

“A Broken Clock Only Strikes Right Twice”: A Conflict Culture Study for BIPOC and First-Generation Student Support

Praxis Project Thesis: Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts — as part of the Community, Youth, and Education Studies Major at Clark University

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Abstract

This project, enacted in two phases, examined and highlighted multiple characteristics that are part of a larger culture of how BIPOC and/or first-generation students (BIPOC/FG) & student-facing staff/faculty (SFSF) understand and manage interpersonal conflict at Clark. In Phase I, I interviewed participants within these criteria. I then used qualitative methodology to analyze the data through discourse and thematic analysis to determine participants’ relationships with and understanding of interpersonal conflict and conflict management. These were mapped out onto nine flowcharts as their ideological theories of conflict. These ideologies around conflict revealed many common characteristics of conflict at Clark such as a heated/tense dynamic, the prioritization of relationships, the desire for neutrality, ageism, and the acute awareness of power dynamics within conflicts. In Phase II, I used the data from Phase I to inform an intervention to shift our relationship with interpersonal conflict to being more open to the possibilities of productive conflict. I used participatory action research and recruited a team of five other BIPOC/FG students to understand the impact of the intervention. We ended up creating a zine project meant to raise awareness and prompt reflection on kinds of student clubs/organizational conflicts. We hoped that by shifting our ideological relationships with conflict, we can build trust, belonging, and a sense of community on campus between varying groups at Clark. While we ended up running out of time to collect formal data, I believe that the results can speak to the interest of the Clark community in engaging with conflict.

Keywords: conflict, conflict culture, BIPOC students, first-generation students, relationships, restorative justice, ideological shifts, trust and belonging

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Introduction

“Do you understand that I have to serve *my students*?” Perhaps one of the more jarring statements I’ve heard in my time at Clark. While the sentiment was there, it was such an odd thing to hear from a staff member that serving their students meant neglecting other students. I didn’t argue with it then, avoiding any conflict, as the power they held over me and my position as a student leader scared me from being honest about my feelings. I suppose I have my chance to pick a bone with it now.

Before this school year started, I had used a meal ticket we found to sneak a friend into the dining hall to eat. This staff member had caught me, but it was half-way through this meal that I received a Teams message to meet them upstairs for a chat. When I got upstairs, I was immediately met with the question, “Do you know why I wanted to chat with you?” I shook my head, fully well knowing why, but I wanted to give them a chance to explain what they saw was wrong. They launched into an explanation on how my actions would take away food portions from other students, on how their role meant that they had to serve *their students*, and ending this mini-lecture questioning whether I understood their side and how disappointed they were in my actions as a student leader on campus. While I did understand, I also wondered what they understood about my actions. I did it to feed an off-campus friend, a student at Clark, who I knew considering their circumstances, was quite hungry at the moment. I remembered questioning if it’d be the same result had I walked out of the dining hall on my own with extra food. Their response was that “at that point it was out of their hands” and this revealed their intentions with this conversation. What I understood in that moment was a stubborn adherence to policies to protect their livelihood, not their students. My frustration with this caused me to be

quiet and smile as if I agreed, just to move on. Admittedly, I still hold a bit of a grudge with this person to this day, even as I continue to smile back like nothing’s wrong.

For a school that articulates a commitment to restorative justice in all of their Conduct processes and student leader training procedures, none of the ways that this person handled that moment exemplified this at all. It was appreciated that they brought me up to talk, but the lecture was not a conversation, and the relationship was definitely not “restored.” Rather, it served to further my own disillusion with how Clark practices restorative justice.

To provide more context, my friend had been hungry in the weeks returning to their off-campus housing. I had known they’ve been eating only tomato soup and bread lately and I wanted to share a meal with them where they’d be eating a little more than that. Not that this justified my actions at all; I perfectly understood why I perhaps should’ve found other ways. However, this staff member did not truly care for their students or their hunger, just to follow procedures with the air of protecting others as a way of ignoring the deeper issues at hand. Rather than asking me why I felt the need to sneak in someone in the first place and really listening to where I was coming from, they launched into an explanation to protect their job with the excuse of “serving their students.” If they truly cared for restorative justice practices, they would’ve understood the needs I was fulfilling too. Perhaps even trying to resolve the tensions of my side as much as I was forced to understand theirs.

Of course though, power dynamics have a way of making the attempts to listen and understand each other, one-sided. I would venture to claim that power can also make the desire to restore a relationship one-sided. As they held my student leadership role in the palm of their hands, the risk of revocation wouldn’t have just been to the detriment of my ACE mentees, but

also to the detriment of my own, as I relied on that income to pay for my tuition. At that moment, I felt like I had no other choice but to bow my head.

Beyond my own bad feelings, the consequences had the potential to ripple far beyond to other students too. I may pass this story down to other younger years of students, hold myself back when referring students for support from staff in that office, and overall just shatter any sense of cohesion or community that may have existed between us. The simplicity of being curious and acknowledging my reasonings would've left me feeling much better about the interaction than I did.

Now as I get the chance to reflect on this story and pursue a project surrounding these kinds of interpersonal conflicts, the opportunity to reimagine a Clark community that has the ability to engage with conflict more productively, on more equal terms, and resulting in a stronger sense of community is quite exciting. I recognize that my story of this conflict across staff and student lines is not unique amongst student leaders. As a further example, the language of Clark's Conduct Process for navigating conflict revolves around “educative” talks, because it is not expected that students know the policies/read the handbook, which is fair enough. However, when policies such as running businesses in the dorms are violated, the issue is not often ignorance, but rather there's a sense of necessity to these students who choose to do so. Many of my friends have attempted this, and left feeling patronized by staff who are well-intentioned but don't actually address or understand the students the way they need to. This conflict management system is much more in line with behavioral management rather than real conflict navigation, let alone restorative justice.

Many of the times, these conflicts tend to compile and build up grudges that move forward to inform further conflicts and division. This creates this false sense of unity on this

campus, and the ones that feel the effects of it tend to be those with less social capital and less means to hold agency, such as BIPOC and First-Generation (BIPOC/FG) students within these student leader roles.

I think that my roommate’s way of utilizing this saying, “A broken clock only strikes right twice,” really hit it on the nail. Following in this false sense of unity, many staff and faculty seem to see that things are “working” with our current systems. And while, in certain circumstances it does, we fail to recognize other moments as anything beyond aberrations from the “normality” that Clark’s ways of managing conflicts work. We pass these moments over as if it did “strike right,” and the staff that treated me in this way was never held accountable or made to realize that their actions made me react in this way. The power they held over me even most likely made it so that they never saw that there was any real problem in the first place. Part of that is my own responsibility for not advocating for myself, but the other part is the ways in which these conflict systems have eroded trust in a way that I couldn’t help but believe that I was in jeopardy if I did speak honestly. So while these systems of navigating conflict, whether interpersonal or systematic, are perceived to work well enough to keep the institution “running”, that doesn’t mean it works equitably for all our community members.

So to me, this project sought to find ways to build up agency for BIPOC/FG students to have the freedom to envision what productive conflict means and looks like to us. I wanted to start by understanding the “conflict culture” at Clark. Through Phase I of the project, I was attempting to identify any misalignments between various parties on campus and bring it to the forefront for consideration in Phase II when we held space for reimagining. I hypothesized that these misalignments are where much of the distrust and feelings of non-belonging exist. And as these misalignments add up, I fear that without intervention or intentional thought about them,

our formal and informal conflict management systems will fail to work altogether resulting in a completely broken clock at Clark.

With my experience as a student leader with the ACE and Connections programs for the past four years, I’m interested in understanding the perception of conflict on campus by BIPOC/FG students and student-facing staff and faculty (SFSF). By focusing on one of the most marginalized populations on a college campus and how we engage with, think about, and navigate conflict, I believed that we could reimagine and design an intervention that can be relevant to those in other social demographics at Clark. This follows the framework for universal design, where designing for those who are most marginalized creates pathways for all people.

In addition with this focus, I also want to specifically hone my attention to interpersonal conflicts at Clark. As a mentor of the ACE and Connections programs for the past three years, I’ve been in the position of the trusted peer to whom BIPOC/FG students can report incidents. Many of these incidents have revolved around racial microaggressions and the ways that my students and the aggressors reacted to these incidents such as ignoring, neglecting, shunning, or lashing back at each other. This has been formative in how I understand the culture around conflict on campus and perceptions of conflict amongst various social demographics on campus.

