contact with the person concerned to discuss the camp, which meant talking face to face about the issues. Jason wanted to reach an agreed solution but wanted to see evidence that his view had been heard. His approach was one of 'carefronting'.

Linda attributed the action she took to the consultancy help. I observed a growing confidence as she talked about issues and then took action. Linda's role was developing because of her growing involvement in the agency and the increasing numbers of workers talking with her about their difficulties at work. As the first consultation developed Linda decided it was important to clarify roles in the organisation, including hers. In conjunction with her manager she then drew on Personnel systems to help do this, initially through job descriptions and an organisational chart both of which helped them to clarify accountability and roles. The organisational structure was based on different projects with staff and volunteers working in one or more projects. This created some conflicts in the past and Linda hoped to help minimise these in future through her actions.

Tina was a manager who was acting as a mediator between two staff. In her role she had influence on the decision making process and planning of the organisation. In analysing the situation, wider organisational issues came to light which she planned to develop. Tina said she received the help she wanted for her conflict situation but is now working on the organisational issues that the consultancy raised for her.

The conflict was handled differently by each consultor which was in part due to the different cultures of their organisations, but in each case they did face up to and work through the

conflict in their own way. As we saw in chapter two Bennis said, the culture of an organisation will usually determine through which mechanisms conflict is resolved.<sup>127</sup>

### **4.3 Conflict**

As we saw in chapter three all four consultants adopted improved methods of working as in behavioural indicator two. These were mainly directional changes although in the case of others commenting or taking action not talked about in the consultancy some had met this and others not.

Anita, Jason and Linda all wanted to address their personal reticence at dealing with conflict situations through addressing a work situation. Whilst being aware of the ways in which she could resolve conflict Anita chose to put management systems in place first that would give staff clarity as to her expectations and enhance team communication. Anita said that she now recognised that others may not see the situation as she did but unless she took action the issues for which she had management responsibility would remain unresolved.

Jason showed evidence of the appropriateness of avoiding conflict and was applying his knowledge of dealing with conflict to his situation. He wanted to resolve his issue in a collaborative and carefronting way and applied this to other work situations. As Fenton says peace is achieved when both parties feel that their needs are met and in trying to resolve his issues Jason examined different options but he wanted to feel his needs were heard.<sup>128</sup> Jason was willing to explore other options and as Bangley says collaboration is about looking for options no one has thought about.<sup>129</sup>

Linda initiated putting management systems in place and this improved communication between workers in the organisation. Alongside this she talked with those with whom she experienced conflict and encouraged other workers to do the same. Linda was acting in a mediator role at times. Linda was the only consultor of whom others commented on changes in behaviour related to working with conflict. For Anita and Tina our arrangement was a private one which meant less likelihood of anyone commenting on changes in behaviour in relation to the conflict as in behavioural indicator two. The consultancies with Linda and Jason were both supported by their supervisors who encouraged the consultancy and were involved in some of their decisions. This meant that they were more likely to have comments about changes in their behaviour made by others.

Tina was unaware of consciously applying knowledge to her actions although she could explain why she had taken actions. Except for Linda all took action not discussed in the consultancy so one can say it looks as if they applied principles learnt to situations.

The consultors had developed different strategies for resolving future conflict as in behavioural indicator four. As Ehrenberg suggests helping people learn is a central part of the consultants function and implementation is crucial.<sup>130</sup> Anita's learning focused on putting management systems in place, which was an area that she, as someone who likes to have clarity and detail in how she works, said worked best for her. She will work in collaboration where relevant. Jason developed a clear future strategy for resolving conflict. If possible he wanted to resolve conflict on a basis of equality with others which he agreed involved changes for him as well as others.

Jason and Linda both said they had learnt that conflict when addressed can lead to positive results and Linda expressed confidence to deal with conflict in the future on her own initiative. Not everyone sees the positive side of conflict, including those in Christian organisations. Palmer refers to research by Dale in which he found that the order of preference for church leaders in dealing with conflict was to compromise, avoid, accommodate, collaborate and compete.<sup>131</sup>

All except Linda said they would have appreciated more background information on handling conflict. Both Anita and Tina said they would have reflected on their situation in line with their reflective learning styles. In future I need to talk with the consultors about their learning style and be aware of it in my approach. On reflection I think all the consultors may have learnt more from their experience if they had been given references to literature they could read themselves. This would have given them the additional objective information from the perspective of a different person and could have helped them further to think and assess outside the box of the situation, which could help them in making decisions. This could have helped to make up for my shortcomings.

