

A Conflict Analysis of Two Chinese Sport Organizations

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Abstract

Using Robbins and Judges' (2010) Five Stages Conflict Model, this study investigated the conflict that arose between two Chinese sports organizations regarding the transfer of a professional team. A single case study design was used that utilized interviews to gain an understanding of the causes of the conflict, the processes of conflict, and the outcomes of the conflict. Semi structured phone interviews were conducted with six participants included three individuals associated with each of the two organizations to provide a recollection of the conflict from both perspectives. Using an interview guide participants were asked to describe the causes, process and outcomes of this conflict case. The findings showed that the conflict was caused by lack of communication, incompatible government regulations, goal incompatibility and ambiguity of organizations sector conflicting management strategies were observed between the two organizations in order to fulfill their own intentions including: problem solving, expansion of resources, authoritative command, compromise and bringing in outsiders. In order to resolve the conflict outside actors were needed to manage the conflict. Finally, it is important to analyze the outcomes of the conflict for each party in order to prevent this conflict from occurring again in the future. The findings also showed in order for the two organizations to collaborate harmoniously they should identify a common goal from the beginning. This research concludes that the government should have specifically clarified their regulations for publicly owned basketball teams and the specific sector to which the basketball team belonged should have been identified beforehand. For future collaboration between two or more Chinese sports organizations, the findings of this

study may help to develop a model that will prevent conflict and promote harmonious cooperation.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background

Rahim (2011) describes conflict as the initiation from the distinctions among human beings that bring an incompatible and incongruous result when people attempt to obtain their desired goals or outcomes while interacting with others. Therefore, conflict is caused by collaboration or necessary contact between two or more entities. According to Robbins and Judges (2010) the conflict process involves several stages including: first recognizing incompatible goals, personalizing the conflict to fit the specific situation, each entity attempting to fulfill their individuals intentions and the behaviors associated with fulfilling those intentions, finally transitioning to the outcomes stage when some sort of agreement is reached. Eventually conflict impacts organizational performance, either decreasing or increasing organizational performance. Specifically, for the two Chinese sports organizations in my research, the findings will show that organizational performance was decreased by the conflict as it prevented the original transfer process to occur.

At the beginning of the 2013 Chinese basketball season, the Dragon¹ team and the Mountain Province Bureau of Sports (MPBS) began to experience differences that prevented agreement when the owner attempted to transfer the team out of the Mountain province. Fans were concerned because the Dragon team's owner, Mr. Huang, had been facing severe financial challenges that could be reduced by transferring the team, and

¹ Specific names of the team and sports department have been altered for confidentiality; these names have

they feared the day their team left the Mountain province. Eventually when an attempt was made to transfer the Dragon team out of the Mountain province, the two sports organizations experienced severe conflict (Chai, 2013). This research analyzes the conflict experienced by these two organizations drawing from Judges and Robbins' (2010) conflict theory and discusses the implications of this unique situation.

Since China is a single-party state governed by the Chinese Communist Party, the majority of the sports industry is still administered by government institutions and thus must obey government regulations (Jackson, 2015a). Increased economic development has resulted in several professional sports becoming more commercialized and therefore appeal to many private enterprises as a potential investment industry. With government permission, private enterprises started to establish for-profit leagues, like the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA) which was the first Chinese basketball league, created in 1995 (Jackson, 2015a). However, the CBA is still an organization affiliated with the National Government Sports Bureau, which means it must operate by government rules and regulations (Chen & Guan, 2005). One of these regulations stated that in order to apply for transfer competition rights, a state owned team must submit transfer-approved documents from its local provincial bureau of sports (Jackson, 2015a). As a result, before the Dragon team could be transferred, the decision needed to be approved by MPBS. This represents an example of organizational conflict, which will be discussed in a proceeding section.

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the conflict

process by using Robbins and Judges' (2010) model of conflict to examine a case of conflict between two Chinese sports organizations: a provincial bureau (MPBS) and a privately owned basketball team (the Dragon team). Given the purpose, the following research questions guided the study: (1) why did the conflict between MPBS and Dragon team occur? (2) What happened during each stage of the conflict? (3) What were the outcomes of the conflict, and how did those outcomes impact each organization? As a result of the unique practices in the Chinese sports industry, I specifically sought to understand why the conflict occurred and its impact on the two organizations. Through in-depth interviews this research discovered first-hand accounts and perceptions of the conflict created in transferring ownership. Interactions between the two parties prior to the conflict as well as the eventual outcome of the conflict were also examined.

Significance

This research has both theoretical and practical significance. From a theoretical standpoint, this research provided an innovative concept of conflict outcomes; the conflict outcome is neither entirely dysfunctional nor functional. In addition, these outcomes are interchangeable when certain conditions are satisfied. Traditionally, function and dysfunction are two contradicting outcomes, which most scholars (Baritz, 2011; Krupp, 1961; Slack & Parent, 2006) would analyze in the aftermath of conflict. Some have maintained that conflict can only bring about a dysfunctional outcome. Conflict impedes the achievement of organizational goals (Litterer, 1966; Pondy, 1967; Rahim, 2011) and decreases the organizations' working efficiency. In general, it is advised that conflict should be avoided. However, Rahim (2011) considers conflict to be

beneficial for the parties involved, because any issues can be discovered and resolved during the conflict process. This research introduced a new understanding regarding conflict outcome because both the dysfunctional or functional outcomes can be interchanged depending on the conditions. People should concentrate on identifying certain conditions that turn functional outcomes into dysfunctional outcomes, preventing this from happening and helping the conflicting parties improve their behaviors to avoid similar conflict in the future.

From a practical perspective, this case study has the potential to improve collaboration between government institutions and privately owned sports teams in China, which is one of the most problematic issues for managing sport organizations in this country (Zhu, 2008). The implications of this study may help to discover a collaboration model that is most appropriate to apply to future situations of conflict between government institutions and privately owned sports teams in China. The results of this study are not only beneficial for the development of sports commercialization, but the competitiveness of the Chinese sports industry could also be improved. However, my results may only be applicable to this particular case and as a result, future researchers who study cases similar to mine, should use my results as a reference.

Conflict Theory

In addition to Robbins and Judges' Five Stages of conflict model, various definitions of conflict exist in organizational literature (Robbins & Judges, 2010; Pondy, 1967), March and Simon (1993) assumed conflict arises when different groups or individuals make incompatible decisions. In contrast, Robbins and Judges (2010) contend that

conflict is a dynamic process and separated the concept into five stages according to specific characteristics: stage I: Potential opposition or incompatibility; stage II: Cognition and personalization; stage III: Intentions; stage IV: Behavior, and stage V: Outcomes. I discuss each of these stages as they apply to the conflict experienced by the Dragon team and MPBS.

Rahim (2011) argued that Pondy's (1967) organizational conflict theory was considered as a "broad definition" (p.15), because it acknowledges the organizational conflict was not only limited to conflict between groups or individuals but also in the scope of a group or an individual. Tedeschi, Schlenker, and Bonoma (1973) argued that conflict happens under contradictory conditions that, as a result of one entity's behaviors and goals, cause controversy to escalate to the degree of conflict. Rahim (2011) considered expanding the conflict over the individuals or group, but did not discuss any possible implications of this expansion. With the numerous definitions of conflict that exist in organizational literature, I maintain that conflict should be considered as a dynamic process with cyclical movement. The dynamic process of conflict includes starting with the cause, then transitions through the effects stages, finally returning once again to the cause, when new conflict is generated. Instead of identifying separate situations of conflict resulting from specific individual's behavior, it is more effective and appropriate to assume that conflict occurs in a cycle and that insights from past occurrences of conflict can be applied to future cases. Therefore, Robbins and Judges' (2010) Five Stages of Conflict theory will primarily be used in analyzing the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS, however, some of the aforementioned theories will

be used as well.

According to Robbins and Judges (2010) Five Stage Conflict model, I first analyzed the cause of the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS. The initiation of conflict generally occurs as a result of different individuals and/or organizational goals (Rahim, 2011). My aim was to understand the causes of conflict between these two sports organizations and Robbins and Judges (2010) Five Stage model served as a framework to analyze the conflict process. Finally, the outcome of conflict was classified by either functional or dysfunctional. Ultimately, analyzing the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS allowed me to provide meaningful suggestions for handling future cases of conflict in Chinese sport organizations.

Summary

As a result of strict government regulations that diminished the Dragon team's control with regards to transferring ownership, conflict occurred between MPBS and the Dragon team. Robbins and Judges (2010) Five Stage Conflict model was deemed appropriate to aid with understanding the various aspects of the conflict that occurred between the Dragon team and MPBS. Additionally, other definitions of conflict that exist in literature will also be used to support my research. This research was conducted in order to gain a better understanding of China's unique and complex sports industry. The purpose and research questions were posed to gain a better understanding of the conflict process within two Chinese sport organizations. In particular, the study contributes both empirically and practically to sports management literature.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to clarify and review dominant themes of conflict management: definition, causes, progress, and outcomes of organizational conflict. Multiple theories of organizational conflict are reviewed to demonstrate an understanding of conflict in its entirety. Conflict is first defined, and then Wall & Callister's (1995) conflict cycle is introduced. The causes of conflict (Kilmann & Thomas, 1978) are discussed, in order to further explain the conflict cycle. Following the causes of conflict, specific characteristics of each stage of the conflict process are reviewed. Finally, the effects of organizational conflict are reviewed, including functional and dysfunctional outcomes.

Definition of Conflict

Rahim (2011) argued that conflict was the most common phenomenon amongst human interactions that originally stems from the necessary contact between two or more entities. He assumed that just like contact amongst individuals in common life, conflict emerges when resources are scarce. As a result, individuals compete with others who possess the resources they covet, this makes the prevention of conflict nearly impossible. Conflict initiates from the distinctions among human beings that bring an incompatible and incongruous result when people attempt to obtain their desired goals or outcomes while interacting with others (Rahim, 2011).

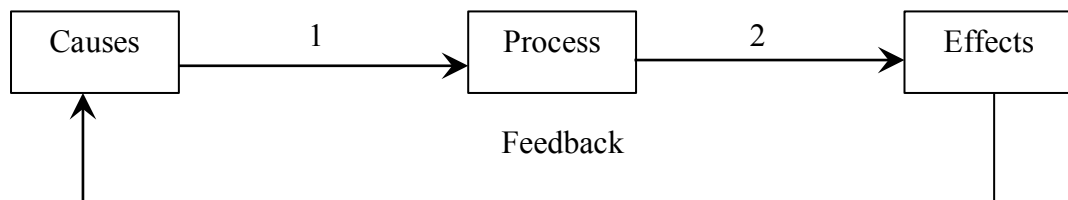
Similar to many scholars' definitions of conflict, Rahim (2011) defined conflict as, "an interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within

or between social entities (i.e., individual, group, organization, etc.)” (p. 16). This definition is a synthesis of previous conceptions of conflict like Smith’s (1966) who described that conflict is a “situation” caused by the inherently incompatible from different social entities under the conditions and Litterer (1966) who described conflict as “...a type of behavior” (p.180), that occurs when two or more social entities act hostile toward each other. Rahim (2011), Smith (1966) and Litterer (1966) confirmed that the interaction of two or more entities is the basic element of conflict.

Conflict Cycle

Figure 1 displays the conflict cycle (Wall & Callister, 1995) which shows how conflict progresses, beginning with the generation of conflict, then its development, and finally its outcome; this suggests that conflict occurs in an infinite loop.

Figure 1: Conflict Cycle (Wall & Callister, 1995)



New conflict will stem from the influences of previous conflict, which occurs from feedback about the previous conflict. As previously argued, conflict is a process and situation rather than a behavior (Pondy, 1967), therefore the diagram is an appropriate way to display its occurrence. Previous literature has described certain facets of conflict (e.g., Kilmann & Thomas, 1978; Lewicki, Weiss & Lewin, 1992) or only studies those contained limited aspects (e.g., Wall & Callister, 1995) of the conflict cycle. The conflict cycle provides a comprehensive and accurate depiction of how conflict occurs in

organizations (Wall & Callister, 1995), because the cycle explains causes, how conflict manifests, outcomes, and how feedback can cause further conflict. Each stage of this cycle is discussed in the following sections.

Causes of Conflict

The conflict literature contains different understandings of the reason conflict occurs within organizations (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964; Kilmann & Thomas, 1978; Brett, 1984). Kilmann and Thomas (1978) assumed that the causes of conflict can be characterized into two “attributional distinctions”, which are “process vs. structural” and “internal vs. external”.

The first distinction, “process and structural”, was perceived as two different approaches to comprehend the conflict phenomenon, which also identified conflict from a horizontal and vertical perspective. The process referred to behaviors, such as verbal threats and grievances that result in a series of momentary struggles and ultimately leads to conflict. The structural model analyzes the conflict from a vertical perspective, this way of thinking can be applied to an organization such as a business corporation that follows a hierarchy.

The fundamental causation for conflict is the distinction between social entities (Rahim, 2011). As Kilmann and Thomas (1978) claimed, the relationship between each entity is important in this model, since the conditions of the relationship can decide and affect their behavior. If their relationships do not work well, the conflict will come from within the organization. The term “internal” in the second distinction, “internal vs. external”, relates to conflict which occurs within a societal entity that is struggling with

coming to a common decision amongst group members. Conversely, external related conflict is more likely to be associated with conflict that occurs outside of the entity, but still impacts the behaviors of members of the group.

Building from Killmann and Thomas' (1978) attributional distinctions theory, Brett (1984) developed a different theory regarding the cause of conflict. He applied Emerson's (1962, 1972a, 1972b) "Power-dependency" model to account for the attributional distinctions theories, "process vs. structural" and "internal vs. external". Emerson (1962, 1972a, 1972b) believed that "power is a function of dependence, and dependence is based on (a) availability of alternative outcome sources and (b) the value to each party of the outcomes at stake". The power-dependency model of conflict describes that when two or more social entities are associated with each other in a power-dependency relationship, conflict is generally the result. Another cause of conflict stems from the fact that each entity cannot obtain their desired outcome. In relation to Emerson (1962; 1972a, 1972b), Brett (1984) maintained that the two attributional distinction theories could be resolved by using the power-dependency model. He stated, "Power-dependency theory suggests that neither of these theories of the cause of conflict is vertical but that conflict arises from factors within each of the parties and from the dependency relationship itself" (Brett, 1984, p. 665).

In reality, attributional distinctions and power-independency, simply apply different analysis approaches to evaluate the cause of conflict (Killmann & Thomas, 1978). The two attributional distinction theories focus on where the conflict happens. In other words, the cause of conflict is interpreted from an organizational structure aspect. This theory

recognizes that the conflict can originate from inside and outside of organizations (Kilmann & Thomas, 1978). The power-dependency model focuses on the causations of conflict regardless of where it occurs (Emerson, 1962). The two attributional distinction theories simply classify the cause of conflict into two categories. Furthermore, the two theories can only be applied to an organization that could be affected by conflict originating outside and inside of the organization. However, the power-independency is a broad conflict theory since it could apply to every social entity, not only to organizations.