Before this project, I understood interpersonal conflict as a struggle of figuring out who’s in and who’s out of social groups. These groups are defined by their alignment to social values which are equated to moral values as well. This tension, I saw as one of the reasons we seem to be so bad with resolving conflicts, is because the expectation to align with each others’ ways of understanding each other and our world doesn’t create space for those outside these values to be welcomed in. While I will reflect on how this has changed after this project, this part of my understanding has to do with my personal journey when first coming to college. This includes

my former beliefs around not understanding gender beyond binaries, thinking that transracial adoption made the adoptee culturally and racially white automatically, and thinking that tolerating (rather than fully accepting or understanding) sexualities other than heteronormative ones was enough. It took many experiences of making mistakes around these beliefs, crossing microaggressive lines, and making friends with those that I harmed to understand their life experiences and how to actually be more inclusive and open to others. I realize that I wasn't always on the "in" with the same values and neither are a lot of my mentees' or the people that microaggress them. This being said, it takes grace to give multiple chances to learn and I had wished our capacity for this as a Clark community was greater than where I believe it to be. Coming to terms with this at the beginning of my project meant that I held a belief that if we could promote an ideological shift from the binaries of who's in and who's out of our social groups to critically engage with the processes of conflict management with others, then we'd be able to shift the conflict culture on campus to be one with more grace for each other. More grace would foster a culture of learning rather than send people into defensive stances where learning and curiosity about each other shuts down. This framing was what I took into Phase I of my project to understand what it would take to continue coexisting as a community in ways that do not deteriorate trust, but rather can foster a sense of belonging and heal our deep fragmentation as a campus.

Considering this, I've designed this praxis project with the hope that I will elicit change in these ways. In Phase I of my praxis, I explored the ways BIPOC/FG students as well as SFSF understand interpersonal conflict and conflict management structures on campus. To do so, I explored these questions in 9 semi-structured interviews:

1. How do types of interpersonal conflict and navigation of them impact an overall culture with conflict at Clark University?
 - a. What are the types of interpersonal conflicts that BIPOC and first-generation students at Clark University face and how do they navigate them?
 - b. What are the types of interpersonal conflict that student-facing staff and faculty at Clark University face and how do they navigate them?
2. What is the relationship between...
 - a. ...BIPOC and/or first-generation college students’ navigation of interpersonal conflict and their feelings of trust and belonging on campus?
 - b. ...student-facing staff and faculty’ navigation of interpersonal conflict and BIPOC and/or first-generation college students’ feelings of trust and belonging on campus?

I used discourse and thematic analysis on the interview data, to get a grasp on interpretation of their conflict ideology and to create 9 flowchart maps to inform an intervention. In Phase II, together with a team of five other BIPOC/FG students, this intervention focused on these questions:

1. What is our understanding of why interpersonal conflicts happen at Clark? What is our understanding of why unproductive and harmful interpersonal conflicts happen at Clark?
2. How do we prompt people who have been socialized to believe conflict is always negative, unproductive, harmful, and should be avoided, to see and utilize conflict as a

productive means for social change in their lives? How can we support Clark in supporting students, faculty, and staff to utilize conflict in this way?

Through a participatory action research (PAR) approach, we designed a zine for our intervention measure. Our goal was to increase an awareness about the nature of how conflict plays out on campus amongst student organizations in interactions with other members of the Clark community in the hopes that it would have folks critically consider conflicts within their own lives and shift relationships with conflict as a potentially productive means for social change in their lives.

With Phase I and Phase II of my praxis project, the overall goals were to make small steps towards raising awareness that Clark’s conflict navigation systems “only strike right twice”, to gauge the amount of interest in engaging with conflict as a topic, and start coming up with the frameworks of what an effective system would entail.

Review of the Literature

In order to get a better sense of the conflict climate of college campuses particularly with BIPOC/FG students, I needed to first examine the literature that already existed. According to Simpson, Peters, and Dixon, they define a culture as a reflection of learned and shared values, beliefs, and behaviors within a community of people (2024). Using this definition, a “conflict culture” then would be a reflection of learned and shared values, beliefs, and behaviors within a community of people (Simpson, Peters, Dixon 2024) in relation to their relationship with conflicts. This includes what’s shared in our practice of navigating conflict, how we conceptualize what conflict is, how we conceptualize what productive and unproductive conflict looks like, etc.. With campus conflicts in particular, Avlies, Duong, et al. (2022) identified the struggle in defining shared values within our conflict culture which “can also influence the direction of that struggle” (pg 5). This laid the foundation for Phase I of my praxis project where I attempted to uncover these shared values through interviews.

As a disclaimer for my use of the convergence of the BIPOC and First-Generation identities, I am taking an approach to understand both identities as an intersection, while primarily focusing on the BIPOC identity. First-generation college students are disproportionately represented by BIPOC college students, as more often than not, both identities are disproportionately from lower rungs of the wealth disparity gap in the U.S. So, my use of BIPOC/FG college students will take a socioeconomic, historical, and cultural lens to understanding the ways we operate in conflicts.

By reading the literature on trying to understand the contemporary conflict climate of college campuses with BIPOC/FG students, this allowed me to do three things. One, find the kinds of known conflict types that BIPOC/FG students engage with on college campuses. Two,

find the ways of known conflict navigation styles that BIPOC/FG students engage with on college campuses. And three, understand the impacts of productive conflict management on a college campus community. These three factors allowed me to get a sense of how to read the data and make sense of it in Phase I. It also helped me figure out potential options for intervention as well as how to talk with my Intervention Team about the data and what’s been done in Phase II.

What are the known types of conflict that BIPOC/FG students engage with on college campuses?

There were five main types of salient conflicts that BIPOC/FG students face on college campuses according to the literature I found. The list was as follows: hate speech, interpersonal conflicts (particularly in residence halls), racism throughout all levels (interpersonal, organizational, and systemic), cultural mismatch, and family/other support (or lack thereof). Each of these conflicts are briefly summarized by one source that covered multiple campuses in their studies that I was able to identify. See below for a summary of each topic:

BIPOC/FG Student Conflicts on College Campuses	
<i>Type of Salient Conflict</i>	<i>Breakdown Summary</i>
Hate Speech (Kealoha 2023)	Hate speech incites violence and is a form of violence itself. Since 2016, there has been a rise of hate speech occurrences and has only continued to rise due to COVID-19. Education codes such as California’s Section 76120 (any exterior group or person can come

	<p>onto campuses to use it for freedom of speech or assembly events) makes campus grounds as great recruitment territory for White supremacist organizations highlighting a 258% increase from Fall of 2016 to the Fall of 2017 after implementation. Under the value of free speech, it is weaponized to legalize hate speech and benefit powerful White groups more than BIPOC groups. In practice, it places the 1st Amendment above the Universal Declaration of Human Rights’ 26th article, the Right to Education. The impact of this on particularly BIPOC students, is the fear of returning back to campus, difficulty operating on campus (i.e. showing up to class, etc.), and the distrust of their institutions for standing by without words or actions when hate speech does occur.</p>
<p>Interpersonal Conflicts (Blakesley 2024)</p>	<p>Much of the context behind why interpersonal conflicts occur and are intensified with or between BIPOC/FG students have to do with the rise of social media and COVID-19. Social media makes it easy to unfriend or unfollow challenging perspectives, and COVID-19 has caused students across the board to experience less interpersonal conflicts. This creates less opportunities to practice navigation and understand each others’ values when it comes to conflict. This manifests in ways such as residence hall conflicts where there’s tensions between claiming personal belongings in a space against actually sharing a bedroom, varying ideas of respect,</p>

	<p>or microaggressions between roommates. Often this causes BIPOC/FG students to seek help at lower rates than White middle-class students. This leads to unproductive conflicts as individuals need to engage with others and self to fully learn in interpersonal conflicts.</p>
<p>Racism (Vega 2021)</p>	<p>Despite post-secondary leaders continuing to report positive race relations on campuses without it actually being the case, the stance that many institutions take surrounding race and racism isolates marginalized students away from their community. These stances include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The belief that "harmony" is found when students "don't take incidents of racial conflicts personally" (the illusion of inseverity) - The belief that blatant racism is a thing of the past - The minimization of subtle racism as "real racism" (i.e. equating wearing attire from another culture with being an issue of political correctness and over-sensitivity) - The belief that BIPOC/FG students shouldn't be complaining because they are privileged enough to be in college and therefore should move past minor conflicts - The belief that racial incidents aren't considered hate crimes