#### **4.4 Evaluation of the Original Goals set by Consultor**

In each consultancy the consultor decided their goals and I did not explore their viability as I felt at the time that it was their decision. On reflection it could have been helpful to have done so especially with Linda and Jason who both had three or more goals. In practice though their viability was raised by Linda herself during the consultancy because of the time available and Jason said that on reflection he thought he had too many to achieve in the time frame available. The goals for all the consultors involved changes in attitudes and behaviour as well

as knowledge, either the consultors and/or others in their organisation which as we saw in chapter 2 are more difficult and take longer to occur. For each consultor except Tina the goals were personal as well as a part of their work in the organisation although these personal goals were designed to help them be more effective in their work situation.

One can say that Anita has made a directional change towards her goal of exploring her tendency to avoid conflict. She resolved to her satisfaction the two original work issues that she brought to the consultancy to help her deal with conflict. Exploring something does not necessarily mean taking action, which she did. Jason felt he had met the latter two goals that referred to him personally and had not met the first two because of changes in the camp team and uncertainty about the future of the camp. As the consultancy developed, racism was explored as an underlying issue in his situation. Linda's priorities changed as she had realised that taking actions related to her second and third goals was helping her meet her first goal of being equipped to deal with conflict. Tina met her original goal to her satisfaction and chose not to talk further with Malcolm. Her focus shifted to an organisational level during the consultancy as she considered whether the real problem was underlying issues related to women in leadership rather than the individual situation. In this consultancy double loop learning helped identify underlying factors in the organisation that needed analysis in order for the consultor to act.

The time frame for the research and the nature of some of the goals meant that the consultor was continuing to work in this area after the consultancy had ended. This is positive because it means the consultor is working by themselves and could use the additional skills, knowledge and abilities they developed during the consultancies. The final resolution to some of the situations will occur in the future. The consultancy played a role in the force for change

as change occurred in each consultancy situation. The extent of this change in the situation or attitude to conflict varied in each case. As we saw in table one all the consultants made a directional change towards meeting their goals.

#### **4.5 Impact of Values and Beliefs**

All the consultants verbalised how their beliefs and values affected their decisions. Jason's belief that one should resolve conflict was important in his initiating the training session and meeting with those with whom he conflicted. He wanted a win-win solution and did not want to just put things in the past and move on. Salapante describes the importance of tradition and this was important for Jason as changes proposed would alter part of the core mission of the camp which he valued. The environment around did not suggest to Jason that this was necessary as those attending were still from the same backgrounds and there were still the same needs that the camp was set up to meet. From his perspective the camp did not have to adapt to survive.

Anita said that her life and beliefs were well integrated which would automatically affect her decisions. Her belief in professionalism and having good systems in place were an important part of her beliefs and values. Linda talked about her Christian faith as being a prime reason for resolving conflict. She suggested that if people on the team were in conflict their work and prayer together would suffer and she wanted to help avoid this. Tina's beliefs and values were influenced by her professional Personnel values. As a result of analysis she realised there were organisational issues and through investigating these her values could alter. Tina was beginning to contest the values and norms of her organisation. For the consultants it was their Christian foundation and the type of work they were doing, as can be expressed in their

organisational mission statements or something of equal credibility, that is at least a part of the core force that Tosey described and we looked at in chapter two.<sup>132</sup>

Consultancy needs to facilitate the critical examination of beliefs and values. All consultants examined their work values and beliefs whilst Linda and Jason verbalised, on their own initiative, the part their Christian belief played. As Lippitt suggests values change through a process of challenge and accommodation between the system of existing values on the one hand and technologies, action pressures and reluctant social changes on the other.<sup>133</sup> In these consultancies I facilitated the examination of personal and organisational values taking into consideration the context of the organisation.