Wall and Callister (1995) stated the causes of conflict could be classified into three general categories: “individual characteristics”, “interpersonal factors” and “issues”, as well as numerous subsections for each category. Personal values and goals are two significant factors of the individuals’ characteristics that can cause conflict. According to Augsburger (1992) and Hahm (1986), they found that different personal values have a significantly stronger influence on conflict. The initiation of conflict arises from different goals of each social entity and even the varying significance of each goal. High or moderately significant goals will always generate conflict (Kaplowitz, 1984; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). The interpersonal factors relate to the phenomenon that occurs in the interaction of two social entities. Pruitt and Rubin (1986) explained that when two social entities do not reach an agreement in certain aspects, such as the differences of perceptual, structure, communications and behavior, conflict will be introduced in these distinct facets. The distinct nature of an “issue” determines the conflict. The complexity and multiplicity of issues can increase the possibility of creating controversy, as a result of reaching contradictory interests or realizing dissimilar goals.

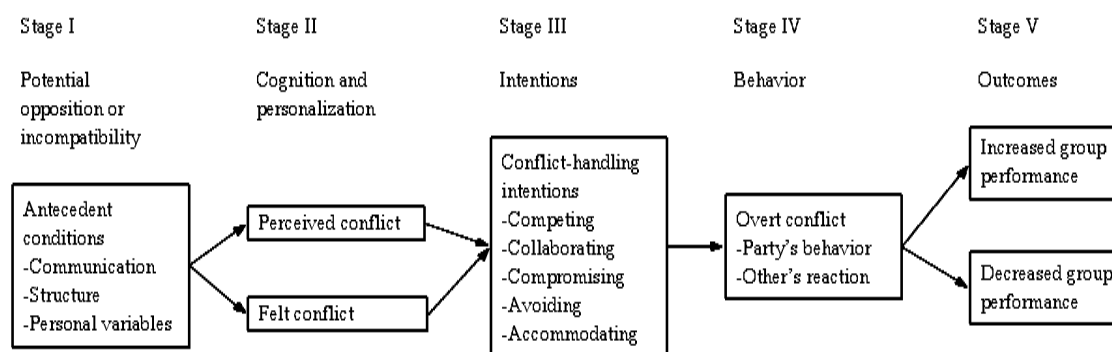
Process of Conflict

To discuss the process of conflict and provide the reader with a comprehensive overview of all the numerous definitions that exist in literature, I will utilize Pondy's (1967) Five Stages Theory, Schmidt and Kochan's (1972) Conflict Definition and Robbins & Judges' (2010) Conflict Model. Pondy's (1992) Five Stage Conflict model is important because it divides the conflict process into stages and describes specific characteristics of each stage: Stage (1) latent conflict (i.e., conditions) is "certain conditions frequently found in organizations provide the latent potential for conflict to occur"; stage (2) perceived conflict (cognition) is a stage that "one or more of the parties involved becomes aware, through some type of stimulus or information revived, of the potential for a conflict"; stage (3) felt conflict (affect) is a stage emotions are encountered, stage (4) manifest conflict (behavior) is the fourth stage, which some sort of adversarial behavior is exhibited, and stage (5) conflict aftermath (conditions) here the conflict is either resolved or become the basis for future conflicts (Pondy, 1992, p .301). The conflict starts from the latent stage that can be caused by a deficient of resources, a struggle for power and control, and groups having different objectives. These five stages of conflict occur through a dynamic process that explains conflict as a whole. The five-stage theory approximates a story or episode of an instance of conflict.

Instead of Pondy's (1967) dynamics of a conflict episode, Schmidt and Kochan (1972) defined the process of conflict, "as an overt behavioral outcome of process, that is, the actual interference or blocking" (p. 363). The conflict process initiates from the motivational forces, shared resources and independent activities, which are identified as

the motivations of conflict. These three factors lead the entities to incompatibility or opportunity for interference, which can result in conflict. As a result, the conflict was introduced to the entities as an “overt behavior” (Schmidt & Kochan, 1972, p. 36). Even though the theory is able to demonstrate the conflict procedures, it has limitations about the particular motivations of conflict. As a result of these limitations, the theory is best applied to conflict that occurs within organizations. The different motivational forces between each individual and the scarcity of resources are the most common issues that appear in an organization (Schmidt & Kochan, 1972). Whether or not it is a small local nonprofit organization or an international commercial incorporation, there is always a possibility for conflict to occur. However, Schmidt and Kochan’s (1972) conflict process theory seems incorrect for conflict caused by individual characteristics, due to the sharing of resources which rarely happens between individuals.

Figure 2: Process of Conflict (Robbins & Judges, 2010)



Robbins and Judges (2010) illustrated the conflict process by assumedly combining Pondy’s five-stage theory and Schmidt and Kochan’s (1972) theory (see figure 2). Similar to Pondy’s (1992) theory, the conflict development flow chart is also comprised of five stages, which are: (1) potential opposition or incompatibility is the first stage that

“presence of conditions that create opportunities for conflict to arise”; (2) cognition and personalization means “one or more of the parties must be aware of the existence of the antecedent conditions”; (3) intentions “intervene among people’s perceptions and emotions and overt behaviors”; (4) The behavior stage “includes the statements, actions, and reactions made by the conflicting parties”, and (5) outcomes: “the action–reaction interplay among the conflicting parties results in consequence (Robbins & Judges, 2010). Some of the previously mentioned stages of conflict development also correspond to the stages of Robbins and Judges’ (2010) theory. For example, the “cognition and personalization” stage from Robbins and Judges (2010) is consistent with Pondy’s (1967) “perceived conflict” and “felt conflict”; furthermore, the “outcome” stage is identical with the “conflict outcome”. Robbins and Judges (2010) admitted that certain behaviors would appear during the conflict development, such as in the stage IV, when the conflict overtly emerged. This is somehow similar to the Schmidt and Kochan (1972) definition of conflict that it is an overt behavior. However, Robbins and Judges’ (2010) conflict model depicted the outstanding features of the development of conflict. It describes the antecedent conditions and outcomes of conflict, and therefore, was fundamental in my research.

The Effects of Conflict

Conflict among different social entities brings about various effects (Wall & Callister, 1995). Generally, scholars agree that there are two consequences of conflict are functional or dysfunctional (e.g., Mack & Snyder, 1957; Baron, 1991; Schweiger & Sandberg, 1991). A functional outcome of conflict results in an improvement in the

group's performance. A dysfunctional outcome hinders group performance. Mack & Snyder (1957) suggested that the standards for defining the functional and dysfunctional conflict outcome have yet to be determined. This is the most difficult issue for classifying the effects of conflict, because of the numerous taxonomies that were built up by the different relevant criteria. In addition, they also claimed that, "No scholar, reformer, critic, or political has ever denied that conflict is an all-pervasive fact of human life, nor does anyone deny that society persists in spite of violent and costly conflict" (Mack & Snyder, 1957, p. 228). Baron's (1991) research on "the impact of strong negative emotions on cognition, stereotype-driven thinking, and attributional processes" can contribute to deciding what the principle outcome of conflict is, and whether it has functional or dysfunctional effects (p. 25). The results showed the strong negative emotions, attributional bias and stereotypical thinking, are more likely to bring about negative effects. On the contrary, positive emotions, accurate attributions and absence of stereotypical thinking yield positive effects. However, the results only reflect how emotion affects the conflict outcomes. Functional and dysfunctional outcomes of conflict cannot be generalized as outcomes are altered by characteristics of the specific situation. Through this research it was uncovered that decision quality, consensus, and affective acceptance rarely exist side-by-side harmoniously. Schweiger and Sandberg (1991) also considered that discussing conflict can enhance a society overall, but it may weaken the ability of the group to work together.

Functional Outcome. Sometimes, the effects of conflict can stimulate social entities in a positive direction (Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992). According to Amason

(1996) the negative effects of conflict should be avoided in an elite management team, which is an ideal method to achieve the benefit from the conflict. This is a positive result from the cognition aspect in analysis of the conflict outcome. He found that many researchers speculated that introducing the conflict into the social entities should be encouraged, which is an effective approach to increase the quality of decision-making. However, he has no evidence to support his research yet, and his study only focused on a small sample size.

Rahim (2011) emphasized several functional outcomes of organizational conflict in: (1) the innovation, creativity and change could be stimulated by the interaction among the entities especially the conflict; (2) The quality of decision-making would be enhanced by the effect of the conflict in the organization; (3) The conflicts might be the possible approach to find the alternative solutions; (4) the individuals and groups behavior might be affected and improved during the conflict; (5) the conflict could assist the members in the organization to articulate and clarify their position.

Dysfunctional Outcome. Slack and Parent (2006) maintained that conflict always has negative implications to the conflicting entities. As mentioned before, collaborating is the most desired result of the process of conflict, which means collaboration can bring a win-win result and both parties will be satisfied. Effective organization is a place where members have a good relationship with each other and work for an accepted target. The higher the collaboration level of the organization, the more effective it will be which will lead to better task quality. Furthermore, collaboration can reinforce the member's relationships (Tjosvold, 1988). Amason (1996) also discussed the significance of

“consensus” in social entities, especially in organizations. Decisions can be quickly made among the members of a team with the facilitation of consensus, which in turn, can improve the “organizational performance”. However, conflict always results in disagreement, along with passive emotions which do not contribute to the progression of the project which contradicts with Amson’s (1996) consensus standpoint. Thus, people generally accept dysfunctional outcomes.

According to Slack and Parent (2006), though functional and dysfunctional outcomes seem to be polar opposites, conflict can bring about results where the two distinctions intermingle. For example, powerful leadership has great influence on an organization and its members. When first introduced to new leadership, members might not be accustomed to a powerful leadership style and conflict can arise within an organization (Slack & Parent, 2006). Conflict weakens the work efficiency and organizational performance which results in a dysfunctional outcome. With the passage of time, the ideal outcome is that members gradually get along with the powerful leadership after the adjustment period. In addition, their work performance is improved by the impact of powerful leadership. Hence, the outcome of conflict is not entirely negative. Combining functional and dysfunctional outcomes can occur in special situations.

Summary

Multiple definitions and theories of conflict were discussed in this chapter. By defining conflict, introducing the conflict cycle, explaining the causes and each specific stage of the conflict process, and finally discussing specific effects and outcomes of conflict; I provided a comprehensive background of the meaning of conflict. I concluded

that Robbins and Judges (2010) Process of Conflict model was the best model to be applied to the Dragon case because its specific characteristics allowed for in-depth analysis. The outcomes of conflict are the most important concept in this chapter as they are fundamental in answering my research questions. The functional outcome is particularly of interest because it is uncommon to consider a positive or functional outcome of conflict. The definitions of these two outcomes should be referenced when reading chapter four and understanding the results of my research.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

In this chapter, the methods for conducting this study are presented. First, the single case study is described, then I discuss my role as the researcher. An overview of the research context is provided, along with a description of: the participants, the data collection process including conducting interviews, and the challenges involved in recruiting participants from a different country. Finally, the data analysis process is described and the criteria for meeting standards of trustworthiness are presented.

Research Design

A single-case study design was used in this study (Yin, 2013). Yin stated “the essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result” (p.15). A case study is focused on the “decisions” (p.15) that participants make in the study; it is used as a research design because it allows for an in-depth analysis of the case within a real-world context (Yin, 2013). The case study of the organizational conflict under investigation was deemed a single-case (Yin, 2013). Following Yin’s (2013) guidelines for conducting a case study, I first selected a “critical case”, which meant the selected case corresponded to my previously established theoretical proposition (Yin, 2013). It was appropriate to apply the theoretical proposition to the Dragon case, since the events resulting from the conflict followed a story-like pattern. Secondly, the case was considered unusual. “The extreme case” emphasizes the specialization of the single-case that might be able to uncover the awareness about the

phenomenon (Yin, 2013). The normal transfer transaction of a basketball team was supposed to progress very smoothly and without conflict under the supervision of the governmental bureau of sports. However, the Dragon case had challenges and both organizations experienced immense conflict, thus was considered an abnormal case in China. Conversely, the “common case” is the third rationale for a single-case study (Yin, 2013). In this situation, the Dragon team was not allowed to conduct the normal transfer transaction by themselves. Instead, the government must authorize any transactions. This government authorization/interference occurs very often in the Chinese sports industry. Since the very beginning of China’s professional basketball league, situations of conflict with governmental organizations have been present. While these two rationales are opposite concepts in meaning, they are two characteristics of single-case studies being analyzed from different perspectives.

Finally, my research was unique because even though situations of conflict between the government and other private enterprises are prevalent, they have not been previously studied. These cases, where private enterprises and the Chinese government experience conflict, have not been studied before because they expose weaknesses in government agencies and their attempt to manipulate the sports market. As a result of these unique characteristics, to perform an in depth analysis of the Dragon case, I utilized Robbins and Judges (2010) Five Stages conflict model, as well as other definitions of conflict that exist in literature because combining the multiple theories provided a comprehensive model that examined the entire conflict process holistically. Robbins and Judges’ (2010) specific descriptions of the characteristics of each stage of the conflict

process assisted me in identifying the distinctive stages of conflict between Dragon team and MPBS. Ultimately, identifying each specific stage of conflict aided me in conducting an in-depth analysis of the cause and progression of the conflict in my research.

Researcher's Role

As an exploratory research approach, qualitative research usually demands researchers constantly keep in touch with the participants (Creswell, 2015). This will uncover a series of issues in the qualitative research that affect the validity and credibility of research outcomes because humans are acting as the mediator between the research subject and the reader (Patton, 2002). Humans are not machines, and thus uncertainty and subjectivity exists when they are used as research instruments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). The issues might include purposeful research strategies, ethical problems regarding the participants, personal considerations, all which do not commonly exist in the quantitative research (Creswell, 2009). In order to address these issues, researchers should adopt strategies to deal with any biases, values, and aspects of personal background that might impact the research. In addition, qualitative researchers should also consider how to get access to gatekeepers in terms of the case and address potential ethical issues. These two elementary issues will be discussed in the researcher's role section.

Personal Biography

The personal biography of the researcher is required in order to demonstrate that personal interests might bias the research (Maxwell, 2005). Since qualitative investigation uses the researcher as the primary data collection instrument, Denzin and Lincoln (2000) maintain that qualitative researchers' unique personal biography, such as

particular class, gender, racial, cultural, and ethnic community perspective, will affect the research's outcome. Therefore, the qualitative researcher should provide comprehensive information about the research subject, which will enable the reader to understand the relationship that the researcher had with the subject.

As a Chinese student, I would like to highlight a couple of unique phenomenon that only exists in China's sports industry, including conflict between governmental bureau of sports and private-own sport team which was discussed in this case study. In addition, I am a sports management major who is committed to sports-related practice. I am motivated by these two personal biographies to probe the nature of the conflict among those organizations. My position in this case study was inquisitive, asking participants' questions that assist an understanding of how the conflict between these two organizations developed. Then, I developed potential applicable strategies for managing future conflict between these two sports organizations. Rather than interrogation, conversation was essential throughout the research process. In order to thoroughly answer my research questions, I had to act as a conversational partner, not just an interviewer, not allowing personal bias to affect the research in any way.