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The belief in interactional diversity as it creates the effect that White students are often more comfortable with BIPOC students, but not vice versa when BIPOC students become the educational curriculum <p>This allows racial and classist jokes, microaggressions, slurs, segregated spaces, unequal treatment, and the denial/minimization of racism to continue having space to exist on college campuses.</p>
<p>Cultural Mismatch (Phillips, Townsend, Stephens, & Goudeau 2020)</p>	<p>Within the context of higher education, it is framed as the "great equalizer" for FG students to go through and reap the benefits after investing themselves in it. This framework expects, socializes, and rewards independence, which is often an antithesis to working class BIPOC/FG students who are often guided by interdependent models of self. This often stems from family/community dynamics which are more likely to adhere to the adjustment to others and respecting group preferences. For example, faculty and staff expect students to develop personal opinions or challenge group rules rather than appreciate others' opinions or respect group rules (but also reinforces the latter in actual practice in a contradictory tie). This creates tensions in the college experience for BIPOC/FG students and reinforces lower senses of belonging in college opting towards values from their home communities.</p>
<p>Family/Support Conflicts</p>	<p>In relation to the previous kind of conflict, college is treated as a</p>

<p>(Thornhill, Wied, Spooner, Terrazas, & Evans 2023)</p>	<p>means of social mobility. This kind of pressure from families often compiles onto other issues such as financial issues (as BIPOC/FG disproportionately come from a low-income backgrounds), lacking social supports (as they attempt to "make it" on their own for their families), and the unawareness of support services on campuses (as families don't have backgrounds in higher education and may not know what exists to support their children at colleges; they may also have unrealistic or false images and expectations of what college is).</p>
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These types of salient conflicts that BIPOC/FG students face tend to create conflict cultures that makes it difficult to trust that conflicts will be handled amicably, because trust that there are shared values and intentions in further conflicts is eroded from what has historically set the stage for BIPOC/FG college students especially concerning hate speech and racism. This isolation from the outside college community in combination with known family support dynamics can alienate BIPOC/FG students from both home and college communities. This creates a tense environment where every choice made in conflicts is representative of the values we want to embody from the conflict navigation cultures in our home or college communities. Making these choices brings up deep tensions in not just our senses of belonging but also in our sense of self. Along with the known pause in more volumes of interpersonal conflict engagement during COVID in 2020, this circumstance gets messier, as without the foundations for trust and loss of conflict navigation skills on college campuses it means conflicts are more likely to be harmful rather than productive.

What does harmful and productive conflict look like? What are the known ways of navigating conflict that BIPOC/FG students use on college campuses?

In the literature I’ve reviewed, the largest distinguishing factor between harmful and productive conflict looks like whether or not relationships are preserved and strengthened or destroyed and weakened. Other factors between harmful and productive conflicts might look like the ability to be authentic in relationships, better decision-making for the issues at hand, or the development/deterioration of interpersonal skills. All of these factors can impact the kinds of conflict navigation that is more often perceived as useful or acceptable for productive conflict. From this, I’ve identified two methods, cancel culture and conflict avoidance, in my review of the literature that shows up most prominently on small college campuses, such as Clark’s. As a friend put it, one is when you get way too involved in a conflict and the other is when you don’t get involved enough. By identifying these methods and how they work on college campuses, we could get a sense of what points may be most prevalent to target our energy towards in Phase II with our intervention.

To start, we can examine cancel culture. This is a tool used to silence the marginalized and organize the majority into morally correct actions, decisions, and thoughts by withdrawing support to those deemed "wrong" (Mueller 2021). Typically this is followed by a call for accountability (apology and action) and social consensus on moral behavior (an assessment of personal character) (Mueller 2021). This was originally used by BIPOC folxs and queer communities of color as the last resort to bring social change (i.e. “Black Twitter”) (Mueller 2021). However, as the real White majority started using this tool in line with their morality, it shifted the tool from social activism to digital vigilantism (Mueller 2021). Now, cancel culture

disproportionately affects BIPOC students as social capital is the new currency that decides who gets cancelled and who is the canceller (Simpson et. al. 2024). The imbalance causes questions as to what the true effects of cancel culture are on a community.

Much of cancel culture happens online, but it can still manifest in physical interactions in the fear of being cancelled in our daily experiences as students. Within race dynamics, it can manifest in discussions around race when beliefs around Whiteness renders White students completely ineligible to participate, seated in the "innocence" of White students against unforgiving BIPOC students (Ortiz et. al. 2024). This brings up a key aspect of cancel culture and its ability to use this fear to create a need of self-protection over your own image to only embody a "good" side of yourself (Ortiz et. al. 2024). This also can lead us to dichotomize others to understand them only as one label, "good" or "bad" (Ortiz et. al. 2024). These monolithic identities are fueled by the constant digital archiving of all past behaviors and the invisibility of the self-reflective and restorative path towards change in the public eye (Mueller 2021).

Cancel culture at its worst can't justify faith that people will change through conflict, rather envisioning a future where we just remain at a standstill frozen in time. By refusing to separate the deeds from their doers, we eradicate the intrinsic worth of each person. This is a reflection of white supremacist approaches to punishment as justice and fundamentally works against the well-being of marginalized communities (Simpson et. al. 2024). It can also foster the silencing of difficult conversations and enable strategic virtue signaling for those to gain social power in alignment with moral stances.

Cancel culture at its best leaves room for everyone to demand consequences and accountability for injustice. It leaves a platform for those to respond, removing any gatekeepers to "truth or morality". At its best state, it works in tandem with restorative justice approaches to

conflict promoting a call-out and call-in culture that has the power to create spaces for dialogue (Simpson et. al. 2024).

In considering the second method, conflict avoidance, there is a lot less research around the impacts of this on college communities. Conflict avoidance is often attributed to BIPOC/FG students as they have less social power in mediation or other direct conflict resolution strategies and thereby opt for more low-context culture styles of conflict navigation (Blakesley 2024). Low-context culture styles of conflict navigation typically are individual by nature, take in account others very minimally, and often relies on direct, calm communication via words. At historically white institutions (HWIs) and primarily white institutions (PWIs) like Clark, cultural norms around conflict are often designated from White middle class values. This reflects in direct communication with quiet, neutral tones; no interruptions or showing of too much emotion; and the refraining from excessive body movements which can be seen as aggressive/intimidating/unwilling to compromise (Blakesley 2024). For BIPOC/FG students, these cultural norms around conflict tend to come into tension with our high-context style of conflict management, leaving us at a disadvantage in navigation (Lareau 2015). I will speak on this later in Theoretical Framework I. The little that is said highlights the positive impacts of conflict avoidance on the individual by helping to “[know] themselves, [enhance] their awareness of others’ characteristics, [increase] energy and motivation for problem solving, [make] life more interesting, and [help] to solve small problems that could grow into big issues” (Bazew & Neka 2017, pp. 27-28). Besides this some of the negative impacts can include conflict avoidance being a barrier to effective communication between individuals which can create animosity, rather than resolving conflicts in a friendly way (Bazew & Neka 2017). This can create low confidence in communication competency which can correlate to feelings of

loneliness (Hawkins et. al. 1991). Also, at many college campuses, conflict avoidance manifests in interpersonal conflicts, especially with first-year students, who want to preserve their friendships to most ends; with staff and administration brushing over deeper issues in topics students raise every year; with the avoidance of the discussion of race as a topic overall; and with BIPOC/FG students who are most vulnerable to the power structures of faculty and staff. In Phase I, I will expand more on understanding conflict avoidance ideologically and the impacts of it on the Clark community.

A subnote on both of these methods of conflict management is that while it does hold both negative and positive connotations, it can be quite subjective person to person. This is why I designed this praxis as a two phase project. Within the Clark context, productive conflict management will look different across many different people and I want to be able to capture that as accurately as possible, by placing myself as deeply in that subjectivity as I can.

What are the impacts of productive conflict management on BIPOC/FG students in their college communities?

In discussing conflict cultures, we also need to discuss what makes poor conflict navigation an issue in the first place. Museus et al. (2018) linked the concepts of culture and sense of belonging in their study associating it with a students’ psychological sense of connection to their communities. Poor conflict management cultures then can lead to poor senses of belonging and thereby weaker senses of connection to our communities. On the other hand, high senses of belonging can lead to retention at the institution, college satisfaction, the building of self-concept, and a deeper connection to our communities (Shaheed & Kiang, 2021). With BIPOC/FG students in particular, a campus’s comfortability with engaging with diverse

ideologies is a key indicator for determining whether the campus is fostering high senses of belonging (Museus et al., 2018). Engaging with diverse ideologies and cultures allows groups on campuses to exchange ideas to change themselves and change others.