#### **4.6 Power**

As we have seen, power is an issue in consultancy, conflict and agencies. As consultant I had power to withhold expertise and information in particular if I did not feel a route was one that would or should be followed and I had to be careful not to do this. I was helping the consultant to make their own decision as they knew the organisation best but needed information on which to base their decision. This was to be examined alongside the advantages and disadvantages of a particular course of action. In Linda's consultancy I had mentioned a communication workshop not anticipating that it would be a relevant route for her to follow because of her reticence at addressing conflict. For her this turned out to be a key area for action and fitted with what she wanted to do and the culture of her organisation.

In assessing power I also recognise that the consultant had power to withhold or distort information related to the situation or their actions. Whilst this is a limitation of this research I

do not think they used this power because of their honesty during the consultancy and their analysis of its value.

Power was a factor in each of the organisations. Some consultants had power to take the actions they wanted whilst others could not without reference to a supervisor. Tina as a manager had power to initiate action on an organisational level as well as in how she acted as mediator between Malcolm and Louise. Anita as course director could use authority she had to put systems in place and avoid future conflict. Linda was working in both an employed and voluntary capacity which in itself can bring conflict. Her responsibility at work was developing as team members approached her on an informal basis. Her power was not yet part of the formal structure but was recognised by her manager as being present. Jason was acting in a voluntary capacity and had power as part of the camp leadership team which he wanted to use to resolve the conflict. For him the DYO's influence was significant because although he was not the camp co-ordinator he had overall responsibility for the camp as part of his employed post.

As we have seen the consultancies empowered consultants to act in conflict situations. In each case there was directional change towards the indicators as the consultancy developed. Some had more power than others to make decisions in their work situation but all were empowered through the consultancy to act within the decision making arena of their role.

#### **4.7 Reconciliation and the Kingdom of God**

All the consultors beliefs and values played a part in their wanting to resolve conflict. Conflict resolution for Jason and Linda meant reconciliation and resolution. They wanted relational unity and agreement. They both mentioned their Christian faith being one of the reasons that they were seeking help to resolve their situation. At the end of the consultancy Jason was still working for resolution and reconciliation, as for him justice had not yet happened.

During the consultancy Jason had periods of silence when he would look down, say nothing and think about what he was examining. He would break the silence when ready by looking up and saying what he was thinking about. Others had thinking time outside the consultancy, but their sessions were shorter than Jason's. Both Linda and Anita reflected on their learning style and their need for time to reflect on my input. In future when discussing the initial contract it may be helpful to include discussion on the space consultors would prefer during the consultancy. These times of silence are akin to prayer, they give opportunity for God to speak directly to the consultor about an area they are considering. As consultant I had to decide if and when to intervene.

The new life that the Kingdom of God can bring is an essential part of my model of consultancy. In each situation something new developed as the consultors were helped to bring new life to themselves and their situation. As we saw in chapter two a positive response to conflict often enables new life to come from it. Linda and Jason both commented that their attitude to conflict had changed becoming more positive having seen benefits from addressing conflict.

## **4.8 Evaluation of the Hypotheses and Assumptions**

I started the consultancy with four hypotheses and assumptions. The first was that guided reflection, analysis and design with someone with expertise in the discipline can help an individual to handle conflict they are facing. The changes consultants have made, although directional, support that this occurred. We have seen in table 1 that consultants took actions and changed their attitudes to conflict they were facing, and this can be attributed to the consultancy.

My second hypothesis was that it is possible to equip people to handle conflict positively. The actions and attitudes of each consultant would support that this occurred as each took action to resolve the conflict and talked about how they had been helped to resolve conflict. Jason and Linda independently said that they had discovered the positive aspects of conflict.

My third assumption was that although there are general personnel policies and procedures that provide basic guidelines on how to act and principles to guide us, the exact way in which one deals with each situation can vary. This hypothesis was not relevant to Jason's situation as he was dealing with a conflict situation where personnel policies were not applicable to its resolution. Linda and Anita both put in place personnel policies and procedures that helped to clarify the situation for all concerned and aided the smooth running of the organisation. They were general management systems that are accepted as good personnel practice. Both situations were different and they decided to put different things in place although there were similarities in that both needed systems to improve communication and clarity as to what workers should and could do. Tina recognised that the way she dealt with her situation had to fit in with the organisational culture in order for changes in attitudes and behaviour to occur.