Negotiating Entry

Negotiating entry is an important technical consideration that requires knowledge of the settings and populations targeted and a strong understanding of participants concerns (Creswell, 2009). In regards to research, a gatekeeper is defined as an individual who is a member of, or has insider status, with the two organizations. Gatekeepers are used in qualitative research to assist the researcher in gaining access and trust within

organizations (Creswell, 2009). In most cases, a gatekeeper is an initial point of contact for the researcher, who is often easier to contact than other participants and able to assist the researcher in reaching other participants (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

Coincidentally, prior to beginning my research, I was introduced to an organizational employee by a friend. He was a suitable gatekeeper for gaining access and building trust between these two organizations and myself. Additionally, most of my background information on this case came from this individual. Ultimately, he enlightened me to initiate the study.

Upon starting this research, I requested and gained approval from the University of Minnesota Institute Research Ethics 1410E54704. Then, I contacted each potential participant via telephone, explaining the study and gaining consent. The form of consent was sent out to each interviewee with the interview guide, which was again provided before the official interview started. The informed consent form provides an overview of the study and acknowledges that participants' rights will be protected during all stages of the study.

Interpersonal

Researchers' interpersonal skills play a significant role in whether or not the qualitative research is successful (Patton, 2002). Marshall and Rossman (1995, p. 65) suggest that interpersonal skills are usually defined by building trust, maintaining good relations, respecting norms of reciprocity, and sensitively considering ethical issues. Reciprocity and ethics were the two important considerations in this case study. With regards to reciprocity, I showed my appreciation and gratitude toward my participants for

their contributions to my research. Instead of a financial reward, the rare reciprocity I provided was showing my gratitude via verbal comments and texts for their participation and sharing their perspectives and experiences with me. In addition, I shared my findings with the interviewees and their respective organizations which helped to answer any remaining questions or concerns.

Qualitative research requires personal and interpersonal interactions and communications (Creswell, 2015). In addition, the in-depth interviewing inspires the interviewees to share their natural thoughts with the researcher, which may provide more insight than surveys, tests, and other quantitative approaches (Patton, 2002). Sound qualitative research largely depends on the authenticity of data gathered from the interviewees' feelings and experiences (Patton, 2002). In my research, the interviewee's willingness to tell the truth might have been affected by the fact that this research was involved with government affairs, however, to prevent this from occurring, and to protect the data validity, confidentiality norms were applied strictly in the data collection. I maintained the confidentiality of interviewees by assigning pseudonyms to these two organizations and the participants (Patton, 2002).

Research Context

A location for performing research may be selected due to its representativeness, interest, and the range of examples of the phenomena under study, but if the researcher cannot gain access to the site and to a range of group and activities within it, the study cannot succeed (Patton, 2002). The location for my research was the Middle region of the People's Republic of China. The specific entities researched were: a governmental bureau

of sports and a basketball team. The pseudonyms for these two institutes are MPBS and the Dragon men's basketball team.

The conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS started at the end of April 2013. The Dragon team claimed that they reached an agreement with Xijing Interest Group and said the team's owner traded the Dragon Team to Xijing Interest Group for the price of 150 million yuan. This operation was immediately opposed by MPBS, because they did not feel the transfer met CBA provisions. Additionally, MPBS firmly insisted the Dragon Team remain in the Mountain Province. After seven months of negotiation and discussion, the Dragon team was finally sold to the Fen enterprise (located in Mountain Province) on November 8th, 2013 (Chai, 2013).

Looking back, the Dragon Team resulted from a consolidation of two teams, one located in the Mountain province and the other located in the West River province. The team became privately owned after it was purchased by Mr. Huang, an avid investor in the sports industry for many years prior to the purchase of the team (Jiang, 2013). Currently, in China, investments in the professional sports industry are very low, creating little room for growth (Chen, 2007). In the past seven years, the team's investor, Mr. Huang, had to pay, out-of-pocket, for the team's expenditures, including employee salaries, arena rental fees, security fees, equipment, and maintenance (Su & Ye, 2013). Last year, the expenses for managing the organization outweighed the revenues, which caused Mr. Wang to sell some of his real estate holdings to cover the financial deficit (Jiang, 2013). In China, the primary mission of sport bureaus is to develop sports talent and provide opportunities for community sport participation (Jackson, 2015a). The

MPBS is a huge governmental agency, who is responsible for administration of sports-related affairs in the Mountain province. According to its official website, MPBS has seven sub institutes and 38 staff members (Mountain Province Bureau of Sports, n.d.).

Sampling

To reinforce the soundness of the qualitative research, a fully developed sampling strategy was used (Maxwell, 2005). The term purposeful sampling is usually used in qualitative research, which means the selected individuals and site, deliberately serve the research to probe the central phenomenon and research problem. Purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002) is adopted in recruiting the participants because it can yield “insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations” (p. 230). Purposeful sampling is also called purposeful selection (Maxwell, 2005) and criterion-based selection (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Maxwell (2005) described that it is “a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or activities are selected deliberately in order to provide information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (p. 88). Patton (2002) explained, “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (p. 230).

In order to gain individuals’ first-hand accounts and understandings of the nature of the conflict within both organizations, the study applied a criterion sampling strategy. Patton (2002) defines criterion sampling as “reviewing and studying all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance” (p.238). This sampling approach is one of the most common sampling strategies and strives to select ideal participants who are relevant to the case study and research questions (Patton, 2002).

Since the research questions were related to the conflict process, the criteria of selecting participants included individuals who were very familiar with the process. The main criteria participants had to encompass in order to be selected for the study was involvement with the cooperation of the Dragon incorporation and MPBS from the very beginning to the end of the conflict process. Individuals, who worked for either the Dragon incorporation or MPBS and experienced the conflict process, assumedly had a holistic view of what happened throughout the stages of conflict. There were approximately three employees engaged with the Mountain province basketball team. The Dragon incorporation is a private enterprise and currently has five people who were directly involved with this conflict case study.

This study recruited six participants from both of the conflicting parties. During the initial interview with the help of my gatekeeper, we identified 10 potential interviewees to invite to participate in the study. Once I determined whether they met my sampling requirement, they were extended an invitation for participation via email. My gatekeeper also aided in this process of the research by serving as an initial point of contact first introducing me, then briefly describing my research intentions. Ten days after the invitation extension, I received nine positive responses. The nine positive responses included 6 members of the Dragon team and three individuals from the MPBS. The male to female ratio of the group was 8:1.

Since government policy is a sensitive issue for Chinese government staff, it did not come as a surprise that fewer members of the MPBS chose to participate in my research. In order to ensure balanced responses, I selected three interviewees from each

organization. I selected three interviewees who had been working with the Dragon organization for the longest time in roles that were similar to those of the interviewees selected from the MPBS. Then, since both organizations had overlapping roles, I selected three of six potential interviewees who were working at the Dragon team for longest years at the same role with other interviewees." Table 1 provides more information regarding these six participants.

Table 1: Participations Demographic

	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Org</i>	<i># Yr</i>	<i>CP</i>
Interviewee A	Male	Dragon	8	Coach
Interviewee B	Male	Dragon	3	Program Specialist
Interviewee C	Female	Dragon	9	Manager Assistant
Interviewee D	Male	MPBS	10+	Associate Director
Interviewee E	Male	MPBS	10+	Project Executive
Interviewee F	Male	MPBS	10+	Director

Note. Org=organization; # Yr=# of years in the organization; CP=current position; Dragon Basketball

Team = Dragon; Mountain Province Bureau of Sports = MPBS

Pilot Study

A pilot study is important to enhance the overall soundness of the research design (Patton, 2002). The pilot study helped to ensure whether the interview questions were suitable to address my research questions and more overall ability to conduct the interviews. In addition to determining the ability to conduct qualitative research, a pilot study can uncover “fascinating questions and intriguing patterns” in the case as well (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 43). Initially I expected to evaluate how effective the

interview guide was, in terms of answering the research questions, even though interview answers were not a reflection of the conflict process. Therefore, I considered several factors during the pilot interviews including: how to refine and develop the interview questions to probe participants' real thoughts in order to increase the credibility of the research, assess the degree of the researcher's bias and test Robbins and Judges (2010) Five Stages Conflict Model regarding the pilot interview.

In general, "convenience", "access", and "geographic proximity" (Yin, 2013, p. 97) were the three primary criteria for pilot participant selection. Since the anticipated sample size of the research was small and the number of potential participants was less than ten, I did not include participants who met the sampling criterion for the actual study because it would waste the limited interviewees. I selected three Chinese students, whom I had a personal relationship with, to be interviewed in the pilot study. I used pseudonyms for each of the pilot study participants, Chris, Jeffery and Lee. Chris was a graduate student, majoring in sports management. Jeffrey was an undergraduate full-time student in the College of design at UMN. Lee was pursuing a Master's degree in the College of Education and Human Development at UMN. All of these participants communicated fluently in either Chinese or English.

In order to simulate problems I might have experienced in the actual interview, I decided to conduct the interviews over the phone, with detailed digital recording and note taking. The interviews were conducted once a day for three days. Generally, I greeted the interviewees and simply explained the purpose of the research. Since the background questions did not apply to the pilot study participants, I revised some of the questions,

like “Can you introduce yourself?” “How do you know about the conflict?” and “How long ago did you hear about their conflict?” Then, I roughly spent 40-50 minutes with each interviewee, asking conflict questions that followed the interview guideline. At the end of interview, besides reiterating the interview content, I restated that their personal information would be kept completely confidential. I also expressed how grateful I was regarding to their generous contributions.

The transcriptions were immediately completed once each interview was finished in order to ensure accuracy of the research data. Detailing the transcriptions was time consuming and very tedious, but doing so allowed me to reorganize my thoughts. As for coding, I utilized the categorization strategy, which allowed me to systematize the considerable amount of data. Regarding the different research questions, I applied the categorizing coding methods. In terms of understanding of the conflict, each stage of the conflict process was identified using substantive categories because the participants have their own recognitions of each conflict stage. The theoretical categories were employed when I coded for the data of other research questions. I categorized the data into several themes; such as the mismatching of organization’s goals and leadership conflict were both under the concept of conflict causation.

Unfortunately, my conclusions from the pilot study cannot be used as an authentic resource to support my research because all interviewees in the pilot study did not experience the conflict between the Dragon and MPBS. Especially, the response to research question #2 and #3 may not be completely accurate and credible. In response to the research question #1, one important theme is both organizations did not reach an

agreement before beginning their collaboration. A legally binding document should be given top priority in their collaboration. In addition, they all mentioned a lot about the term of separating the politics and sports, which means for a highly developed sports industry, such as basketball and soccer, the governmental control should be diminished allowing the private industry to continue its development develop without any restriction. In response to the research question #4, the participants agreed both functional and dysfunctional outcomes came as a result of the conflict between these organizations.

Data Collection

Interview Guide

Interviewing is an effective approach to support researchers inquiring participants' first-hand accounts within a specific case study (Yin, 2013). I assumed the potential interviewees had comprehensive, significant and valuable views to add to the research. As a qualitative researcher, I expected personal experiences related to this case to be collected from the interviews. Because the research quality was affected by my data collecting techniques and interview design. An interview guide should consist of questions which will elicit rich stories by the participants.

The interview guide was designed in a semi-structured (Patton, 2002) format with open-ended questions. I conducted conversational style interviews to keep the interaction friendly (Patton, 2002). This design gave the interviewees flexibility to generate responses without choosing from a fixed list of answers, and also reduced interviewer effects and bias (Patton, 2002). The interview guide was first written in English and then translated into Chinese. As a result of the location and cultural practices of the region

where I conducted my research, the interview guide was presented to the interviewees in Chinese, their native tongue. For the purposed of my thesis, their responses were then translated from Chinese to English. In order to make sure that the research questions were addressed in the interview, the list of questions provided in the interview guide were designed and organized in a logical order, although many questions in the actual interview were spontaneous. Additionally, the interview guide was not a list of questions that must be followed one by one, instead it also served as a direction that allowed me to probe, discover, and ask questions directly to the participants within the certain scope of the research (Patton, 2002).

The interview guide was organized into two main sections. To help address the three research questions. The first section asked pertinent background/demographic questions such as number of years employed with the organization, role, and responsibilities. The second section asked questions about the nature of the conflict in terms of exploring how the conflict arose, what happened, the consequences of the conflict, and what strategies, if any, were used to address the conflict. In general, the interview was conducted in a non-directive style and consisted of open-ended questions (Patton, 2002). It allowed the interviewees to elaborate their thoughts with more details and gave them the freedom to naturally describe each stage of the conflict (Patton, 2002). While non-directive question techniques were the most beneficial in my research, a direct questioning style was occasionally used as well, when I desired more explanation/detail.

Interview Procedures

The qualitative in-depth interviews were much more like casual discussion rather

than formal conversation (Patton, 2002). In my case study, the in-depth interview included two steps. First, I sent each participant an interview guide, in order for them to better understand my questions. I wanted them to know what kind of questions would be asked in the interview and it gave them a general idea of the research focus. Emailing the interview guide provided enough time for each participant to prepare and think about the conflict they had experienced and/or observed. Because of the international nature of the case study, all interviews were conducted by phone in Chinese and digitally recorded. I required a phone interview because the interviewees were located in different cities in China so I was unable to interview all of them face-to-face. During each interview I took notes on important points that were made by the interviewee as well as follow-up questions that I was interested in analyzing further. My note taking facilitated transcribing and analysis because my first response thoughts during the interview were recorded. I mainly wrote down the answers that closely related to the research questions as important facts should be highlighted during the research. However, I was cautious not to let my note taking distract my attention during the conversation with the participants. The phone interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes in length, and were transcribed verbatim.

Data Analysis

Regarding the nature of data analysis, most scholars maintained the same conception. According to Creswell's (2015) description, data analysis in qualitative research includes several phases: assembling the different types of data collected and ordering it logically for analysis, then creating codes and using appropriate coding techniques and

reorganizing the data with proper categories, and finally writing up and presenting the analyzed data. Yin (2013) also explained that “data analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, testing, or otherwise recombining evidence, to produce empirically based findings” (p.132). In order to organize the data in a meaningful way, researchers generally experience a messy, dubious, tedious, creative and fascinating process (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

The data analysis therefore consisted of three major steps: 1) organizing the data; 2) generating categories, themes, and patterns via coding techniques (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p.114); and 3) representing data for discussion (Creswell, 2009). First, the data was organizing through transcribing each interview in Chinese. The verbatim transcription is the essential raw data for qualitative analysis (Patton, 2002), it enables the researcher to record information not just the words but also the audio, for example non-verbal communication in the interview, such as laughter, silence and ambiguous answers (Patton, 2002). The data was originally transcribed in Chinese, as this was the common native language amongst all interviewees and myself. Once all data was recorded, it was translated to English for the purposes of this thesis. To assist with the credibility of the study, I had a bilingual colleague (fluent in English and Chinese) verify each translated transcript for accuracy.

Repetitive readings were next necessary after the verbatim transcription to help familiarize myself with the data I collected (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). For each of the six interviewees I collected about six pages of Chinese transcription which resulted in about eight pages of English translation. In its entirety, the translation process took one

and a half months to complete. While I was reading the transcription, I “cleaned up” (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p.113) the unmanageable data and as well as took notes of the key data that directly answered my research questions. The “clean up” procedure was a phase to get a sense of the quality of the information; and it helped me to form a sense of how to generate themes from the information (Patton, 2002).