A large factor of this was highlighted in the literature in the examination of the kind of racial language on college campuses. It discussed that colorblindness (downplaying racial/ethnic importance and salience by stressing commonalities) and multiculturalism (acknowledging and valuing group differences in promoting engaging in interracial interactions) have strengths and negative consequences (Shaheed & Kiang, 2021). This includes how White folks endorse colorblindness to be perceived as less prejudiced and perceive multiculturalism as a threat or as a way of thinking that evokes feelings of exclusion or threat (Shaheed & Kiang, 2021). This also includes how BIPOC folks benefit from multiculturalism and perceive colorblindness as a harmful blissful ignorance to the differences that are present. Both racial languages lead community members to avoid interactions altogether when neither side is understood. While the literature suggests that productive conflict management could be correlated to adopting multiculturalism (Shaheed & Kiang, 2021), I think that it has more to do with making sure that both sides are understood by the other and to embrace multiculturalism while acknowledging commonalities.

The literature suggests that engaging with (racial) conflict productively will lead to fostering high senses of belonging (Hussain & Jones, 2021). On the individual level, there's benefits to well-being, academic performance, health, diminishing the negative effects of racism and discrimination, and connecting students to more salient forms of their identities as they engage with one another and discover themselves (Hussain & Jones, 2021).

What has been done as conflict culture interventions on college campuses?

In the literature, conflict navigation is mentioned in three ways: conflict resolution, conflict management, and conflict transformation. While I will define these terms later in Theoretical Framework II, Mitchell (2022) noted that conflict resolution and management “has become a term associated with the manipulative search for an agreement that is satisfactory not merely to the adversaries, but also to the third party and the latent interests they represent” (p. 2). This being said, perceptions of formal conflict resolution, management, and transformation processes aren’t very well-viewed by students, faculty, and staff alike because “people often do not trust... neutrality... often correctly” (Peterson, 2018, p. 11). Often these systems of formal conflict navigation seek to provide a neutral third party to mediate conflicts and this is one source of known conflict navigation. BIPOC/FG students reach out for help at lower rates as White middle class students which gives them less social power in this way of navigating conflict through formal mediation (Blakesley 2024). These formal conflict navigation systems on college campuses highlights the pre-set way that conflicts are handled on campuses.

In another study, they reveal that there is much interest in this topic on the national level with various institutions that participated in their study. In Aviles et al.’s (2022) report “Transforming Conflict on College Campuses” created by the Constructive Dialogue Institute (CDI) and Aspen Institute’s Citizenship and American Identity Program, they’ve identified nine strategic interventions that work to transform college conflict cultures. These nine strategies include:

“...establish[ing] organizational values... creat[ing] low-stakes practice opportunities and model desired skills... invest[ing] in administration, staff, and faculty training and skill building... be[ing] clear who you’re representing when making public statements...

embrac[ing] novel counterprotest techniques... us[ing] participatory practices in decision-making... build[ing] relationships across stakeholder groups and map your human information network... invest[ing] in and engag[ing] expertise... [and] establish[ing] a crisis response team.” (p. 3)

These strategies were collected from their study participants and have uses both proactively and reactively for conflicts on campus overall. This study also included a reimagining of a vision for future college (conflict) cultures which included “being a sacred space for learning” (Aviles et. al., 2022, p. 52) where “differences are seen as adding value... [and] conflict is treated as natural, necessary, and as something not to be feared, but to be embraced” (Aviles et. al., 2022, p. 54). This study highlighted a way that different stakeholders on a college campus have the means to reenvision and try strategies around adjusting their campus conflict cultures, and is quite inspiring for the ways I attempted to frame Phase II of my praxis.

This being said, there were a couple of limitations that this report didn’t cover. It didn’t make distinctions across racial groups and the characteristics that make up conflict ideologies and management within those groups. It also didn’t address conflict creating harm in a sufficient way and working through the healing that needs to happen in order to feel like it is ok in the process of not being safe to pursue change in our relationships and social worlds. These gaps are important to fill. I believe that this is very important to understanding college campuses, because if we can see the ideological path for conflict engagement and navigation with one of the most marginalized populations on a college campus, then we can see most clearly where we can heal the deep fractures that Clark holds. If we make pathways for understanding and living with the most marginalized, then we’ll make pathways that can work for all people. In this way, my

findings can add onto the literature by identifying the ways BIPOC/FG students at Clark think about what productive conflict management looks like.

Any additional limitations in the literature?

There still are some additional limitations with the literature. Much of the literature typically speaks to analyzing interpersonal conflict separately from other kinds of college conflicts. As I engaged with Phase I, I came to an understanding that this is so decontextualized that the literature I was able to find is ineffective in speaking to interpersonal conflict as part of an intersection with other kinds of conflict such as systemic, institutional, or historical. While there may be literature out there that can speak to this, I am limiting myself to what I could find in the time I had, to pursue what I can in my project at the risk of addressing topics that have already been spoken to in other literature. I believe that my analysis will be my own and add value to the conversation, at the risk of being redundant.

Methods

How did I approach understanding the "conflict culture" at Clark and where and how to change it?

In my praxis project, I divided my research into two phases. Phase I included collecting interview data from 9 BIPOC/FG students & student-facing staff/faculty (SFSF). With this phase, I used discourse analysis and thematic analysis to search for relationships to conflict, conflict resolution, goals that they wanted to achieve in conflict, and why their conflict ideologies were oriented in those ways. These subtopics were used to create my analysis of the data by creating 9 conflict ideology flowchart maps. My initial research questions for Phase I involved:

1. How do types of interpersonal conflict and navigation of them impact the overall culture of conflict at Clark University?
 - a. What are the types of interpersonal conflicts that BIPOC and first-generation students at Clark University face and how do they navigate them?
 - b. What are the types of interpersonal conflict that student-facing staff and faculty at Clark University face and how do they navigate them?
2. What is the relationship between...
 - a. ...BIPOC and/or first-generation college students' navigation of interpersonal conflict and their feelings of trust and belonging on campus?
 - b. ...student-facing staff and faculty' navigation of interpersonal conflict and BIPOC and/or first-generation college students' feelings of trust and belonging on campus?

Phase II consisted of forming an Intervention Team by collaborating with 5 other BIPOC/FG students to create a zine project that prompted self-awareness with different kinds of conflict in the club setting at Clark. With this phase, I used a form of participatory action research (PAR) to understand three research questions:

1. How does conflict happen at Clark? How does unproductive and harmful conflict happen at Clark?
2. In what ways can people who have been socialized to believe conflict is always negative, unproductive, harmful, and should be avoided, begin to see and engage with conflict as a productive means for social change in their lives?
3. How does engaging in a collaborative effort to reimagine an approach to conflict affect the participants' understanding of and approach to conflict?

Why these methods? What connection does it have to my theoretical framework?

In Phase I, I used a qualitative methods approach by using discourse analysis and thematic analysis on the interview data. Discourse analysis refers to the analysis of all forms of talk and texts, especially as it relates to the tensions of interrogating your own assumptions and the way you habitually make sense of things in relation to your interviewees (Atkinson et. al. 2000). I chose this method because I believe that conflict is also inherently discourse and therefore the knowledge that can be gleaned from moments of conflict are socially constructed. By using discourse analysis I had hoped to link this knowledge to actions and practices that the Intervention Team would make decisions around what the best use of our data would be. This method helped me embrace the subjectivity of the data by getting closer to complexifying individual points I collected from the interviews and assisted me in creating conflict ideology

flowchart maps for each participant. One of the biggest things that I struggled with in creating these flowchart maps was trying to stay true to the spirit of what my interviewees mentioned while also acknowledging that my analysis of their experiences would create distance through my lens. This was combined with the limitation that I had only a handful of participants meant I couldn't make generalizable claims as efficiently about an entire Clark conflict culture. However, by using the qualitative research approach, I was able to expand the boundaries of what could be considered as part of the conflict culture. My way around this was in combining the pattern identification approach of thematic analysis with closely reading the word choices, hearing the tones, and understanding what was omitted to build the flowchart maps, which created typology/caricatures of different stakeholders in the Clark community. These maps would serve to be useful as my Intervention Team and I attempted to make sense of the ways my participants' relationships with conflicts construct the ways they made sense of it. This means that I must acknowledge that the flowchart maps I created were me trying my best to be as true to what was mentioned directly, but also including my own interpretations of what was told to me and what seemed to underlie each story. This covers addressing three of the tenets that I believe to be the greatest strengths of discourse analysis: expansion of the boundaries of what's included as part of the data, recognition of the interpretative nature of research, and a high sense of integrity/reliability.

I had hoped to see many of the concepts in my Pre-Phase I Theoretical Framework to be brought up, and it did for the most part. However, it was still missing a couple concepts to explain some of the ways I interpreted the data from the participants in authentic ways, which is why I have included a Post-Phase I Theoretical Framework. Matching my perceptions of the interview data with the perceptions of my participants through consent that the conflict maps

make sense to them was the sign that this worked out. Also, participants were able to co-create a space with me to make sense of their relationships around conflicts in their lives and this was also a way that I believe these methods worked for us.