There were not enough consultancies to draw conclusions that can be widely applied as each situation had different elements to it and therefore the action in each varied but there was directional change as consultors acted to work on conflict situations. In order to support this hypothesis I would need to have had consultors with similar situations so I could analyse the similarities and differences between their actions and results.

My final hypothesis was that people could use their Christian faith in a positive or negative manner when dealing with conflict. I did not see evidence that consultors were using their Christian faith in a negative manner. Their Christian faith was a reason both Linda and Jason agreed to the consultancy. One of their underlying values was that they wanted to resolve the conflict so that the work they were involved in could continue and flourish and as Christians they felt they should do what was in their power to do towards this. The consultors had values and beliefs which were formed through their professionalism as well as their religious belief. These consultancies were all with people who were willing to address their conflict and anyone who was unwilling would not have taken part in the research. Therefore I can only conclude that although Christian faith could be in a negative way, in these consultancies I only saw it being used in a positive manner.

## **Conclusion**

I have shown in this research that consultancy can contribute positively to handling conflict situations. Although there were limitations and constraints in the research, the consultors all made directional changes towards the purposes of the indicators. Each consultor expressed that the consultancy had helped them in taking actions towards resolving their situation.

I have demonstrated that guided reflection helped consultors, and that through consultancy it is possible to equip someone to handle conflict positively. I have shown that although personnel policies and procedures were used in helping three of the consultors to work on their situation the limited numbers of consultors meant that I could not draw conclusions that could be widely applied because the situations themselves varied. The consultors each had beliefs and values that affected their decisions and actions. In these particular consultancies these beliefs were applied positively in handling conflict and that the consultors took action to resolve their situation meant their beliefs and values were applied positively.

In conclusion I can say that consultancy has contributed in a positive manner to handling the conflict situations involved in this research. I would suggest that from the evidence in this research it is likely that any future research on this subject would reinforce this conclusion.

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## Appendix

These are the questions that formed the basis of a meeting with each consultor to evaluate my consultancy with them. The notes in brackets are the areas that I wanted to expand on through each question.

### **Evaluation of Consultancy Questions for the Consultant**

1. Was any progress made towards achieving your goals for the consultancy and if so what was it? (What are their perceptions on the achievement of the goals? Look for behavioural changes, what has been done and have there been any changes in attitude.)
2. Did your goals change in any way during the consultancy and if so why and how? (Were any changes as a result of the consultancy or outside circumstances?)
3. Are there any changes in yourself and your work situation that you attribute to our consultancy sessions? (What is the position of the conflict situation now and what has been the result of any actions taken?)
4. Has your ability to resolve conflict, your attitude to conflict and your confidence in conflict situations altered since the beginning of the consultancy sessions? If there has been a change can you identify the contributing factors to this? (Probe attitude, skills, confidence, knowledge and the impact of the consultancy in any changes.)
5. What other evidence is there that would support any perceptions that your attitude to conflict has changed, e.g. comments from those you work with, your superior etc.? Why did you decide on the course(s) of action you did in relation to your conflict situation? (What were the influencing factors at work, in the consultancy and in oneself that contributed to the decisions?)
6. How would you deal with a similar situation in the future? (Look for confidence, would they ask for help or deal with it themselves, is there an awareness of different types of conflict and ways to deal with them.)
7. Did you find any aspects of the consultancy sessions helpful? If not why not and if so why? (What specific input from the consultant in the form of skills, attitude, knowledge etc. did the consultor find helpful?)
8. What aspects of the consultancy could I, as the consultant, have improved upon and were there areas where you would have liked more help and/or we didn't explore and on reflection you would have found helpful? (Probe how I could have helped more. Are there factors that could help me in being a more effective consultant?)
9. Do you think that your decisions/changes could have been made with any other form of help? Why/why not? (To gauge the value of consultancy in general.)
10. What impact, if any, did your Christian faith have in handling your conflict situation? (To gauge the conscious or unconscious part their Christian beliefs and values played in handling the consultancy situation.)

11. Have you any reflection on how being part of a Christian agency may affect the handling of conflict situations? (To gauge the positive and negative part Christian beliefs and values play in addressing conflict.)
12. Have you any other reflections or comments?