The second stage of data analysis was coding, which is the most difficult and intellectual phase of data analysis because one must figure out themes, recurring concepts or language, and patterns of belief (Patton, 2002). In terms of the different research questions, codes were developed and different coding strategies were employed (Patton, 2002). For stage I and stage II, I applied two types of inductive coding strategies on the research data: open coding and axial coding. According to Creswell (2009), open coding is identifying and selecting the certain research data with different labels that were designated to explicitly point out several properties. Those labels and properties also called codes that can be discovered when the transcription is read line-by-line. In order to generate appropriate codes or labels, Given (2008) suggested thinking about the following questions, while the researcher is working on the transcription: What is going on? What was done? How is it being done? Who did it? What are the goals? What was the meaning of it? What was the intent? What feelings or thoughts are being communicated? For example, when I transcribed Interviewee C’s answer regarding interview question five, she stated that “...the MPBS neither gives any responses nor takes any actions to Dragon team regarding the transfer. They only told us that they would not authorize Xijing Interest Group to take over Dragon team and they would help

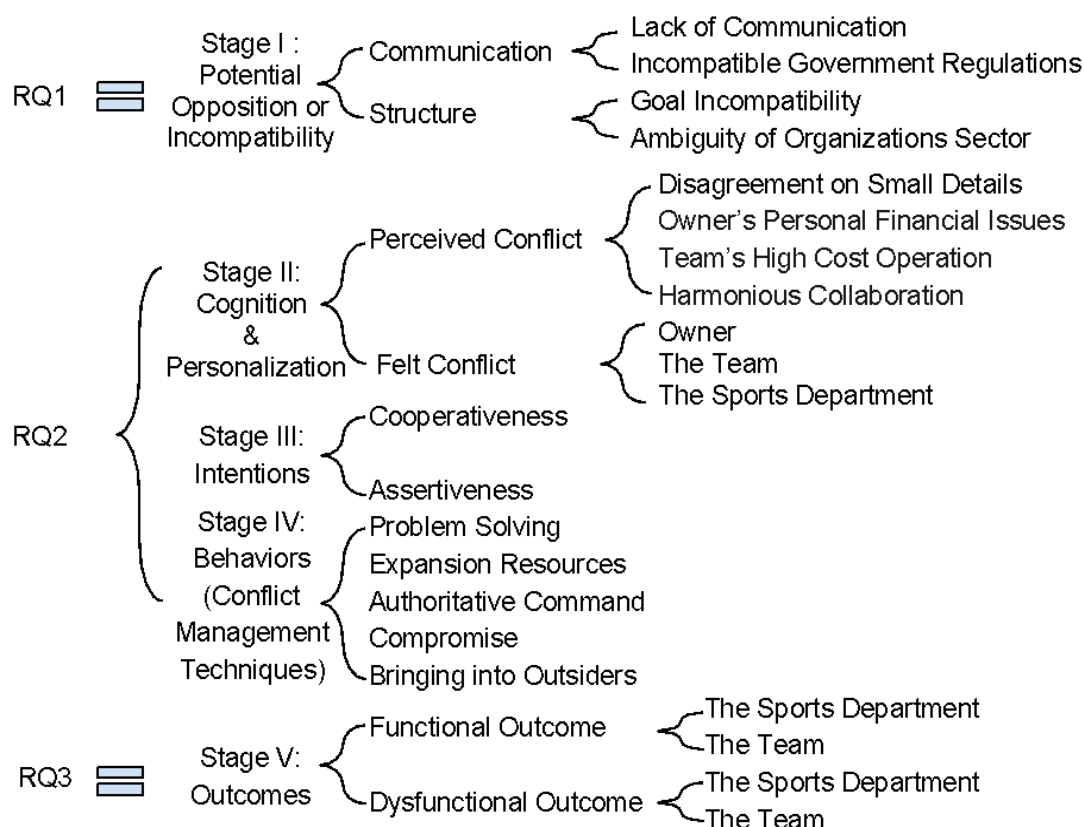
us to look for the local enterprise. But we did not hear from them until one month ago....”

The first few sentences hit at the notion that MPBS and the Dragon team lacked communication, and I found that other interviewees mentioned similar communication issues as well. As a result, lack of communication became a coding tag.

After the open coding, several similar and related codes and labels can be categorized under a general theme, which is the axial coding. Axial coding is classifying the labels and codes with a logical order and sorting them into groups (Creswell, 2009). For example, I created several coding tags after open coding such as lack of communication and incompatible governmental regulations, then I classified these tags under the theme of communication in Robbins and Judges Stage I (Robbins & Judge, 2010). Deductive coding strategies were applied to identify the information regarding to the stage III, IV and V. Deductive coding starts from a specific theory pertaining to the research topic and interest (Patton, 2002). Then, researchers develop hypotheses to verify the theory. During the observation and data collection, researchers will see if the data is able to address the hypotheses. This eventually directs us to test the hypotheses with specific data and searches for a confirmation (or not) of our original theories (Trochim, 2006). I classified Robbins & Judges (2010) five conflict stages for this case when I am coding. Important descriptions and words pertaining to the case study and research questions were extracted from each transcript. Meanings are then formulated from the significant statements. Then the meanings were allocated into themes; these themes evolved into theme clusters, and eventually into theme categories. A category matrix will be an appropriate approach to present the evidence within such categories in a visualized

way. The following figure is an example of such matrix. This figure breaks down each stage of the process of conflict, as they relate to each of my research questions. Specific characteristics of each stage are listed. The final stage of data analysis is wrapping up the results. It requires selecting particular words that encapsulated and expressed in the complicated data.

Figure 3: Data Analysis Matrix



Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that any persuasive inquiry must validate the value and worth of its findings, provide explanations for implementing the results and “allow for external judgments to be made about the consistence of its procedures and the neutrality of its findings or decisions” (p.1). Lincoln and Guba (1985) assumed that

trustworthiness is a method to evaluate the worth of research. In order to reinforce the trustworthiness, they suggested using four criteria in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Since qualitative research uses completely different data collection and analysis methods than quantitative research, quantitative researchers criticize qualitative research as “fiction, not science, and that these researchers have no way to verify their truth statements” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 8) because qualitative research is against positivist criteria of validity, reliability, and objectivity (Anfara et al, 2002).

Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research is demonstrating that the conclusion and findings of a qualitative study are authentic and convincing from the aspect of an interviewee or subject in the research itself (Patton, 1999). Since the intention of qualitative research is presenting or interpreting the case, fact or phenomenon of interest from the perspective of participants, “the participants who form the subjects of the study are best situated to judge the credibility of the findings in a qualitative study” (Patton, 2002, p. 1189). As an alternative to internal validity (Anfara et al., 2002; Lincoln, 1985), credibility employs two techniques, including member checks and peer debriefing, which are provided by Creswell (2009). Member checking is a method to increase the data authenticity and remove the misunderstanding of the findings, which is Lincoln and Guba (1985) thought the most significant provision for building study’s credibility. Probing and follow up questions along with transcribing responses provided by participants helps to ensure accuracy of their statements. Member checks occurred throughout the data generation and

analysis process. This not only provided the participants the opportunity to reconfirm their statements and exam their interpretations, but also add any additional information at the same time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). During an interview, I restated and summarized answers previous responses, and where necessary, asked questions to verify my understanding. Member checks were also used after analyzing the research results. I shared all of the findings with the interviewees involved where I encouraged them to critically examine and analyze the research results, making comments where necessary. The majority of the results were positively accepted by each interviewee and they also affirmed that the summaries reflected their views, feelings, and experiences.

Transferability

Transferability is whether the research findings can be applied to similar research contexts (Dereshiwsy, 1999). Unlike quantitative research, the findings of a qualitative study are limited to a small number of particular conditions and a special group (Dereshiwsy, 1999); it is difficult to confirm that the study findings and outcomes can be suitable to other cases and environment (Shenton, 2004). However, that decision is left up to the readers. In order to establish the transferability and reinforce external validity of the research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) use the term of thick description, which means representing the sufficient and detailed findings in the conclusion that can be transferable to other situations. The decision whether to apply the research outcomes to other researches depends on the sufficient thick description of the qualitative research under investigation (Shenton, 2004). I adopted Shenton's (2004) summary for enriching and providing sufficient thick description of the data collection and analysis process. First, I

provided the basic information regarding the organizations involved with this research; second, the criteria for selecting participants and why they fit my research purpose was documented; Third, the data collection methods and analysis techniques I used for contributing to the research findings was clearly documented; last, the time period of the case study was provided in the text for readers to consider its results and determine if the results could be transferred to their own research.

Dependability

The dependability of qualitative research is whether the findings or results are consistent and could be repeated, if the research could be conducted again with same or similar context and subjects. Guba (1981) explained that even though the stability of data is an important factor that affects the dependability, the certain tolerance range of instability of data was allowed that result in “different realities are being tapped or because of instrumental shifts stemming from developing insights on the part of the investigator-as-instrument”(p.86). In order to reinforce the study’s dependability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested researchers implement the strategy of external inquiry, which is looking for “accurate and adequate documentation of changes, surprise occurrences, and the like, in the phenomena being studied” (Dereshiwsy, 1999). External reviewers were a good alternative to help me verify and establish the dependability of this research. An external reviewer assessed several procedures of the research, which included reviewing the interview guide to determine whether it properly fit the research purpose, and examining transcripts according to the audio data to ensure that the research findings were authentic. My academic advisor acted as an external reviewer in this research. She

assisted me with checking to affirm the entire research design was appropriate for addressing the research questions and making further revisions to verify the research could be easily and smoothly implemented and repeated. In order to increase the dependability in the data transcribing, a colleague, helped me to check the accuracy of in transcribing the digital interviews. At the time of data analysis she was a PhD candidate at the University of Minnesota. She was knowledgeable researcher, who spoke Chinese fluently and did not have any connection with this research. She read my verbatim Chinese transcribing while listening to the interview records. My colleague also examined the translated interview data. Using external reviewers helped ensure the study's trustworthiness by strengthening the dependability and confirmability of the research.

Confirmability

Confirmability is testing the objectivity of the qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The concept was initiated by the qualitative investigator's concern regarding objectivity (Shenton, 2004). Shenton assumed that "steps must be taken to help ensure as far as possible that the work's findings are the result of the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the characteristics and preferences of the researcher"(p. 72). The research results must come from the participants' insights and perspectives, rather than the preferences and bias of researchers. The purpose of confirmability is determining whether the research findings can be confirmed by another source (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I employed triangulation to enhance the confirmability of the research. Triangulation was defined by Guba (1981), "whereby a variety of data

sources, different investigators, different perspectives (theories), and different methods are pitted against one another in order to crosscheck data and interpretations” (p. 85). Three types of triangulation methods were identified by Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999), methods triangulation, triangulation of sources, analyst triangulation and theory/perspective triangulation. The methods triangulation is most commonly applied to test the confirmability for both qualitative and quantitative research. It is a way to verify the consistency of findings with identifying other types of data sources (Patton, 2002). Therefore, collecting data from previous research studies was an appropriate method to demonstrate the consistency of my findings. I attempted to review other studies in order to identify possible connections with my case study in order to verify the confirmability of my research. However, since the Dragon team and MPBS case was quite unique, I was unable to find many studies that were similar to my research. Nevertheless, I did find a research study that analyzed the transfer conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS from a legal perspective, however, the results were not able to reinforce my research results. Instead of academic studies, I found some news commentaries regarding the case of conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS and a few of them agreed with my conclusion of a need for clear sector identification and compatible governmental regulations. These news commentaries helped to reinforce the research trustworthiness from a confirmability perspective.

Summary

The methods used to complete this case study were reviewed in this chapter. Given the unique international context of organizational conflict, a single case study was

warranted. The role of researcher was detailed as it related to gaining access and conducting the interviews. Data analysis involved open and axial coding that assisted in generating themes and categories related to the causes, processes, and outcomes of organizational conflict. Various strategies were used, including conducting a pilot study, for ensuring the overall trustworthiness of the study. In the next chapter, the various themes and categories related to this case of organizational conflict are presented as they related to addressing the research questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results related to the three research questions that addressed how differences between the Dragon team and MPBS lead to conflict. The first section, explains why the conflict occurred. The conflict occurred primarily as a result of an increase in private investment in the professional sports industry which created a competitive financial environment, primarily amongst basketball teams. The second section explains how the conflict progressed, to do this, Robbins and Judges (2010) Conflict Process Model is analyzed and applied to the conflict experienced by the Dragon team and MPBS. Finally, the last section discusses the outcomes of the conflict experienced by the Dragon team and MPBS, to do this, both the functional and dysfunctional outcomes of the conflict are analyzed. My research was unique because it suggests that the Dragon team and MPBS experienced both outcomes instead of just one.

Research Question One

Communication

Robbins and Judges (2013) explained that conflict might result from “differing word connotations, jargon, insufficient exchange of information, and noise in the communication channel” (p. 450). Continuing to practice inefficient communication leads to an increased potential for conflict between two collaborating organizations. Under-communication or over-communication can also lead to potential conflict. Under-communication entails a lack of communication between collaborating parties while over-communication involves an immense amount of communication which can lead to

misunderstandings. Specifically, the Dragon team and MPBS' lack of communication and inapplicable government regulations caused the conflict and these two themes are explained next.

Lack of communication. A lack of communication occurs when two parties fail to efficiently express information with each other (Robbins & Judges, 2013). A lack of efficient communication often results from misunderstandings (Robbins & Judges, 2013). A misunderstanding is when a party receives incompatible information based on their previous understanding (Robbins & Judges, 2013). Therefore, both parties are responsible for the conflict resulting from their inefficient communication. The miscommunication between the Dragon team and MPBS occurred as a result of a need for approval authority to complete the transfer. The Dragon team asked MPBS for approval to complete the transfer with the Xijing Interest Group; the firm opposed the idea of moving the team out of the province and avoided and refused communication with the Dragon team. Refusing communication with the team was a retaliation tactic, making it very clear that MPBS did not agree with the transfer. Instead of directly addressing the issue, MPBS used non-communication to negatively impact relations with the team. Interviewee C explained the conflict with an angry tone,

“MPBS neither gives any responses nor takes any actions to Dragon team regarding the transfer. They only told us that they would not authorize Xijing Interest Group to take over Dragon team and they would help us to look for the local enterprise. But we did not hear from them until one month ago.”

The acquisition of the team was delayed as a result of the lack of communication between

the Dragon team and MPBS. Neither party responded to requests from the other, therefore, the acquisition did not progress in a timely manner. Moreover, MPBS accused the Dragon team of failing to inform them about the preexisting deal with the Xijing Interest Group. It is unclear whether the lack of communication was an intentional act by either organization, but we do know that the poor communication techniques (i.e., not responding and failing to proceed with the transfer) practiced by both organizations led to the conflict.