As for Phase II, I used an arts-based Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. PAR disrupts the subject model of research and invites them to co-construct research that is action-orientated towards local community priorities and perspectives (Puri 2023). It creates opportunity for emergent knowledge through problem-solving and theory-building, which trusts that the communities in which we belong to have the agency to solve their own problems (Puri 2023). Following this methodology, I collaborated with 6 BIPOC/FG students at Clark and in bringing in their experiences with conflict, I attempted to stay true to the core of my belief about social change. Social issues that impact marginalized demographics of people need to include the voices and decisions of those people in it for solutions or interventions to be even remotely successful. We as BIPOC/FG students bring in a lens to conflict at Clark that others, such as staff or faculty, wouldn't necessarily have, precisely because we are so entwined with the culture here in such a short period of time. I chose this method because we had the opportunity to co-construct the way we wanted to understand my analysis of the data in Phase I, reflect on that data, acknowledge our capacities and goals with this project in a realistic way, and then create an intervention. While this wasn't a purely PAR research project because I chose the topic and it wasn't necessarily an iterative process, I do believe that this was a close attempt at it. By trying to understand ourselves in the context of the issues at Clark as much as we were comfortable with sharing with each other, these experiences shaped our direction with the intervention over multiple and shared realities. The kinds of data that I collected in Phase II were my personal observations of the team, the notes that we took from each meeting, and the zine that came out of

our intervention by the end. A measure for success that I anticipated was that I expected to see the zine reflect many of the Pre-Phase and Post-Phase I Theoretical Frameworks, alongside any other emergent conceptualizations around an ideal conflict culture.

Who are the participants in this praxis?

In Phase I, 3 BIPOC/FG students and 6 SFSF were involved in the interviews. By engaging folxs from across Clark in various capacities, it created a more equitable analysis in gauging Clark’s "conflict culture". Considering that the list of participants was smaller than intended, it won’t be possible to make claims on the entire Clark conflict culture. However, we can catch glimpses of things that can very well be plausibly attributed to a conflict culture at Clark, as well as more insightfully, their perceptions of what they understand as part of the conflict culture.

For some brief definitions for the graph below, a Clark student is referred to as a “Clarkie”, a professor at Clark is referred to as “Faculty”, and any other kind of employee at Clark (including administration) is referred to as “Staff”. All code names have a number alongside a specially designated code of a letter representative of their positionality: C for Clarkie, P for Faculty, and S for Staff. This is followed by a pseudonym to assist in memory of each participant. All salient demographic details are self-described and some details were redacted in order to preserve confidentiality. See below for a graph of participant demographic details that are able to be shared:

Positionality	Code Name	Salient Demographic Details
Clarkie	C1 (Jamie)	International Student; Hispanic; First-Generation Student

Clarkie	C2 (Alex)	Latine; Neurodivergent; 1.5-First-Generation Student*; First-Year
Clarkie	C3 (Ibrahim)	Asian; Non-First-Generation Student; Junior
Faculty	P1 (Leigh)	White; Woman; Visual & Performing Arts department
Faculty	P2 (Eliza)	White; Woman; Gender, Race, & Area Studies department
Faculty	P3)(Jocelyn)	White; Woman; Sustainability and Social Justice department
Staff	S1 (Grey)	BIPOC; Man
Staff	S2 (Fran)	White; Woman
Staff	S3 (Navy)	BIPOC

*1.5-First-Generation Students are students whose life circumstances don’t give them access to parents that have knowledge of what college systems in the U.S. are like (i.e. parents that graduated from a 4-year college but in another country, divorced parents and living with the parent that didn’t graduate from a 4-year college, etc.).

In Phase II, only BIPOC/FG students were engaged in the Intervention Team. This is because our intervention was intended for specifically this population of students, created by BIPOC/FG students, for BIPOC/FG students. Participants were recruited by word of mouth. Chrysanthe and Nahele were already onboard from a praxis project that I designed and scrapped over last summer. A.T. and Watson were friends with each other but I had only met them that semester and they seemed interested in my project, so they decided to join. Dynami was a special addition after gauging their interests in one of our first longer conversations together. All code names below, besides mine, are pseudonyms (all of which have the surname of Wells following a group decision/joke to represent ourselves as a family). All salient demographic details are self-defined. See below for a graph of participant demographics that are able to be shared:

Code Name	Salient Demographic Details
Bão (Wells)	Senior, Asian, 1.5-First-Generation Student*
Chrysanthe Wells	Junior, Asian, 1.5-First-Generation Student*
Nahele Wells	Junior, Afro-Latine, First-Generation Student
A.T. Wells	Sophomore, Latina, First-Generation Student
Watson Wells	Sophomore, Latina, 1.5-First-Generation Student*
Dynami Wells	First-Year, Asian, 1.5-First-Generation Student*

*1.5-First-Generation Students are students whose life circumstances don't give them access to parents that have knowledge of what college systems in the U.S. are like (i.e. parents that graduated from a 4-year college but in another country, divorced parents and living with the parent that didn't graduate from a 4-year college, etc.).

What is important to know about Clark University?

My site of choice was Clark University, because it is a community that I've been entangled with for the past four years. It is where some of my most formative experiences have been in my growth to being the person I am now, and most of those moments came from some form of conflict.

One of the most important qualities of Clark is that it is a small liberal arts school. What this means was part of what we identified in my team during Phase II, that the size of the institution makes it easier to make mountains out of molehills and for these mountains to stick for a while. In other words, grudges are easily held at Clark. It creates higher levels of isolation

for those who do experience conflict, and it makes it easier to pass down older conflicts generationally and having the incoming students pick sides.

In terms of the BIPOC/FG population here, according to the 2023 Clark Campus Climate Survey, of the 633 undergraduate students who submitted a partial or completed survey, it reports that 36% of undergraduate students identified as students of color and 25% identified as first-generation college students. The students that were surveyed identified issues related to their sense of belonging at Clark, such as the need for (prompts were not provided in the report):

- “large[r] events that resonate with the campus community and bring people together... speak[ing] to a diverse audience, not just dominant or highly visible identities” (Clark University 2023)
- “cultural healing... diverse classrooms... [and corrections to the] inaccura[cy of] the more cliquy predominantly White environment” (Clark University 2023)
- “genuine commitment to [inclusion], not just utilizing the few people of color to spread a misleading idea of diversity on campus” (Clark University 2023)
- “support in retaining historically marginalized members over hiring/admitting” (Clark University 2023)
- “conflict management skills” (Clark University 2023)
- “critical engagement with “cancel culture” as a means of shifting to a culture of “kindness and forgiveness”” (Clark University 2023)
- “rethinking the polarization of this culture through dismantling the "one truth" narrative” (Clark University 2023)
- “trust building with administration” (Clark University 2023)
- “better relationships with the Worcester community” (Clark University 2023)

- “actions against microaggressions” (Clark University 2023)
- “increased feelings and actual empowerment on campus to not rely on “thick skin” “ (Clark University 2023)

Within this range, my praxis engages directly with the conflict portions of this list, including but not limited to the expressed need for “conflict management skills” and “critical engagement with “cancel culture” as a means of shifting to a culture of “kindness and forgiveness,” “actions against microaggressions,” “rethinking the polarization of this culture through dismantling the “one truth” narrative,” and “trust building with administration.”. (Clark University 2023)

What is my positionality at Clark?

I am an "insider" researcher at Clark that is affected by conflict as much as anyone else who is involved in my research. This has caused me to be acutely aware of the risks that my project could have on the staff and faculty should they mention something that I include in my project that could be taken and reflected poorly on their position. It also means that in speaking out about experiences that students who have engaged with my project, we could also face consequences relating to our ability to operate and be on campus. Therefore, I have taken many precautions in protecting the data and separating it as far as I can from the actual person.

I am currently a senior student with experience working with the BIPOC/FG student populations here for the past 3 years as an ACE/Connections mentor. Within ACE and Connections participants from 2022-2026, the estimated population accounts for around 150 students. This number represents around 32% of all first-generation students on campus and 19% of all students of color on campus (in 2023). This is a dense population of undergraduate

BIPOC/FG students that I’ve gotten the chance to work with and mentor through different conflict experiences.