## End Notes

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- <sup>2</sup> Hakim C, *Strategies and Choices in the Design of Social Research* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1987) p171
- <sup>3</sup> *ibid.* p135
- <sup>4</sup> Bryman A, *Quantity and Quality in Social Research* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988) p99
- <sup>5</sup> See Bryman, Edwards and Hakim.
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- <sup>6</sup> LRM Team, *Hints on Research* (Derbyshire: Cliff College notes 1997) p1
- <sup>7</sup> Reason, p2
- <sup>8</sup> Edwards, p52
- <sup>9</sup> *ibid.* p52
- <sup>10</sup> *ibid.* p52
- <sup>11</sup> *ibid.* p53
- <sup>12</sup> *ibid.* p29
- <sup>13</sup> Kane, p212
- <sup>14</sup> Lovell G, *Indicators* (Derby: Cliff College Paper, 1990) p1
- <sup>15</sup> No author given, *Writing Behavioural Objects*  
(<http://favrer.riv.csu.edu.au/~gfellows/scholarship/objectives.htm> 29.05.01) pp.1-4 (p3)
- <sup>16</sup> Kizlik B, *How to Write Behavioural Objectives* (<http://www.adprima.com/objectives.htm> 1.06.01) pp.1-3 (p1)
- <sup>17</sup> Lovell G, *Indicators*
- <sup>18</sup> Lovell G, *Consultancy Ministry and Mission: A Handbook for Practitioners and Work Consultants in Christian Organisations* (London: Burns & Oates, 2000) p35
- <sup>19</sup> Hawkins P & Shohet R, *Supervision in the Helping Professions* (Open University Press, 2000) p52
- <sup>20</sup> *ibid.* pp67-87
- <sup>21</sup> Schein E, *Process Consultation Volume 1 - Its Role in Organisational Development* (Massachusetts: Addison Wesley Publishing Company, 1988) p11
- <sup>22</sup> Lovell G, *Analysis and Design: A Handbook for Practitioners and Consultants in Church and Community Work* (Tunbridge Wells: Burns & Oates, 1994) p222
- <sup>23</sup> Schein E, *Process Consultation Volume 1* ....., p11
- <sup>24</sup> Lovell G, *Consultancy Ministry and Mission*....., p22
- <sup>25</sup> Schein E, 'A General Philosophy of Helping: Process Consultation', *Sloan Management Review* (Spring 1990) pp.57-64 (p61)
- <sup>26</sup> Lovell G, *Consultancy Ministry and Mission*....., p23
- <sup>27</sup> Todeva E, 'Situational Analysis as an Integral Approach in Consulting to Organisations' (Casemore R, Dylos G, Eden A, Kellner K, McKauley J & Moss S, [eds.] *What Makes Consulting Work: International Consulting Conference* (South Bank University Press, 1994) pp.167-178 (p175)
- <sup>28</sup> Schein E, 'A General Philosophy of Helping: Process Consultation' ....., p62
- <sup>29</sup> Lecture from David Dadswell on Consultancy Mission and Ministry course on 24 April 2001
- <sup>30</sup> Lovell G, *The Church and Community Development* (Worcester: Avec Publications, 1980) p5
- <sup>31</sup> *ibid.* p19
- <sup>32</sup> Tosey P, 'Consultancy as Working with the Energy in Organizations' (Casemore R, Dylos G, Eden A, Kellner K, McKauley J & Moss S, [eds.] *What Makes Consulting Work: International Consulting Conference* (South Bank University Press, 1994) pp.394-405 (pp394-403)
- <sup>33</sup> *ibid.* p396
- <sup>34</sup> Schein E, *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publisher, 1997 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) p47&127
- <sup>35</sup> Schein E, *Process Consultancy Volume 1*....., p10
- <sup>36</sup> Cockman P, Evans B & Reynolds P, *Consulting for Real People – A Client-Centred Approach for Change Agents and Leaders* (Berkshire: McGraw-Hill, 1999 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) p87-112
- <sup>37</sup> *ibid.* p89-90
- <sup>38</sup> *ibid.* p111