Inapplicable government regulations. In addition to the lack of communication between Dragon team and MPBS, government regulations regarding the Dragon team's equity transfer, were also responsible for the conflict. In the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA), there exists a regulation stating that in order to apply for transfer competition rights, a state owned team must submit transfer-approved documents from its local provincial bureau of sports (China Sports Connection, 2015). At the time this regulation was implemented, all Chinese Basketball teams were state owned. Conflict arose when the State tried to apply their government regulations to the Dragon team which was a privately owned team. MPBS applied this outdated and inapplicable regulation, written specifically for public teams, to the Dragon team even though they were a private enterprise. Administrators of the Dragon team believed the regulation was outdated and felt the transfer rule was invalid because Dragon team was privately owned. Interviewee B said, "It is not acceptable that the temporary regulations was implemented for over 20 years and probably will be continually applying in the future. In addition, why would be a private owned enterprise objected by a public regulation?" Interviewee C

suggested those regulations should be revised to reflect the modern Chinese Basketball Association.

Structure

Organizational conflict also resulted from the structural nature of these two organizations. The structure of an organization can be defined from various aspects, such as size of the group, degree of specialization in the tasks assigned to group members, jurisdictional clarity, member–goal compatibility, and the degree of dependence between groups (Robbins & Judges, 2013). In this case, goal incompatibility and the ambiguous nature of which organization the team belonged to were the main structural causes of the organizational conflict. Robbins and Judges (2013) explained two reasons why ambiguity within the structure of an organization often results in conflict. One reason is because of the difficulty in assigning credit or blame between two entities increases the likelihood of conflict. The second reason is because the low routinization and uncertainty of means to goals increase the potential for conflict. The cause of the conflict can be associated with incompatible goals and the organization type (i.e., Dragon was a private organization and had opposing goals with MPBS). Next, I provide an in-depth inquiry of these two structural characteristics to explain how the conflict escalated.

Goal incompatibility. Over half of the interviewees agreed with the claim that the Dragon team and MPBS had conflicting goals. The Dragon team was interested in exploring options to solve their financial problems, one of these options included being sold to a high bidder. On the other hand, MPBS attempted to prevent the Dragon team from leaving the province because they did not want to lose the team that had been

playing in the Mountain province for the past 10 years. As an enterprise, the Dragon team wanted to be sold immediately and relieve themselves of the financial burden associated with running the team.

Interviewee B explained how quickly the team owner, Mr. Huang, wanted the team to be sold. He wanted to relieve himself of the financial burden as early as possible and the Xijing Interest Group seemed to be the right buyer. He said, “the Dragon team’s owner can hardly wait to sell the Dragon team’s equity due to financial stress, while the Xijing Interest Group had the intention to acquire the Dragon team.”

Interviewee D and F understood the financial stress the team was experiencing and realized the need to find an appropriate buyer. Then, they explained that in the world of professional sports, time is money and Mr. Huang’s financial situation would not even allow him to operate the team for one more day. Interviewee D said, “We totally understand what the Dragon team was facing at that time. Their financial situation would not allow them to operate the Dragon team for even one more day.” Interviewee F shared the same attitude as Interviewee D and said

“...Mr. Huang really desires to find a suitable buyer in such a short time. Time is money. ... So we’re always holding the same attitude to allow the Dragon team to look for buyer by themselves.”

Despite Mr. Huang publically expressing the immense financial burden associated with sponsoring the team, MPBS did not show any empathy to his pleas and therefore the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS intensified. Conflict was further experienced between the two parties when MPBS officials insisted that the next sponsor

should be selected locally from within the Mountain province, which would prevent the team from moving out of the province. Interviewee D explained, “The only thing we care about is keeping Dragon team in the Mountain province. However, Dragon transferred Dragon team to a Xijing enterprise, which means they contradicted our initial agreement.” Interviewee B said that “MPBS has clearly breached two provisions: 1. the competition participation rights must stay in Mountain province and cannot leave; 2. Mountain’s enterprises (the local enterprise) should be priority regarding Dragon team’s equity transfer.” The findings therefore show that if two organizations do not have compatible goals, they most likely will not be able to positively work together.

Ambiguous organization sector. Similar to Robins and Judges (2013) explanation of reasons for conflict between organizations with ambiguous structure, differences between public and private sector entities played a role in the conflict experienced by the Dragon team and MPBS. MPBS recognized the Dragon team as a public enterprise while the Dragon team viewed themselves as part of the private sector. This led to confusion regarding the Dragon team’s specific sector.

Amongst interviewees it was unclear which specific sector Dragon belonged to and most interviewees did not really mention which sector Dragon belonged to. When I spoke to interviewee D, I immediately recognized that the ambiguity of the organization’s sector would be a potential source of conflict. He explained the history of the Dragon team. The team was actually formed by a consolidation of two now defunct teams, one of which was located in the Mountain province², while the other was brought

² In China, a province is similar to a state in the United States. The Mountain province is therefore a region located in Midwest of China.

in from an outside province, the West River province³. Interviewee D also explained that Mr. Huang, the team owner, helped with the consolidation and acquiring the CBA's participation qualification. Unlike other CBA teams, the Dragon team was special because it was not governed by their provincial bureau of sports. In China, a provincial bureau of sports is a governing body for professional teams, located in the same province as the team it governs. However, because Dragon's specific sector was never defined, regulations used to implement Dragon team's equity transfer became a big issue leading up to the conflict. MPBS applied the inapplicable and out of date governmental regulations to stop the transfer. Interviewee A said, "even the originality of the Dragon Team was partly from the West River Province owned team, it became a private owned team after it has been purchased by Mr. Huang. Therefore, I do not think our team should be subjected by CBA's regulations." He continued to add that

"I remembered when the team moved out from West River Province to Mountain Province, the West River Province Bureau of Sports (WRPBS) was more willing to facilitate the transfer and approved all documents in just two days. Because the team is private owned at that moment, getting the approval from WRPBS was a formality of transfer procedure and it does not mean RPBS could decide where the team should go."

The confusing governmental regulations and incompatible goals between the organizations were two major factors that triggered conflict. State regulations could only be implemented if the Dragon team belonged to its provincial bureau of sports. With the

³ A region located in Midwest of China as well.

numerous changes within the professional basketball league since 2007, more and more private enterprises have invested in the sports industry, especially in basketball. However, the government regulations regarding basketball enterprises need to be altered to reflect the modern financial market and apply to these teams. This case should be an indicator to remind the governmental bureau of sports that it is time to make regulatory changes to meet current sport sponsor/owner needs. Due to China's special ideology, or hierarchy of power, the goals of governmental entities were always of the utmost importance, and satisfied first. In order to develop a healthy professional sports industry, the Chinese government has to make the choice whether they would like to give up control of the sports market or if they to continue to control its development.

Research Question Two

Robins and Judges (2013) also framed my second research question, which described an overview of the conflict process and identified the characteristics of each of the five stages of conflict. Research question two, examined the nature of the conflict during each stage. Since stage one explained research question one, and examined the cause of the organizational conflict; research question two concentrated on stages two through four of the conflict process: stage II: cognition and personalization, stage III: intention and stage IV: behavior.

Stage II of conflict: Cognition and Personalization

Robbins and Judges (2013) defined stage II of organizational conflict as a manifestation of stage I where the conflict is created and then becomes personal and therefore escalates. As the findings of research question one showed, potential opposition

and incapability created great potential for conflict and led to the negative results that emerged in stage II.

There are two levels of conflict in stage two, perceived conflict and felt conflict (Robbins & Judges, 2013). Robbins and Judges (2010) explained that perceived conflict is the first level of stage II of the Five Stage Conflict Process Model, (see figure 2 on page 22) and is defined by a small level of disagreement that does not affect one party's feelings toward the other. Felt conflict is at a higher level in this stage because "individuals become emotionally involved" (p. 451). Essentially this means that individuals are no longer merely witnessing conflict, they are directly involved with the conflict. Since emotions often create passion for a situation or cause, when combined with conflict, they often lead individuals to resort to any means necessary to achieve their goals and desires.

Perceived conflict. Participants' perceptions of the conflict varied and some of them had completely contradictory opinions about the conflict. This may be caused by the fact that participants were all from different positions or played different roles within these two organizations. Perceived conflict can be classified into several subgroups which include: disagreement on small details, team's high cost of operation, owner's industrial recession and harmonious collaboration.

Misunderstanding of expectations. In a situation of conflict, misunderstandings, specifically those related to expectations, can, and often will, result in a disagreement which only escalates the conflict. In the conflict experienced by the Dragon team and MPBS, expectations regarding financial support of players differed between both parties.

For example, MPBS did not allow Dragon team members to live in apartments that were built to house the athletes. The players did not agree with this decision, because they were under the assumption that the housing facilities were constructed for their use. This created a rift between the players and the management, who the players believed were to blame for the misunderstanding. The players felt hurt and mistreated by what they considered to be an intentional act. Interviewee A posed several questions regarding trying to understand MPBS's behavior,

“If the Dragon Team is a governmental entity, why hasn't MPBS provided any financial support for Dragon team in the last ten years just like other provincial bureaus of sports do? Why isn't Dragon team allowed to use the new Olympic stadium for free? Why isn't Dragon team allowed to use the athlete's' apartments?”

Not having access to this financial support resulted in conflict that hindered the two organizations from positively collaborating. Interviewee B shared that the Dragon team should not be subjected to government policies like financial regulations because they were not a government entity, they were part of a private enterprise. The ambiguity and confusion regarding what sector the team belonged to was evident. This ambiguity played a vital role in the escalation of the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS.

Owner's personal financial issues. Due to the owner's poor financial state, he could no longer support the Dragon team. Around the time of the transfer, China was also experiencing an industrial recession (Chai, 2013) and as a result, team owner, Mr. Huang was forced to sell his steel plant companies in an effort to compensate for the expenses and resulting revenue losses associated with owning the Dragon team. Additionally, Mr.

Huang also used his personal savings to finance team member salaries. Mr. Huang's depreciating finances were well known throughout the province and the publicity only made the impending transfer more urgent, as he urgently worked to avoid bankruptcy. Mr. Huang was distressed, as any man facing bankruptcy would be, but he was also tired to putting so much into the team: emotionally, physically and mentally, he was exhausted, and ultimately concluded: despite his love for the players and how much the team meant to him, the best decision was to sell the team to someone better equipped to manage the enterprise. At that point it was clear that emotions were involved in the situation and thus we can classify this as stage IV of the conflict cycle.

Harmonious collaboration. The ideal situation for two entities who chose to work together to achieve a common goal is harmonious collaboration which can be defined as two groups positively collaborating - working together in a way that encourages compromise and understanding. Interviewee E's opinion completely contradicts the previous statements, as he felt that the collaboration between the Dragon team and MPBS was very successful and positive. He mentioned the fact that the two entities had worked together since 2006 as proof for this notion, "overall, I think our collaboration is very happy. If not, how could we have continued to work together from 2006 when the Dragon team moves from West River Province. I personally think that the collaboration between us is very smooth and harmonious." It is important for the reader to note that interviewee E was affiliated with MPBS and it is my personal belief that he intended to deny any collaboration problems. However, it is known that small conflicts existed between Dragon team and MPBS in the past. As a result of these small previous

conflicts, it was inevitable that more conflicts were to come in the future. From this information, it is clear that from the very beginning of the collaboration between the Dragon team and MPBS, harmony and understanding was not a top priority, instead each entity chose to put their needs and goals before the other, therefore conflict was the result.

Felt conflict. When people experience conflict, sometimes they allow negative emotions to cloud their normally reasonable judgment; when emotions enter a situation of conflict, individuals begin to experience the “felt” level of conflict (Robbins & Judges, 2013). The felt level of conflict marks a transition point between individuals merely witnessing and understanding that a situation of conflict has occurred, to individuals being emotionally involved in the conflict. Participants indicated that three main parties experienced various levels of negative emotions as a result of the conflict including the Dragon team’s owner (Mr. Huang), the Dragon team itself, and MPBS.

Owner. The Team owner was very distressed as MPBS attempted to prevent Dragon team from moving out of the Mountain province. The owner was financially and emotionally invested in the Dragon team, after having owned and worked with the Dragon team for more than ten years. Interviewee C explained why team owner, Mr. Huang chose to invest in the Chinese basketball industry. He said, “...he loves this sport, and he wants to do something that can contribute and give back to the community.” From this quote it is evident that Mr. Huang was not involved with the team solely for financial gain, he wanted to help improve his community. As a result, his distress and negative feelings towards MPBS for attempting to prevent that team from moving out of the province and on to a better owner who could financially support them, was very

understandable. Interviewee A further explains the contributions Mr. Huang made to significantly impact the development of the sport,

“He spent too much on this team financially and became mentally exhausted. Also, his almost ten year devotion to the basketball industry was his way of giving back to society. The Mountain’s basketball industry was not able to develop without his contributions.” (Interviewee A)

Interviewee E also elaborated on Mr. Huang’s strong connection to the team as he worked with many of the players for five or six years prior to the transfer agreement. This interviewee compared the team leaving Mr. Huang and the province to a parent watching the child they raised, finally leave home. Interviewee E said,

“Mr. Huang was the most reluctant person to transfer the Dragon team because these players trained with him for at least five or six years, and they deserved the right to play for their team. It was just like I raised my kids and I have to send them away finally. I can feel how sad he is to see the Dragon team leave.”

He never thought the government would prevent him from transferring the Dragon team because the team was his property. Interviewee B discussed the obstacles MPBS created in order to prevent the Dragon team from leaving the Mountain province. Mr. Huang compared the conflict regarding the transfer to the issues he faced when moving the Dragon team from the West River province to the Mountain province 10 years ago. Because Mr. Huang had invested so much in terms of resources and emotions into the team, he was extremely disappointed that he was not a part of the decision to transfer the Dragon team out of the Mountain province.

Dragon team. Similar to the Team owner, Dragon team members expressed their concern regarding the transfer. The Dragon team members were generally concerned about the difficulty of the transfer process. On July 4th, 2013 the Dragon men's basketball team announced "The Second Statement for MPBS regarding The Equity Transfer" (Zhu, 2013), listing six bullet points to clarify several misunderstandings of Dragon team's sector. They felt issuing a public statement was the best way to express their anger regarding the difficult and lengthy transfer process. After MPBS declined to approve Dragon team's transfer. Interviewee B further explained the reasons behind the public announcement, "MPBS did not respond our transfer request in 20 statutory days and they wrongly claimed that the nature of Dragon men's basketball team is public and social."

Even though it was a formal public statement, either its context or rhetoric reflected Dragon team's emotions at that time: desperate, upset, disappointed and angry. Most of the interviewees agreed that the statement was the first time the Dragon team expressed their emotions publicly and officially to the government. Interviewee C admitted, "the Dragon team's second statement was our way of expressing our anger and firm attitudes", Interviewee D stated he understood why the Dragon team released the statement, however, he also asked whether the team thought about the government's perspective and impact on the state. He stated, "I did read the second statement; and I can feel how upset they were. Did anybody think about how the government would feel when they were informed of Dragon team's transfer to a Xijing enterprise? We were all shocked." As a result of the public team statement, community members blamed the government for the conflict and sided with the team, "Once the statement released,

people were starting to blame us (MPBS) and Dragon team got a lot of sympathy from the public. The statement made Dragon team look innocent while the government became a guilty devil” (Interview F).