I identify as Asian and a 1.5-first-generation college student. This shapes the ways I’ve gotten to engage with conflict at Clark, because I’ve felt the need to suppress myself in most spaces. In contrast, in creating and engaging with my project, I’ve given myself more space to be free to express conflict experiences under academic protections. For these reasons, I engaged in Phase II of my research as a peer and lead co-researcher. This is important because I wouldn’t be free to explore this process without too many repercussions otherwise, and is also a large part of why I designed Phase I with the utmost confidentiality.

What were the procedures in collecting the data?

In Phase I, I recruited participants through a flyer for BIPOC/FG students and SFSF, mass email to student-facing faculty and staff, and word-of-mouth/snowballing post-interview. I particularly leaned on the flyer and mass email approach, because I wanted students, faculty, and staff to engage with the project on their own terms and wanting to be a part of the research. This ended up with 9 participants; 3 Clarkies, 3 Faculty, and 3 Staff. Many of the participants in the interviews left feeling like the interview experience was a therapeutic one. When a couple of the participants had doubts about being useful to me in answering the research questions and being stuck in the mind of being interviewed, I remember attempting to reframe many interviews with lines similar to “[t]his is going to be whatever it needs to be” (Ibrahim, C3, 2025), and participants responding well in trying to continue making sense of their experiences with me (i.e. “I guess I realized that I think a lot about belonging now.” (Ibrahim, C3, 2025)) rather than trying to transfer what they know to me. I’m quite glad they appreciated this opportunity to speak on

topics that they don't have the space to verbalize elsewhere. Each interview lasted for a maximum of 45 minutes, and resulted in a direct transcription made of the interview. Then, each of these transcriptions were sent out to the corresponding participants within 3-7 days to check over the accuracy and noting spots that they wanted to be omitted from this thesis and my analysis. Once I received consent from all participants, I created the conflict ideology flowchart maps for each person and created a comprehensive findings document.

In Phase II, I recruited my Intervention Team by word-of-mouth. I identified many prominent student leaders across the year lines who are highly involved on campus. As a disclaimer, I did draw from existing relationships with friends. Two that I had known for a couple years and one that I knew just this year. The other two were completely new to me. As a team, we met for 6 weeks on Sundays from 11:45 am - 12:45 pm to work out a common understanding of the data from Phase I and collectively agree on an intervention method (see Appendix A). I did not show them any raw interview data, only the conflict ideology flowchart maps with my analysis of it. This means that they saw my analysis of the data and analyzed it in a meta-approach to this project. We ended up creating a zine project that sought to bring awareness to club conflict dynamics with an ideological social change approach. Admittedly, we ran out of time to formally collect data on this in our process as I had to write my thesis coming into Spring Break and I didn't want to take up any more time than I had promised them to take post-Spring Break. We were planning on attaching a QR code with an attached online community forum space for further engagement with the zines, but decided against it as time was a limiting factor. However, our zine and engagement with this project (see Appendix B) seems promising, and we were able to answer both research questions collectively even as the

effectiveness of the intervention hasn't been measured. Instead, I will gauge my third research question for Phase II for some ways that I observed that this praxis had impacts on my team.

Pre-Phase I Theoretical Framework

What theoretical frameworks am I using and why?

In order to make sense of how conflicts manifest on college campuses in general, I’m relying on some theoretical frameworks that help me think about my presumptions around conflict, known BIPOC/FG students dynamics with conflict, and what frameworks we can use to elicit change. For these purposes, I am using three theoretical frameworks: High vs. Low Context Cultures & Cultural Mismatch Theory, Restorative Justice Theory, and Conflict Theory. As a disclaimer, for each of these theories that I refer to, I draw deeply from the particular work of one body of text from the author(s) rather than drawing from all those that have written about these topics. The reason for this is because I found these theories as conceptualized by these authors through a conflict lens which makes it the most relevant for me to engage with as I question and pull in ways that I want to frame these ideas for my praxis. This does not mean that these authors are the only source that we can use to understand these theories, but they are the ones that I choose to engage with here.

High vs. Low Context Cultural Mismatch (Blakesley 2024 & Phillips, Townsend, Stephens, & Goudeau 2020)

Concerning conflict styles of BIPOC/FG students, many of them have cited family and their environment as having a large influence on their style of conflict engagement. Using high and low context cultures is a way to make sense of this dynamic and what kinds of conflict engagement is valued in different environments. In low context cultures, the other parties in conflict are not gauged for their circumstances in the conflict, and often it is on the individual to communicate messages clearly and directly to the other. Rather, it is more often very

individualistic; relies on confrontation and mediation to explain the self; and can manifest in quiet, neutral tones, engagement with the Other, minimal body motions, and having no interruptions or too much expression of emotions. Typically, low context cultures are associated with western white values (individualism and capitalistic gains in a win/lose framing) around conflict.

In high context cultures, the other parties in conflict are taken into account to consider the contexts of shared relationships and reading between the lines of nonverbal communication to share messages. It is a collectivist approach in valuing the relationships within the conflicts; relies on self-reflection and can manifest through indirect strategies of navigation (e.g. avoidance, silence, concealed feelings, passive aggressiveness/cold anger); the respecting of seniority, and creation of counter cultures (e.g. “beasting”: my entire culture is built around direct opposition to what you think I am; Black intellect). Typically, high context cultures are associated with BIPOC (non-western), low-income (family-oriented) values around conflict. Typically, high context cultures are associated with BIPOC (non-western), low-income (family-orientated) values around conflict. It is also important to note that the ways that both high and low context cultures manifest can overlap, but for entirely different reasons and values.

My theory for how this comes into play in the college setting is that colleges typically value low context cultures. Many of the formal processes at this level deal with conduct and behavior management through more direct means and have a strong emphasis on mediation and confrontation aimed at the explicit individual understanding of the self and the removal of the problem rather than the restoration of relationships. This transactional feel to conflict navigation leaves BIPOC/FG students, especially those in their first year of college, feeling out of place as we come into college settings. Typically, BIPOC/FG students are coming from backgrounds that

value more high context cultures and bring this into contention with the values of the university. This mismatch asks us to assimilate and engage with conflict in ways that aren't familiar to the ways we know how to. This hinders senses of belonging and trust as universities tend to understand this mismatch as the inability to interact or engage with conflict from a lack of skills to be able to do so. This mismatch brings us to a need to make a greater use of a wider range of resolution options in formal processes in the university setting.

Conflict Theory (Siregar & Zulkarnain 2022)

I am placing myself in the larger conflict theory tradition of sociology, in reaction to the structural functionalist theories that it responds to. This theory stands in sharp contrast to understanding society as a system of interconnected parts that contribute to order and stability. Rather, it asks us to understand society at the most basic level, life or the struggle for survival, as inherently conflictual. This reveals a deeper nature that every society is in the process of conflict and therefore change. Because of this, every element inside society contributes to disintegration and social change rather than order and stability.

Conflict is always at some level unwelcome in society, especially as we seem to seek order and stability. For a conflict theorist, seeking order becomes a call for subordination within capitalist systems that inherently involves domination and therefore subjugation under the guise of order. In conflict theory, the understanding of the formation of a society is that it is a struggle for power amongst groups that are competing for survival/dominance. In conflict, this order gets challenged, potentially broken, and then reformed to become something else. In other words, conflict is “unwelcome to the bureaucracy which must strive towards an ever-widening extension of the area of predictability and calculability of results” (Cosser, 1957, p. 199). And because of

this, my reflections on the university culture as it’s designed, is that it’s in a way that attempts to mitigate and sort through conflicts quickly. This dynamic reveals a need to do deeper questioning on what our systems in place actually try to do with conflict. Currently, these formal conflict navigation systems only tolerate conflict as a natural aberration that’s bound to happen in our systems and that its goal is to return everyone back to “order.”

One other mention that I believe will be important in our discussions of conflict within conflict theory is that all social systems imply an allocation of power, wealth, and status positions among individual actors and component subgroups. All individuals and groups within a society have interest in increasing their share of power through conflict, which is known as their "vested interest". This implies that the disorder of conflict is rooted in the efforts for the redistribution of power, wealth, and status. Since this is where the true tensions lie within conflicts in society, there is a need to find forms where social progress and attainment of power for marginalized groups happen when their interests aligns with the interests of the majority groups in society in building systems that utilize conflict to redistribute power, wealth, and status equitably rather than simply tolerating conflict to return to an “order”.