- <sup>39</sup> Lovell G, *Consultancy Ministry and Mission.....*, p129-133
- <sup>40</sup> Quaker thought identifies conflict as a part of life and says how important it is that young people learn to take responsibility for resolving conflicts. This should be within the context of recognising the value of individuals, mutual respect and developing skills and attitudes involved in conflict resolution.(Quaker 24:54)
- <sup>41</sup> Lippitt G & Lippitt R, *The Consulting Process in Action* (California: University Associates 1986 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) p203
- <sup>42</sup> Melamed JC, *Conflict Resolution Theory and Skills* (<http://www.to-agree.com/divcr.htm> 24/05/01) pp.1-6 (p1)
- <sup>43</sup> Palmer DC, *Managing Conflict Creatively* (California: William Carey Library, 1994) p4
- <sup>44</sup> Huczynski A & Buchanan D, *Organizational Behaviour* (Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall, 1991 2<sup>nd</sup> ed) p547
- <sup>45</sup> In the Psalms 32 and 73 we see the conflict David and Asaph experience within themselves. Interpersonal conflict can be seen in relationships such as those between Jacob and Esau (Genesis 27) and Saul and David (1 Samuel 19) as well as between individuals like Job and Jonah and God. Intergroup conflict is seen between Paul and the believers (Acts 21) as well as Jesus and the disciples (John 11). Whilst intergroup conflict was experienced between Elijah and the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18) and Jesus and the merchants in the temple (Matthew 21 v12-16).
- <sup>46</sup> Holden T & Mellor H, 'Conflict between Christians: Evangelicals and Radicals', *Epworth Review* Volume 18 No 2 (Methodist Publishing House, May 1991) pp.40-47 (p42)
- <sup>47</sup> Melamed, p4-5
- <sup>48</sup> Palmer and Melamed  
Elmer D, *Cross Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Illinois: Inter Varsity Press, 1993)
- <sup>49</sup> Elmer, p42
- <sup>50</sup> *ibid.* p43
- <sup>51</sup> Leas S & Kittlaus P, *Church Fights: Managing Conflict in the Local Church* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973) p72
- <sup>52</sup> Adair J, *Effective Decision Making* (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1985) p15
- <sup>53</sup> Fenton G, 'A Crash Course in Conflict – What Your Leaders Need to Know', *Leadership - A Practical Journal for Church Leaders*, Volume XV11 No 4 (Fall 1996) pp.38-40 (p38)
- <sup>54</sup> Baum HS, 'Community and Consensus: Reality and Fantasy in Planning', *Journal of Planning and Education in Research*, 13 (1994) pp.251-262 (p262)
- <sup>55</sup> Leas and Kittlaus. p159
- <sup>56</sup> Palmer, p105
- <sup>57</sup> This means that in the West lying is a greater sin than losing ones temper whilst elsewhere it is vice-versa. In the West ways of approaching conflict are often more direct whilst in South America and Africa conflict is usually approached indirectly where what has happened is stated with no indication of responsibility.
- <sup>58</sup> Use of a mediator is very common in the two-thirds world and is a sign that unity is the ideal in the relationship especially where harmony in relationship is an important social value.
- <sup>59</sup> Leas SB, *Leadership and Conflict* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1983)
- <sup>60</sup> Bell P & Jordan P, *Conflict: Handling Conflict in the Local Church* (London: Scripture Union Ltd., 1992) p139
- <sup>61</sup> Cameron H, *Unit 4: Organisational Analysis and Design* (Derbyshire: Cliff College 2000) p11
- <sup>62</sup> *ibid.* 4 p53
- <sup>63</sup> In bureaucracies staff have contracts, paid remuneration for their work, are often professional with a career structure and are personally free. Policies and procedures are laid down in bureaucracies and can be give to newcomers who then have clear guidelines in acceptable practices in the organisation when they take over a function.
- <sup>64</sup> Jaques E, 'In Praise of Hierarchy' (Shafritz JM & Ott JS,[eds.] *Classics of Organization Theory* (Fort Worth: Harcourt Brace College Publishers, 1996) pp.255-262 (p255-262)
- <sup>65</sup> Jaques, p255
- Alongside this he found that for effective management an employees accountability manager had to be one real layer higher in the organisation hierarchy not just a point higher on the pay scale. This was because people at a given layer add value to the work of those below them.
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Figure 1  
My Model of Consultancy