MPBS. Dissatisfaction with the way in which the Dragon team was transferred (i.e. without bureau approval) lead to feelings of anger from MPBS. During the almost month long conflict process, MPBS had been holding a consistent attitude to not allow the transfer. They firmly believed the Dragon team should not move to another province. Interviewee E said, “Regarding Dragon team’s transfer, I would say the result is not we expected and wanted. We also hoped the transfer could be processed smoothly and properly. But Dragon team crossed the line and we have to keep our principles consistent in the end.” MPBS felt the Dragon team crossed the line by reaching a transfer deal with the Xijing Interest Group without MPBS approval. This led to feelings of betrayal and distrust amongst the two parties.

Instead of passively and subtly displaying emotions, the Dragon team and MPBS displayed overt emotions in the felt conflict level meaning they made the other party aware of how they felt. As the owner of the Dragon team, Mr. Huang personally expressed disappointment with MPBS and was reluctant to leave the Dragon team. The Dragon team’s public statement showed its discontent and strong attitude against what they perceived to be unjustifiable behaviors by MPBS. However, MPBS completely ignored the Dragon team’s demand and insisted on their “philosophy” by applying the inapplicable and confusing governmental regulations to the private enterprise. This strategy was the final act for the felt conflict level and once complete, the actual conflict

began.

Stage III: Intentions

During stage III, individuals involved with the conflict generally are aware of what is happening, become hostile toward each other and devise strategies to defeat their opponent. Strategies and goals that affect behaviors and emotions are known as *intentions* (Robbins & Judges, 2013, p.453). Intentions are a vital aspect of the conflict process because they can directly impact the outcome as individuals work to fulfill their goals. My interview question, “how did these two organizations deal with the conflict?” was designed to study the intentions of the Dragon team and MPBS as well as better understand behaviors in the third stage of the conflict cycle. The specific and obvious intention of MPBS was keeping the Dragon team in the Mountain province. On the other hand, the intentions and goals of the Dragon team were selling the team for a good price. Similar to the previous discussion of incompatible goals, successful and cohesive collaboration for these two organizations was nearly impossible.

Cooperativeness. Cooperativeness and assertiveness are two dimensions to evaluate how people deal with their intentions related to conflict. Cooperativeness is defined as “the degree to which one party attempts to satisfy the other party’s concerns” (Robbins & Judges, 2013, p.452). The more cooperative one party is, the more likely the other party is to be satisfied. However, due to conflict related to finances, the Dragon team and MPBS experienced tension. For example, Interviewee F explained that MPBS helped the Dragon team look for buyers in the Mountain province. Interviewee E explained numerous attempts to contact potential buyers in the Mountain province were made in an

effort to expedite the collaboration. Interviewee E elaborates saying, “We contacted almost every famous enterprise in Mountain Province and made a lot of efforts to make the collaboration happen. But, maybe because of money; ultimately, they did not make any deals.”

However, the finances prevented any of the potential deals from coming to fruition. The Dragon team was unable to agree on a price with potential buyers located in the Mountain province, therefore, they planned to agree to a deal with the Xijing Interest Group who were located outside of the Mountain province. However, MPBS did not agree with an out of province interest group, therefore the plan was not successful. On the team’s side since their priority was not staying in the Mountain province, their negotiations were unsuccessful. The team did not feel offers from enterprises located within the Mountain province were acceptable. They felt the offers were so low the enterprises in the Mountain province were not respecting the team or the entire basketball industry. The two organizations were not cooperating, instead they protected and fought for their own goals, which is called assertiveness. Interviewee C said,

“We did talk with a couple of Mountain Province’s enterprises, but their offers were much lower than what we demanded. They do not respect the Dragon team and the basketball industry. They didn’t make the deal genuinely. They would come to talk to us because it was requested by the sports department.”

Assertiveness. When associated with conflict, assertiveness is defined as, “the degree to which one party attempts to satisfy his or her own concerns” (Robbins & Judges, 2013, p.453). To elaborate, assertiveness relates to self-interest - how each party

works to satisfy their own goals. When each party is more concerned about achieving their own personal goals, rather than satisfying a common goal, this assertiveness can turn into competition, and quite often, escalates to conflict. A key difference between intentions and assertiveness is that intentions define specific goals an individual attempts to achieve while assertiveness is a potential action of an individual attempting to achieve his/her intentions. In this study, the Dragon team and MPBS attempted to work together in a cooperative way by selling the team to an enterprise located within the province, for a reasonable price. Along the way, both parties continued to work to achieve their personal goals, which created the conflict.

Without MPBS's approval, the Dragon team struck a transfer deal with the Xijing Interest Group. This allowed them to achieve their goal of transferring the entity for a reasonable price, and serves as an example of their assertiveness. Interviewee C recalled that

“After Mr. Huang sold Dragon team to Xijing Interest Group, they refused to communicate with MPBS except for issues concerning the approval. In addition, they reduced the duty to Xijing Interest Inc., and told us to contact Xijing Interest Group with any questions or concerns in the future.”

The Dragon team stood their ground and did not waiver, acting in a very assertive manner. Once they made the transfer, they had accomplished their ultimate goal, and therefore their only concern was acquiring the approval documents to make the transfer complete.

MPBS also acted in an assertive manner by not responding in a timely manner to the Dragon team's constant requests to transfer the team to a buyer. For example, once

the Dragon team announced they had transferred all equity to the Xijing Interest Group and requested the approval, MPBS avoided the Dragon team for a few weeks, and did not give any responses until September 2013. An analysis of the Dragon team and MPBS's assertiveness showed that the two parties could not work together because each entity only wanted to achieve their own personal goals. MPBS was unsympathetic about the potential earnings the Dragon team would receive from the deal with Xijing Interest Group. MPBS was focused on keeping the Dragon team in the province and was interested in any other possible solutions/options. The Dragon team's main priority was the potential profit and MPBS's priority was keeping the team in the province. Each entity put their own personal goals before the common goals of the collaboration and as a result these two parties displayed assertive behavior, but not positive cooperation. Being too assertive and lacking cooperation, led to the conflict Dragon team and MPBS experienced.

Stage IV: Behaviors

During stage four of the conflict process, the conflict itself becomes readily visible, and people recognize that it is happening (Robbins & Judges, 2013). The conflicting parties will implement "resolution and stimulation techniques" (p.454), which are also called "conflict management" (p.454), to obtain a desired outcome and realize their own intentions. The following themes are used to describe how each party behaved and reacted as they attempted to manage the conflict: (1) problem solving, (2) expansion of resources, (3) authoritative command, (4) compromise and (5) bringing in outsiders.

Problem solving. Robbins and Judges (2013) describe problem solving as

conflicting parties meeting face-to-face for an open discussion on strategies to resolve conflict. The Dragon team and MPBS engaged in several problem-solving strategies to help resolve the conflict. For example, negotiations were sought through a face-to-face meeting. MPBS attempted to persuade the Dragon team to stay in the Mountain province. Specific details of this meeting were kept confidential but based on the analysis, interviewee E feels the meeting did not seem allow time and space for both parties to share their feelings. Essentially the meeting failed to promote an open discussion, and therefore, attempts at problem solving failed.

Expansion of resources. Conflict often results from a scarcity of resources, therefore by increasing the amount of resources it is possible for conflicting parties to reach an agreement (Robbins & Judge, 2010). In this study, financial resources played a major role in the conflict that occurred between the Dragon team and MPBS. The Dragon team's owner, Mr. Huang, was not financially able to manage the team any longer due to his own personal assets decreasing dramatically. Therefore, the Dragon team attempted to prevent further losses and make a profit by transferring themselves to the Xijing Interest Group. MPBS was aware of the lack of financial resources within the Dragon team, and agreed that increased resources would be beneficial for the Team. Interviewee C said,

“...from the Dragon Team side, our original buyer, Xijing Interest Group, showed their most sincerity to make the team transfer happen, either from the buying price or transfer procedure facilitation. I think they are the best resource we can get at that time. MPBS did not allow us leave to Xijing and had referred couple local enterprises attempt to take over our team. But the prices they offered were way

much lower than the marking price. Mr. Huang would not accept that price.”

However, they believed this could be accomplished within the province of Mountain and worked to transfer the Dragon team locally. It was evident that both the Dragon team and MPBS had a common goal, but contrasting methods for achieving that goal. Ultimately, expanding the Dragon team’s resources failed to alleviate the conflict, it could actually be argued that expanding resources created the conflict Dragon team and MPBS experienced.

Authoritative command. When management steps in to attempt to resolve conflict between two parties, authoritative command is exercised (Graham, 2009). In China, there exists a very special ideology where the government plans and manages all aspects of the Chinese sports industry (Chen & Guan, 2005). They set strict goals and decide how the industry will develop, implementing their executive authority if need be (Guo, 2008).

As a result of the Chinese’s special ideology, authoritative command assumedly is the best method for solving conflict between private and public Chinese organizations. By using authoritative command, the conflict would be solved quickly and effectively, as the government had the final say in all matters. Interviewee F who was in favor of MPBS’s interests believed the conflict between MPBS and the Dragon team occurred as a direct result of China’s special ideology. He explained “despite the fact that private enterprises were investing in the industry, they were not allowed to make any decisions by themselves just like the Dragon team. Governmental consent is significant when a private enterprise is planning to do something related government’s interests”. While there may be conflicting opinions about the effectiveness of authoritative command, in this particular situation, authoritative command did alleviate some of the tension the two

parties experienced.

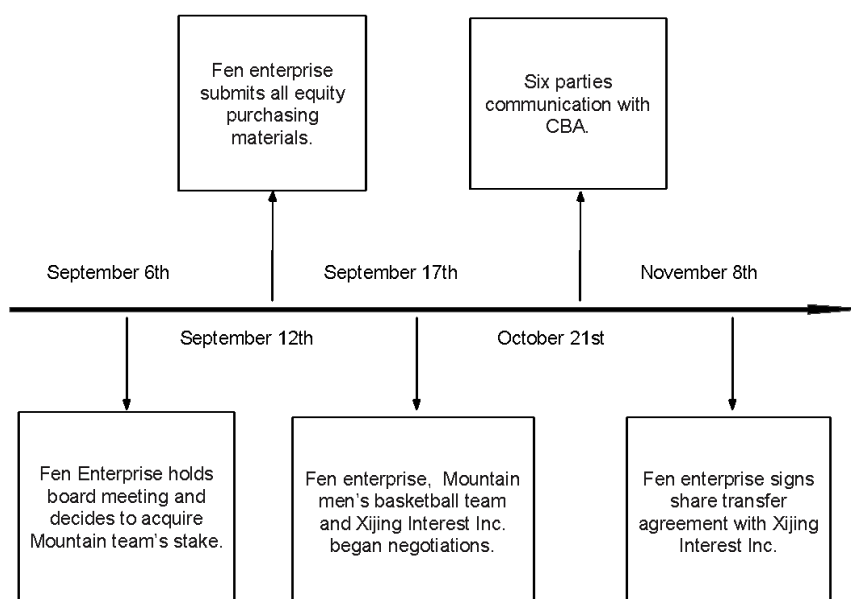
Compromise. Sometimes, conflicting parties have to give up something of value in order to resolve conflict, this is how a compromise is defined (Robbins & Judges, 2013). In my research, both the Dragon team and MPBS had to compromise all or part of their original intentions. The Dragon team's compromise included accepting the offer from Fen Inc. in order to gain competition rights for the following season, while MPBS had to negotiate with the local enterprise and compromise on the offering price, in order for the Dragon team to stay in the Mountain province. Interviewee B said, "we have to compromise our intentions, otherwise, we would lose more than we expected. Because Dragon team belonged to Xijing Interest Group, we cannot lose them as well if we were not able to look for an appropriate buyer." As a result of each party compromising on their original intentions, the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS was resolved, with each party benefiting to some extent.

Bringing in outsiders. Adding other parties into conflict that already exists can help resolve issues by coordinating communication between the conflicting parties and acting like a buffer to prevent the conflict from escalating (Robbins & Judges, 2013). On October 21st, the CBA acted as a mediator to resolve the conflict amongst the six parties who were involved with the transfer. Though the CBA was not directly involved in the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS, this organization played a significant role in helping to resolve the conflict between the two parties. The CBA is a semi-governmental institute created by the National Sports Bureau with duties that include managing national basketball affairs and other issues related to basketball teams in China

(Chen & Guan, 2005). Several interviewees explained that the CBA mediated disputes between the Dragon team and MPBS. Interviewee D specifically stated that the CBA encouraged each organization to compromise their intentions in order to begin the new season on a positive note, “CBA obviously felt that their conflict would definitely affected the operations of new game season. They also desperately desired to settle their conflict down.” Eventually, the outsider (CBA) successfully resolved the conflict and created an outcome that achieved the common goal of all parties involved.

The timing of specific events that unfolded in the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS was essential in understanding how these two organizations dealt with the conflict. The conflict timeline is illustrated in Figure 4. The figure shows key dates in the conflict between the team and MPBS as well as a brief description of what occurred. In the figure below, the October 21st date is very important, as this is when the outsider was brought into the situation, and the conflict was finally resolved.

Figure 4: Conflict Timeline



As a result of incompatible goals, and the implementation of authoritative command, the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS was resolved through a conflict management technique known as compromise, where each party gives up something of value in order to reach a resolution. The biggest compromises were made by the Dragon team as they were forced to break their contract with the Xijing Interest Group, which was settled before MSPB's approval, and rescind the plan of moving out of the province.

Research Question Three

Once conflict escalates past the previous four conflict stages outlined, it reaches its climax and begins to diffuse (Robbins & Judges, 2013). Robbins and Judges (2013) explained that, ultimately conflict results in a functional or dysfunctional outcome. Depending on the events that ensue between conflicting parties, there are two possible outcomes of conflict, as described by Pondy (1967). Pondy (1967) contends one possible outcome of conflict is functional, this means that, at least one of the collaborating parties benefitted from the conflict. The other possible outcome of conflict is dysfunctional, meaning the organizational performance of at least one collaborating party was hindered by the conflict, and that the original conflict has great potential to create new conflict. My last research question discusses the outcome of the conflict, and how each organization was affected, these findings are discussed in the next section.

Functional

It is difficult to understand how aggressive behavior can yield a functional result. However, as Pondy (1967) described, conflict can be positive when at least one party benefits from the conflict in regards to creativity, self-critique and positive change. Both

the Dragon team and MPBS benefitted from the conflict they experienced, therefore, it can be argued that the outcome was functional.

MPBS. By compromising with the Dragon team, MPBS successfully kept the Team in the Mountain province and continued making contributions to the local community. This was an example of a functional outcome because MPBS benefitted from the conflict. One interviewee explained that to the residents of the Mountain province, the basketball team was an intangible asset, which was essential to the province's culture. Interviewee F said,

“The dragon team has already become an important part of Mountain Province culture. Our residents love the Dragon team very much. On the game season weekend, all the Dragon team's fans were gathering in basketball arena to support their beloved team and expecting the Dragon team's victory.”