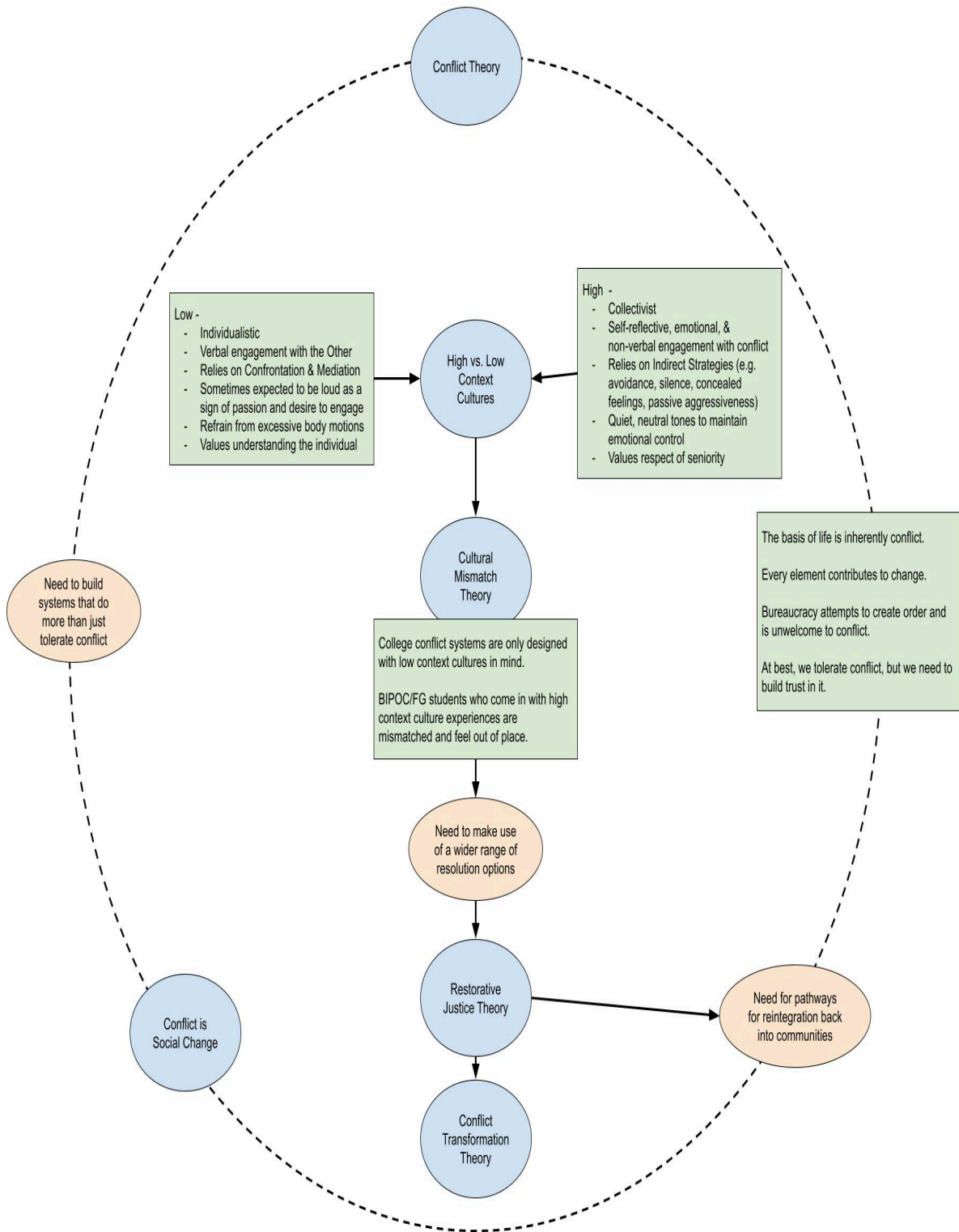
Restorative Justice Theory (Simpson, Peters, & Dixon 2024)

This form of the alignment of interests may lie in restorative justice theory. We all coexist in limited spaces and resources and already rely on one another to sustain our lives. In other cultures, it’s very easily visibly community-oriented, but in the U.S., with its commitment to capitalism and individualism, it’s easy to forget the people behind the things we use and do on a day-to-day basis. This is at the core of restorative justice theory, because in a conflict, relationships are positioned as what matters most to consider (not necessarily to preserve).

Furthering the progress of relationships through conflict, whether that be through repair or release, is how we create social change and the persistence of the faith in the obligation we have towards one another. Restorative justice highlights accountability, making amends, the participation and inclusion of all, and the reintegration of all back into the community. This creates a "vested interest" in the humanity of all people by tying our very fates to one another. Restorative justice has the potential and call to action to heal intergenerational trauma by calling back in folks in a society that has been deemed to have done harm or wrong. By working on building systems that welcomes all back into a community through accountability measures and understanding of the other, we will be able to foster trust and belonging and a faith that the humanity of all will be sufficient to hold community. This will come with the beliefs that wrong doing is for deep-rooted reasons, that we always have a place around each other, and that we all have the agency to decide to repair or release relationships amicably.

Restorative justice dismantles the "right and wrong" & "good or bad" people binaries. This kind of binary is often aligned with whiteness, and its message of seeking righteousness or innate goodness in others is a problematic one that seeps deep into many discussions around conflict. I am acting on understanding conflict through a morally grey lens, which is why I must make this disclaimer that I am not seeking right actions or good people, but rather looking for why are things the way they are, why do people think the things they do, and what has made people choose to take certain actions surrounding moments of conflict. From understanding conflict in these lenses, I seek to create change in the ways that we believe and think about conflict.

Please see below for a visual aid on my theoretical framework:



Please click on the chart to see the full view.

Findings Phase I

Through Phase I of my project, I recruited my participants through a blanket email to all faculty, and a flyer aimed at BIPOC/FG students as well as student facing staff (see Appendix D). This allowed me to recruit 9 participants, 3 Clarkies, 3 Staff, and 3 Professor members to interview and create conflict ideology flowchart maps based on the characteristics of their stories that I chose to extract. These interviews and flowchart maps helped me understand how high and low context cultures manifested at Clark, how different interests at Clark view conflict as either natural/an aberration/welcome to it, and how many would describe characteristics that align with restorative justice in an ideal conflict culture at Clark. This last part would be important in the design of Phase II as it would confirm or deny my initial assumptions that various interests at Clark would even want some kind of intervention geared towards restorative justice. In this way, rather than looking at explicit mentions of themes, I coded my data by highlighting characteristics mentioned and what these could potentially point to in terms of their beliefs around conflict. Many beliefs around interpersonal conflicts across the board involved five major characteristics. *Please see Appendix E and F for the transcripts of the interviews and the flowchart maps.*

Characteristic 1: “Where everybody involved is kind of upset.” - Alex (C2)

One, a belief that conflict involves a high tension, heated dynamic. When asked for stories of conflict in their time at Clark, many of the first mentions of conflict involved this dynamic whether student, staff, or faculty. We see this most clearly with Alex (C2)’s (2025) definition of conflict as “...more [a] heated situation, probably more personal, more emotional, stuff like that.” or with Leigh (P1)’s story describing an emotionally charged and tense moment

concerning the safety of their students. In both Alex (C2)’s and Leigh (P1)’s reflections on what conflict is, they expressed a desire to return to/maintain a state of order and normalcy. Alex (C2) mentioned avoiding confrontations with family and friends as a way to maintain a state in their relationships where they wouldn’t be upset at them. Leigh (P1) mentioned a desire to maintain a sense of professionalism with a fellow professor despite repeatedly feeling disrespected and delegitimized as a professor. In both of these cases, conflicts seem to erupt in a heated form occasionally, but are held beneath the surface of interactions. Even as they don’t seem to define conflict in this way, I think that viewing conflict as both the eruption and the hidden sides are aligned with the way conflict theory understands what “order” looks like, submerged conflicts. The eruption of conflict is then understood as an abnormality to “order”, while submerged conflicts are perceived as more "normal" or "calmer" interactions with others.

Most others desired a return to "normalcy" away from what Eliza (P2) (2025) called out as "problematic conflict", moments filled with “shouting... yelling... calling names... [and] being nasty”. What this "normalcy" really looks like, away from defining it as the absence of the qualities of "problematic conflict", is still ambiguous amongst the interviewees. There doesn’t really seem to be a consensus, but some of the qualities of "normalcy" participants cited were “feeling comfortable in the room” (Jamie, C1, 2025), an amicable relationship to be able to continue doing work together (Alix, C2, & Leigh, P1, 2025), “being able to chitchat with someone [as] a sign of closeness” (Ibrahim, C3, 2025), being able to be collaborative and collegial (Eliza, P2, 2025), being able to hold a “neutral” ground (Jocelyn, P3, 2025), and having the presence of no ongoing problems (Fran, S2, 2025). The odd one out involved the maintenance of institutional order and compliance with behaviors that adhere to university policy (Navy, S3, 2025).