As a result of its conflict with the Dragon team, MPBS was able to benefit from another functional outcome, the creation of an environment for self-evaluation. By this I mean, the conflict allowed MPBS to consider strategies to promote future private investments in the Mountain province's sports industry. Furthermore, the conflict may trigger governmental administration reformation in the sports industry, fixing problems that currently exist and prevent future conflict from occurring. Interviewee C stated that

“I think further system reformation in sports industry can help to solve this kind of case. The government intervention should be reduced. In addition, the most important point is respecting and protecting the interests of investors”

Ultimately, the conflict allowed MPBS to reflect on their behaviors and consider making

changes. This will be very positive for the entire basketball industry because learning from mistakes of the past and applying newfound knowledge to future situations is essential for growth. Interviewee E shared that, future sports reformations will focus on releasing teams from government control as this will allow for faster development of the industry. He said “the upcoming sports industry reformations will be the chance to improve the current status of private enterprise in Chinese sports industry. Governmental control will gradually abbreviate till the market could be completely taken this industry.”

Dragon team. The Dragon team also benefitted from the conflict, being relieved of the financial burden of managing the Team’s daily expenses. Furthermore, the final selling price of the Dragon team (1.5 billion Chinese yuan) was higher than expected which gave investors’ confidence in the future development of the basketball industry. Once the Dragon team’s equity was transferred to the Fen enterprise, the Dragon enterprise did not have to support the Team anymore. Financially, this was a positive change, greatly decreasing the Dragon team’s liabilities and increasing its assets. Interviewee A and B both discussed this relief as well as the impact it had on Mr. Huang. Interviewee B said,

“This is a relief and a break for the Dragon team. But the outcome must have greatly impacted the owner of the Dragon team. He has been supporting and investing physically and mentally into the X basketball industry for years. It is not easy for him to completely remove himself from the Dragon team. I have to say, this decision benefited the enterprise, but negatively impacted the owner.”

As a result, it was extremely hard for him to completely remove himself from the

team. So, while the decision benefitted the enterprise, it negatively impacted the owner. The Dragon team profited greatly from the transfer, 1.5 billion Chinese Yuan, which will, in turn, promote private investments in the basketball industry. Interviewee C explained that it was a good decision for the CBA because it might strengthen the confidence of potential investors, "...it shows how worthy the CBA is, and that will strengthen the confidence of investors." Interviewee C and D also explained that the high price reflected the value of the basketball market.

Dysfunctional outcome

While the functional outcome of conflict is not well known as it is difficult to understand how conflict can yield positive results; the functional outcome is widely accepted and greatly understood. The dysfunctional outcome of conflict can be defined as a result that is destructive, decreasing efficiency and organizational performance (Pondy, 1967). The conflict that occurred between the Dragon team and MPBS had several negative implications that are discussed in the next section.

MPBS. As previously mentioned, MPBS implemented a conflict management technique known as authoritative command, in order to resolve the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS. This conflict management technique provided an example of China's political structure. The use of authoritative command showed the public that they live in a society where government monopoly is the norm. Interviewee E stated that "...as a result of the governmental monopoly, private investors are often unable to make any decisions concerning Dragon team, instead the government owns the players, profit and resources." In addition, the defective nature of governmental policy was exposed

when MPBS applied regulations to the Dragon team to prevent them from moving out of the province. Interviewee B explained that ultimately, “as a result of this conflict, the public is left with a very unprofessional image of the government, and their ability to manage effectively.” This will result in delayed development of the Chinese sports industry which will be very dysfunctional for fans, players, and potential investors alike.

Dragon team. From the Dragon team’s perspective, a dysfunctional outcome was created because the public finally became aware that the Chinese basketball industry was not making a profit. One of the interviewees explained that China’s strict political system actually prevented private entities from investing in government owned organizations and also placed restrictions on specific team’s management abilities. Interviewee A said,

“As a staff of a private owned enterprise, I really concern about the development of a private owned enterprise in sports industry, which is highly controlled by governmental agency. If Chinese sports industry would like to go further in the future, I believe sport industry should be follow its marketing needs, instead of being manipulated by any institution.”

Additionally, the conflict also discouraged private investments into the Chinese basketball industry because investors believed that situations of conflict similar to that experienced by the Dragon team and MPBS would be repeated in the future. Interviewee E also added that, similar issues between bureaus of sports and their teams resulted in conflict like the one experienced by the Dragon team and MPBS. Interviewee C illustrated the vicious circle that will result if the government does not to revise the current policy,

“... If there is no private cooperation that would like to do the investment, the government can only look for help from a national enterprise. Because they don't mind if the basketball team can make a profit, the nationalized companies do not pay much attention to or manage and administrate Dragon team. Dragon team is still losing money and then the Chinese professional sports industry is not able to achieve its commercial value.”

Discussion

After analyzing my results, several of the findings are explained by the literature, such as the conflict entities and the major themes of Robbins and Judges' Five Stages Conflict Model (2010). On the other hand, interchangeable conflict outcomes were not explained by the literature and will be discussed in the conclusion. Authoritative command lies somewhere in between a complete literature explanation and a lack of a literature explanation.

It is easily recognized that multiple entities were involved with this unique case of conflict, and my research only analyzes two major organizations, the Dragon Team and MPBS. I chose to only analyze these two entities because I believed simplifying the complicated conflict process, limiting it to only two parties would be constructive for readers with regards to understanding. Nevertheless, as Rahim (2011) defined conflict, “An interactive process manifested in incompatibility, disagreement, or dissonance within or between social entities (i.e., individual, group, organization, etc.)”, my research, although limited, discussed multiple parties: an individual (Mr. Huang), a group (The Dragon Team) and several organizations (MPBS, CBA and Xijing Interest Group). The

ultimate conflict stemmed from minor disagreements among these entities and can be classified as the following: interpersonal, intergroup and interorganizational. Future conflict studies should focus more on the actual process of conflict rather than the different entities involved. This was also why I applied Robbins and Judges' (2010) Five Stages Conflict Model to the study. It classifies the whole conflict process into five specific subgroups instead of identifying the minor disagreements between entities. The major themes of Robbins and Judges' Five Stage Conflict completely and precisely explained the Dragon Team and MPBS' conflict as a 3-step progression from causes, to process to effects.

Authoritative command is one technique of conflict management and is defined by Robbins as utilizing the formal authority to command the conflicting entities to settle their issues in a way the formal authority figure desires. The authoritative command of conflict management (Robbins, 1974) has been somewhat proven useful in this study, however, I doubt its functions and effectiveness. I admit that authoritative command would be the most efficient method to solve conflict in a very short time. This was proven in my research because the conflict between the Dragon Team and MPBS was finally resolved when the CBA stepped in to facilitate a mediation. However, I doubt whether authoritative command could be able to ultimately resolve the conflict between private and public parties associated with Chinese sports organizations. It was also unclear whether authoritative command could prevent the conflict from occurring again in the future. Therefore, my findings with regards to authoritative command are only somewhat explained by the literature.

Summary

The goal of my research was to identify how conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS began and progressed, and to make reasonable suggestions for future conflict management between these two organizations. In Robbins and Judges' (2010) first stage of conflict, I found that incompatible communication techniques, general miscommunication and an ambiguous structure led to the conflict experienced by the Dragon team and MPBS. I concluded these causes for the conflict by analyzing stage I of Robbins and Judges' (2010) conflict model. Applying stages II - IV of Robbins and Judges' (2010) Five Stage Conflict Model process to the Dragon team and MPBS allowed me identify and understand how the conflict progressed. I conclude that the conflict progressed as a result of: disagreement on small details, owner's industrial recession, team's high cost operation and one extremely contradictory opinion - harmonious collaboration. These factors added to an already tense relationship between the Dragon team and MPBS, helping the conflict to progress. Likewise, in stage III, both conflicting parties expressed overtly hostile behaviors in order to reach their own intentions therefore, the conflict continued to progress.

In stage IV, the Dragon team and MPBS began to implement conflict management strategies in order to fulfill their own intentions including: problem solving, expansion of resources, authoritative command, compromise and bringing in outsiders. In the end the Dragon team and MPBS had to bring outsiders into the conflict they were experiencing to reach their specific goals. Finally, it is important to analyze the outcomes of the conflict for each party in order to prevent this conflict from occurring again in the future. See the

Table 2 below for a summary of outcomes for both the team and sports department.

Table 2: Conflict Outcomes

	<i>Dragon Team</i>	<i>MPBS</i>
Functional Outcome	● Relieved of the financial burden	● Allowed Dragon team to stay in the Mountain province
Dysfunctional Outcome	● Left a waste of money public image and discouraging capital investment	● Left a negative public image of a government monopoly and exposed confusing government regulations to the public

Through this case study, I was able to understand the causes, progression and outcomes of the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS. My in depth analysis allowed me to form appropriate suggestions for managing possible future conflicts between these two organizations.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Major Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand and analyze the conflict between the Mountain sports team (Dragon team) and affiliated bureau of sports (MPBS) utilizing Robbins and Judges' (2010) Model of Conflict. My specific research questions were: (1) why did the conflict between MPBS and Dragon team occur? (2) What happened during each stage of the conflict? (3) What were the outcomes of the conflict, and how did those outcomes impact each organization? Individuals affiliated with both Dragon team and MPBS were interviewed to share their experiences and perspectives of the causes, processes and outcomes of the conflict between the two organizations. In general my research concluded that the conflict between the Dragon team and MPBS was inevitable. From the very beginning of the collaboration the two entities failed to understand and appreciate the needs and goals of the other, thus conflict was the only possible result. Nevertheless, the conflict yielded both functional and dysfunctional outcomes for both parties.

To expand on previous research (Zhou, 2005; Xue, 2013; Chen, 2002; Lu, 2003), a case study was conducted that examined the nature of conflict between private capital investment organization in the Chinese basketball industry and the government. My research depicted the current situation of those private investors who had already invested or are still considering whether or not to invest in China's basketball industry.

Conclusions drawn by previous studies provided valuable insights for my research,

however, previous research did not analyze conflict between two parties. A qualitative case study design was used to examine the conflict experienced by the Dragon team and MPBS, two separate entities; as well as using Robbins and Judges' (2010) Five Stages Conflict theory in order to determine the important context of the conflict case.

The five-stage theory analysis lead to the discovery of the three main conclusions drawn from this research including: (1) From a practical perspective, prior to making a purchase decision, the private enterprise should have assured that their goals were compatible with those of sports bureaus. (2) From an empirical perspective, clarifying the specific sector that Dragon team belonged to (public or private), and updating the outdated regulations concerning the transferring of public, state-owned, enterprises would have reduced the chance of conflict arising between the government and the private enterprises; and (3) From a theoretical perspective, determining the conditions for making the functional and dysfunctional outcomes interchangeable.

The Common Goal

Research question one, identified the differences between the Dragon team and MPBS that lead to the conflict the two parties experienced. Goal incompatibility was the major reason that these two organizations were not able to positively work together. Hocker & Wilmot (1995), Poole & Putnam (1987) and Van Slyke (1999) maintained that conflict occurs when two or more cooperative entities discover that their goals are incompatible. This leads to competition for common resources and each party working to achieve their personal goals. The conflicting goals brought about drastic competition for scarce resources, for example, there were two groups interested in buying the Dragon

team, however, its ownership could only be transferred to one enterprise. Wall and Callister (1995) explained that conflict usually generates when one party disregards the other parties' goals in order to achieve their own. Mr. Huang expected to transfer Dragon teams as soon as possible and therefore made a deal with Xijing Interest Group. However, MPBS was not willing to allow their only basketball team to leave Mountain.

Yang (2005) contends that a harmonious collaboration must begin with a mutually beneficial mentality, and then both parties can receive a win-win outcome. Their mutual goal should be to "maximize mutual benefits and minimize potential risks" (p.127). Dragon team and MPBS did not follow this basic collaboration principle and the conflict emerged. Yang (2001) found out that the State Basketball Administrative Center (i.e. government institution) and professional basketball teams (i.e. Dragon team) hold different opinions regarding operational goals of professional teams, such as Dragon, which resulted in issues regarding the distribution of profits and hindered the basketball system reformation. The conflict between the Dragon and MPBS was a consequence of goal incompatibility between the government and professional basketball teams. If specific expectations and goals of each collaborating party are not made clear from the beginning of the partnership agreement, conflict is almost always certain to happen and therefore, collaborating parties should prepare themselves and discuss conflict management techniques. The two parties did not reach an agreement regarding Dragon team's transfer and therefore attempted to prevent the other party from achieving their goals.

A common goal is one that positively influences all parties and encourages a need for

teamwork in order to obtain common goals. With this definition, it is easily understood that teamwork results in the attainment of common, shared goals and contrarily, competition amongst collaborating parties' results in insufficient performance and goals that were not met (Jehn, 1997). In China, most likely due to government policy, the sports market has become more and more prosperous and diversified; and as a result a number of private enterprises have been persuaded to invest in the market (Rahim, 2011). However, the private enterprise owners similar to the FJ enterprise were only concerned with short-term profits and failed to consider the fact that the basketball teams were still associated with the government sports bureaus. For those private enterprise owners who had intentions of purchasing a basketball team in China, the first aspect to consider is whether their enterprise has goals that are compatible with those of the basketball team's affiliated sports bureaus. If goals are not compatible, the potential for conflict occurring during collaboration is very high.

Regulation Clarification & Sectors Identification

The Chinese governmental sports bureaus should elucidate a specific sector for Chinese basketball teams, this would help to improve some of the previously mentioned outdated management regulations. Their conflict occurred as a result of differences in understanding the disparity in governmental regulations and ambiguity of the organization's sector. Yang (2005) found that the immature "policy environment" and lack of "policy-making stability" are two obstacles for the Chinese sports industry. Fan (2009) stated that the outdated regulations only protected a few entities, namely, the current regulations are more beneficial for the state owned teams than other teams (Chen

& Guan, 2005). However, in this study, the regulation affected both state-owned and private teams and was apparently not in the best interest of other teams such as Dragon.

The only reason MPBS provided for preventing Dragon team from leaving the province originated from the Chinese Basketball Association team's Ownership Transfer Interim Regulation (Jiang, 2013). This document stipulated that any team should receive the transfer-approved documents from its local provincial sports bureau when Dragon team is applying for transfer competition rights. The regulation was enacted in 2004, when the Dragon team was provincially owned, and was intended to be a temporary policy (Jiang, 2013). The Chinese basketball market dramatically changed: the province owned teams gradually transformed into joint stock or private owned enterprises (Xue, 2013). However, the interim regulation is still in place, even though it is clearly not suited to meet the modern market demands. As a result of these issues many Chinese scholars (Yang, 2005; Zhu, 2008) strongly supported enhancing the current regulations. Zhu (2008) explained that the standardization of the basketball market regulations and policies will provide certain confidences for the investors who are still hesitant to make decisions and protect their enterprises' goals. Ultimately, a standardized environment is necessary for growing a healthy sport industry (Yang, 2005).

The ambiguous sector classifications of Dragon team also resulted in conflict. The specific sector that the Dragon belonged to should have assisted in determining what regulations were applied to the team. However, Dragon team's specific sector was unknown and therefore it was not clear what regulations to implement. Zhou (2005), Xue (2013), Chen (2002) and Lu (2003) all agreed that explicit sector identification is urgent

in China's basketball industry today. Chen (2007) studied sector identification of current Chinese basketball teams and found that there are still numerous Chinese basketball teams that have not defined their sector, which brought about several issues included in the transfer conflicts. Identifying Dragon team's sectors will be the first urgent task for the basketball industry reformation (Zhang, 2005). Du (2002) suggested that the procedure of sector identification should be gradual, in order to turn the Chinese basketball industry into a market-oriented industry instead of its current government-orientation. With the support of the national government, the sports industry has become more and more popular and appealing to its target audience (Jackson, 2015a). Yao Ming and many other famous Chinese athletes proposed that the governmental administrations should be separated from the professional sports industry because they believed the government manipulation would negatively impact the team's decision making (Jackson, 2015b). Therefore, similar instances of conflicts will be decreased if the sector clarity issue can be completely resolved.

The importance of training athletes in a positive and encouraging environment is extremely important. In order for these athletes to be successful, they must develop their talents in a professional environment, similar to the National Basketball Association in the United States. The competitive nature of the market will stimulate both the individual player and teams, and help the entire basketball industry to improve (Yang, 2005). The most fundamental principle of establishing a mature industry should start from enhancing regulations and policies. This also provides protection for the people who choose to become involved with the industry, like investors. If the government chooses not to

improve the current state of the sports industry, they will continue to experience conflict similar to that situation discussed in this research, and ultimately the basketball industry will fail to develop. The importance of identifying Dragon team's specific sector and improving the current regulations is to promote healthy overall development of the Chinese basketball industry.

Functional and dysfunctional outcomes

This study yielded a substantial theoretical contribution associated with the boundaries between functional and dysfunctional conflict outcomes. At some points in my research, the boundary between these two aspects of the conflict process were unclear, and even became interchangeable. Interchangeable conflict outcomes can be defined as: no matter how positive or negative the outcome it is, it can be converted to the opposite side with certain condition. Pondy (1967) also mentioned that "It has become fashionable to say that conflict may be either functional or dysfunctional and is not necessarily either one" (p. 307). In my research, the ultimate outcomes were both functional because the Dragon team remained in the Mountain province, but also dysfunctional, because the Dragon team was not able to make decision by their own willingness.

Despite the definitions of the functional and dysfunctional outcomes of conflict, a number of scholars maintain that conflict is completely unfavorable for both organizations (Baritz, 2011; Krupp, 1961). Similar to these scholars, most people associate conflict with negativity, or dysfunctional outcomes (Slack & Parent, 2006). The findings showed that dysfunctional outcomes are not completely destructive for the conflicting parties, and that, functional outcomes also are not entirely constructive. For

example, one of dysfunctional outcomes for MPBS is that the confusing regulations had been exposed to the public through their conflict. It resulted in a chain reaction, decreasing the investor's confidence regarding the basketball industry, and decreasing investments in the industry. However, as long as the governmental sports bureaus realize the importance of correcting the regulations, they will experience a functional outcome. Therefore, the dysfunctional and functional outcomes of conflict were interchangeable in this Chinese sport context; however, the focus should be on understanding the conditions that cause the dysfunctional outcome to be transformed into a functional outcome while avoiding behaviors that cause functional outcomes to be transformed into dysfunctional outcomes.

In this study, if MPBS was able to identify which sector Dragon team belonged to and modernize the outdated regulations, their negative public image could be altered. The dysfunctional outcomes of the conflict included discouraging investments in the industry and putting a very negative "money-wasting" image of Dragon team in the public's eyes. Nonetheless, the functional outcome will be generated as long as Dragon team's investors reach a common goal with the governmental sports bureaus and attain legal regulations protection. Therefore, determining the interchangeable outcome conditions is more significant than identifying the functional and dysfunctional outcomes of the conflict.

Suggestions for Further Research

A number of important questions were brought about by this research, and could provide scholars with opportunity to continue this line of research in the future. To expand and improve on my research, future scholars should consider multiple cases of

conflict, instead of a single case, allowing the research results to be more applicable and meaningful in understanding other cases of conflict in the management of sport.

Furthermore, performing more research on Chinese governmental organizations could spark public interest and further curiosity, encouraging other private organizations to review their transfer policies and make necessary changes. Next, because controversies similar to the issues surrounding the transfer occur in both private and nationally sponsored organizations, further investigation is necessary to understand whether these conflict situations have any relation to my research. Lastly, future researchers should conduct a longitudinal study in the same research context, with sufficient funding and time. In addition, face-to-face interviews are also suggested for data collection. Face-to-face interviews would allow the researcher to read facial expressions and other body language cues, making the results more accurate by reducing barriers between the researcher and interviewee.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are related to the methodology used in the data collection. The method used to conduct the interviews and translation barriers both limited the application of my results. Additionally, the saturation of my research participants also limited the results. Both of these limitations should be considered in future research studies. I used phone interviewees as my main research method for collecting data and communicating with my research participants. As a result, I was not able to directly observe interviewee's their body language and reactions, and subtle facial expressions. These expressions could have given me more insight into the interviewees'

emotions regarding my research questions, especially the question about negative emotions experienced during the conflict. However, the phone interviewees only provided me the chance to catch emotions through voice, which are uncertain and unreliable. My choice to use phone interviews to collect data was a result of the cost that would come with having to travel to meet each of the research subjects in person.

With regards to translation barriers, as Lopez, Figueroa, Connor and Maliski (2008) found, most cross cultural researchers use a routinization methodology to analyze their collected data that is, transcribing the interview directly in target language while they are conducting the interview with participants. However, I conducted my interviews in the opposite fashion. In my research, while the interviews took place, I chose to take notes in Chinese and record the entire conversation. Then, from the recorded data, I transcribed the conversation in Chinese, and finally I translated my Chinese transcription to English. In order to confirm the accuracy of the research data, two Chinese-English bilingual speakers and one native English speaker proofread and reviewed the transcriptions for me. The entire procedure was extremely time consuming and it is impossible to confirm complete accuracy with such a lengthy process. The translation results could have been unintentionally altered by the several people who handled the data. Furthermore, some Chinese phrases do not translate to English which would affect the reader's understanding of this particular case of conflict. Finally, there are multiple methods one may use to translate Chinese to English. The specific method one uses is determined by their personal bias and background. This fact could have also affected the data and therefore is a major limitation of most international and cross-cultural qualitative study.

I have to acknowledge that the recruiting methods for participation in my research did not reach the saturation. As mentioned in the sampling session, I originally received six positive responses from participants which showed willingness and excitement for my research. In order to ensure balanced responses from the Dragon team and MPBS, I only selected three of the most qualified participants from the Dragon team. I know that my sampling technique did not allow for me to reach saturation in the data collection. However, it was important that I was perceived to be fair in selecting an equal number of participants from both organizations. Otherwise, I might have been accused of being biased toward one of the organizations if I interviewed six participants from the Dragon team and only three from MPBS.

Conclusion

In conclusion, my research intended to answer three questions: (1) why did the conflict between MPBS and Dragon team occur? (2) What happened during each stage of the conflict? (3) What were the outcomes of the conflict, and how did those outcomes impact each organization? These questions allowed me to analyze not only the main conflict experienced by the Dragon team and MPBS, but also the events leading up to the conflict, as well as the outcomes. Chinese ideology, including the autonomy of the Chinese government, created an extremely unique experience for the Dragon team and MPBS. Further, the Dragon team was the result of a previous transfer and consolidation of two now defunct teams and undoubtedly, some feelings of resentment stemming from the previous transfer played a role in my study as well. As a result of my research, I hoped to encourage positive facilitation between these two parties, regarding Dragon

team's transfer as well as other reformation policies. Despite the dramatic increase in private enterprises investing in professional and commercial sports, private investors are not respected in the Chinese sport industry and few governmental regulations are able to protect their rights. Recently, the Chinese council has strongly encouraged expanding investments in the sports industry, however, the specific strategies and policies still not have been discussed and implemented.

After analyzing the stages of conflict between the Dragon basketball team and MPBS, I conceptualized the general process of the conflict and drew three main conclusions. The first was practical, explaining the importance of establishing a common goal between two or more collaborating parties. The next was empirical, discussing a need for clear sector identification and the compatible regulations regarding the Chinese basketball team and sports bureaus. The last conclusion has a theoretical implication referring to conflict literature on functional and dysfunctional outcomes of conflict. For future conflict research, a comprehensive understanding of the practical and theoretical implications is necessary.

From a practical perspective my research suggests that from the beginning of their collaboration, each entity chose to pursue their own personal goals, for the Dragon team that included remaining in the Mountain province and for MPBS that included selling the team for a good price. The literature proves that harmonious collaboration, specifically compromising allows for two parties to positively work together to achieve a common goal. It is important for the reader to understand that common goal must be common amongst both collaborating parties. In my research, the Dragon team and MPBS

never established a common goal, and as a result, their collaboration was destined for failure.

From a theoretical perspective the conflict between Dragon team and MPBS yielded both functional and dysfunctional outcomes for both parties involved. For example, altering goals and improving regulations allowed for each organization to obtain somewhat of a functional outcome, when at the very beginning of the conflict, this did not seem possible. As a result of my research, when future conflict arises between the government and private sports organizations, I suggest concentrating on establishing common goals, clarifying regulations and identifying sectors from the very beginning of collaboration. This will allow both organizations to work together to achieve their common goal, increasing the likelihood of both entities obtaining a functional outcome and preventing future conflict from arising.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Guide

English

Conflict Management Research of Two Chinese Sports Organizations Case Study

I am studying conflict between the Mountain Province Bureau of Sports and the Dragon basketball team, because I am trying to understand how conflict occurs and strategies to help address conflict.

Background questions:

1. What is your background with this sport organization? Did you play?
Administrator?
2. Could you tell me about your role and responsibilities with the organization?
3. How long have you worked within the organization?

Conflict questions:

Now, I would like to ask you some questions about the organizational conflict.

4. How did the conflict happen? Can you describe what was going on between the two organizations?
5. What types of instances happened in the past that lead up to the conflict happened?
To what extent did you see the conflict coming?
6. To what extent do you think the conflict could have be avoided?
7. How did people experiencing the conflict respond? What kinds of emotions did these two parties show during the conflict? For example, where people angry, happy, upset, or resistant?

8. How did they deal with the conflict?
9. How was the conflict resolved? How well did you think they resolved the conflict?
To extent did you think the conflict would end in this way?
10. How do you think the outcome of the conflict impacted the two parties? In a positive way or negative?
11. Do you think this kind of conflict could happen in the future? Why? Do you have any suggestion for dealing with it?
12. That is all the questions that I have, do you have anything else that you wish to add?

Thank you for your time and help!

APPENDIX B

Interview Guide

Chinese

我正在研究的是省部级体育主管部门和其下属篮球俱乐部之间所产生的矛盾，首先我想从背景方面的问题开始我的采访。

背景问题

1. 您在体育领域的背景是什么？您是运动员嘛？还是官员？
2. 您能告诉我您在所属组织中扮演的角色和所承担的责任是什么？
3. 您在您所供职的组织工作多久了？

矛盾方面的问题

现在，我准备开始问一些关于组织间矛盾的问题了。

4. 请问这两个组织间的矛盾是怎样发生的？您能为我描述一下在这两个组织之间到底发生了什么？
5. 请问过去发生过怎样的事情导致了现在矛盾的发生？您之前察觉到了潜在的矛盾嘛？
6. 在怎样的一个程度，您觉得这样的矛盾是可以被避免的？
7. 请问在矛盾发生的过程中，两个组织分别表现出了怎样的态度？比方说是否有人表现出，生气，开心，失望，或者顽固。
8. 请问是否有一件具体的标志性事件引发了两个组织正式的决裂？他们又是怎样处理这样的矛盾的？

9. 请问矛盾最后是怎样得到解决的？您觉得最后的处理方法怎么样？你有想到过这样的结局嘛？
10. 在您看来这样的结局会对这两个组织有怎样的影响？积极的还是负面的？
11. 您觉得类似的矛盾还会在未来发生嘛？为什么？对此类事件你有什么解决上的建议吗？
12. 这是我所有的问题了，您有什么想补充的吗？

APPENDIX C
CONSENT FORM

English

You are invited to be in a study about the nature of conflict between Mountain Province Bureau of Sports (MPBS) and Dragon men's basketball team. You were selected as a possible participant because you are/were a member of either MPBS or Dragon team. I will read this form carefully with you and you can ask any questions you might have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Xi Chen, a M.A. student in Sport Management in School of Kinesiology at the University of Minnesota under the instruction of Dr. Lisa A. Kihl.

If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, you will ask to do the following: Engage in a semi-structured audiotaped interview approximately 30-60 minutes in length with Xi Chen. You will be asked about your professional background, to reflect on how the conflict occurred, what instances lead up to the conflict, what were your reactions to the conflict, how was the conflict managed, and what was the outcome of the conflict. You will have the opportunity to read the interview transcript.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject.

Research records will be stored securely and only myself and my supervisor Dr. Lisa A. Kihl will have access to the records. Only my Dr. Kihl and myself will have access to the interview transcripts and will be destroyed in one year's time.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with your place of employment or the University of Minnesota. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Xi Chen. You may ask any questions you have now or contact the researcher later at chen3002@umn.edu; Phone: 612-203-2873. The researchers' project advisor is Dr. Lisa A. Kihl, 219 Cooke Hall, 1900 University Ave SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 612-624-3150, lkihl@umn.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding the study I encourage you to contact Xi Chen.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

APPENDIX D
CONSENT FORM

Chinese

知情同意书

因为您作为山城体育局或者巨龙男子篮球俱乐部的一员，您被邀请作为本人研究项目的参与者。此项研究由明尼苏达大学双城分校，体育管理硕士生陈曦进行，目的是为了了解山城体育局和巨龙男子篮球俱乐部之间的矛盾。在您签字同意之前，请您仔细阅读以下文字，我也非常乐意解答您的任何问题。

研究背景

此次研究的目的是了解山城体育局和巨龙男子篮球俱乐部之间的矛盾。在您完成此次采访后，我将会告知您此次项目的研究重点，以便您对此发表观点。

研究过程

如果您同意参与此次研究，我将对您进行为时 20 分钟的中文采访，本次采访将会被录音存证。

研究的潜在危险和益处

此次研究将不会对您造成任何伤害和危险。

保密协议

此次研究采访录音将会由研究者私人保存。无论在任何情况下，在我的研究发表当中都不会涉及您的个人信息使得您的身份被暴露。研究记录将会被保存在保密文件当中，只有我有权利查看参阅。

研究参与者自主参与权利

参与者有权利选择是否参与此次研究。您是否参与此次研究不会影响到现在或者将来与相关组织的关系。如果您决定参与，在研究过程中如果您觉得某些行为会影响您与相关组织的关系，您有权利拒绝回答任何问题和在任何时间停止研究和采访。

联系方式及疑问

陈曦为这次研究项目的主导人，您可以通过电子邮件 chen3002@umn.edu 和电话 612-204-2873 向她提出任何关于此次研究的任何问题。研究者的项目导师为 Lisa Kihl 博士，其联系地址为 219 Cooke Hall, 1900 University Ave SE, Minneapolis, MN 55455, 612-624-3150。如果您有任何关于研究项目的问题想要咨询除了研究者以外的人，请您与明尼苏达大学研究项目中心联系，联系方式为：D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware Street S.E., Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; 电话：(612) 625-1650.

您将会得到一份知情同意书予以存证

我已经仔细阅读以上信息，也已经提出了相关问题，同时得到了满意的答复。
我同意参与此次研究。

参与者签名： _____ 日期： _____

研究者签名： _____ 日期： _____