A large sense of what I get from most of these qualities require some sense of trust in the other as part of their goals with conflict. Whether they envisioned minimizing it or finding ways to engage with potentially conflicting situations more productively, all participants wanted to be trusted and be seen as people, even as they represented larger structures like the institution. We can see this in the qualities of "normalcy" surrounding the ability to be together with one another. This is a large tenet of restorative justice, being able to see the need and ability to be around one another, where the conflicts don't define or make the individuals who exist within it. In this way, conflicts, then, can also be understood as interruption in relationships rather than being part of the relationship itself.

This I have to disagree with, but this informed the way I designed Phase II. The questions I wanted to answer out of this characteristic was what exactly would "non-problematic" conflict look like to people that understood conflict as interruption, can it still involve all the qualities of "problematic conflict," and how can we draw out this contradiction as to change conflict ideologies and thereby the conflict culture at Clark? I personally believe that conflict is part of the relationship itself and is meant to hold qualities of "problematic" and "nonproblematic" conflict. These qualities allow us to be seen as a complex person, and if we can see each other in this way, it has always felt more humane to me. Perhaps this is the part of high context culture that I appreciate a lot more. I'd be willing to argue that if the core of these envisionings of conflict cultures is being seen and trusted as people, then in the next phase, we'd just have to figure out how we want conflict to fit into this process beyond just the context of our interactions with one another. Perhaps figuring out how conflict can also be an instigator or basis for change in relationships rather than simply an abnormality.

Overall though, it is an accepted reality to most participants that conflict has to involve high tension, heated dynamics. However, there were two abnormalities in this data set. One involved another quality of seeing conflict as high tension, heated dynamics. Many participants seemed to cite how they grew up in families and cultures that have seemed to hold a lot of power over them. They cited many examples of various power dynamics and the trauma from these experiences carries over to the ways they handle conflict now. Jamie (C1) (2025) reflected saying, “I think it’s mostly my ethnic identity that affects most because I grew up with a lot of like... I grew up in the U.S. a lot so my mindset is affected by that and that’s like quite different from home in the sense of like I’m sure this type of conflict appears at home, but not in the way that like is as emotional.”. This kind of national power over their conflict engagement styles was a really interesting part of their identity as an international student and explicitly points back to my understanding of high and low context cultures. They went on to express the differences in the heightened emotional states of those involved in conflicts here in the U.S., while in their home country, it feels very straightforward avoiding the emotions. This preference towards low context cultures is an interesting version of resistance to assimilation in a way that defies what I expected from BIPOC participants.

Secondly, in Ibrahim (C3)’s reflections on their conflict engagement style, they expressed that they would rather avoid conflict altogether as the conflict itself felt self-inflicted. I noted this as an atypical reflection as compared to the rest of the participants. Their reasonings involved racial conflicts in classrooms and particularly with being one of the only students of color in their classrooms with white peers. This struck me as while I would explain this to myself structurally, as an individual, Ibrahim (C3) explained it that they weren’t being hateful or anything. Rather, they understood their place of nonbelonging as something they brought on themselves. This kind

of conflict is not heated or high tension, but is much more subtle and quiet beneath the surface. To make sense of this, I thought through this in terms of conflict avoidance. Rather than engaging with others in their class, Ibrahim (C3) decided to avoid what could've been a potentially heated moment and opted for a quieter kind of self-inflicted conflict. This kind of strategy of engagement is very in line with high context culture as it considers the feelings and contexts of the surrounding environment before even engaging in what we typically see as conflict.

Characteristic 2: “If it doesn't, don't cause trouble, trouble is not needed.” - Ibrahim (C3)

The second characteristic that I've noticed with my interviewees' conflict engagement comes out of that desire for "nonproblematic conflict" or the absence of conflict. This characteristic is the desire for neutrality within or avoidance of conflict scenarios and it seems to be underpinned by a need for safety. This belief that it works in managing conflict or is the best way to engage with conflict can be clearly seen in the role of the “middleman” as an advisor in Grey (S1)'s (2025) interview or Eliza (P2)'s (2025) belief in “[the] ea[se of] keep[ing] neutral” and not taking things personally with students. In addition, students like Jamie (C1) (2025) wanted to "acknowledge both sides" in their ideal conflict culture or Ibrahim (C3)'s (2025) method in navigating conflict “...try[ing] to be neutral”, has the same implication of the staff and faculty interviews of the desire for safety alongside neutrality. The neutral ground was often talked about as the safe ground from pushing the bounds of relationships and this is often where conflicts try to get returned to. Either that or this could even allude to an anti-harm culture where we believe that we could exist in a reality where no harm is done. This characteristic is really problematic to me, because while the desire to be seen as people is quite pervasive, it also comes

with a lot of suppression of the self to be more amicable. This shuts off our ability to deeply engage with and learn with and about others. This brings up how authentic we actually are to one another in conflict if we really are just seeking to return to more stable footing in our relationships. Of course, this brings up questions around where we separate the line between quite real harm in conflict, natural discomfort in conflicts, and opportunities for personal and relationship growth. And in engaging with this question, I believe that if we travel nowhere in our relationships with one another, never allow it to change and transform with space for authenticity, eventually there won't be enough space for each other's submerged troubles to remain submerged.

An interesting reflection on Navy (S3)'s interview can be brought up here concerning safety at the institutional level. They brought up many moments of transgressions against university rules and policies, equating it with conflict. Their rationale for these rules involved the need for structure in order to function as a group, a society, and perhaps even going so far as to imply as a Clark community. This structure keeps us safe from one another and while they brought this up to speak on conflict, I want to agree with Jamie (C1)'s definition of conflict. In Jamie (C1)'s (2025) reflections, they said, “I don't think I'm likely to have a conflict with them because they have higher power than me, so if I start a conflict, it would be like me getting scolded”. If a conflict happens between an institution and an individual, or at the very least within power imbalances, is it truly a conflict or is it the imposing of reality from someone with more institutional power on another? To me, Jamie (C1) brings up the latter as a way of clarifying that one of the qualities of neutrality is that it allows imposed realities to make us feel safe, but in these scenarios it's not really a conflict in the first place. This implies that interpersonal conflict must be between those of equal-ish power relations and that those involved

in the situation had to have the agency to engage the dynamic as a conflict in the first place and have influence over the outcomes. In cases of unequal power relations, this seems to join the larger conversation of the weaponization of safety in our institutional structures and our compliance with it as a form of domination. So just as relationships can't sustain themselves in safety, I think what the interview suggests is that our desire for neutrality is actually a desire for safety. And this safety is part of many socialized values that prevent us from building our relationships or truly engaging with conflict well. Perhaps if we are able to move past the desire for the absence of conflict, the next stage might be moving past the desire for "safe conflict".

Characteristic 3: “...there's no vacuum ever. So, yes, [power] always makes a difference.” - Eliza (P2)

As we talk about power relationships in conflicts, this highlights a third characteristic I noticed within the interview data. Most participants acknowledge power as involved in conflict, but each of them brought out different implications with where and how power gets involved. As mentioned with Navy (S3)'s interview, they see power as what enables the ability to impose social norms through policies for accountability and preservation of a society/community to be able to live together as a group. Conflicts in this case, aren't really a power struggle but rather incompliance with preexisting systems and resolution looks like reeducation to understand why we need compliance with these systems. This can manifest as institutional conflicts rather than interpersonal ones, although the struggle between representatives of these groups deeply entangles the interpersonal with the institutional. I think that this brings up a key point in my considerations of conflict, that it's really difficult to separate our discussion of conflicts into types, as they all have some kind of interplay into the situations depending on how you look at

them. Perspectives on the kinds of power matters here and how we view its legitimacy within the institution and the ways they legitimately hold practical influences on our institutions.

Similarly, Jocelyn (P3) also acknowledges the representatives of larger groups or what they call “factions” in interpersonal conflicts. Although Navy (S3) and Jocelyn (P3) both see power as what influences the outcome of conflicts, only Jocelyn (P3) describes it as a misalignment in ideologies or values. Thinking about conflict in this way can explain a question from earlier concerning "problematic conflict." Perhaps "problematic conflict" happens when what we represent in conflicts, whether that be how we think about conflict itself or the subject of concern, goes unrecognized by the other. What happens when one member in the conflict cannot see the misalignment, I speculate that it ends up bringing out the "nastiness" that was mentioned by Eliza (P2). This happened with many of the conflicts that were brought up in the interview data. And most notably with the example that Alix (C2) provided with the group project, the reason that they didn't feel like it was much of a conflict in the first place was because they were able to see and understand both perspectives. Each of their priorities were placed in different things, sports and school respectively, and in being able to weigh accepting the differences as a reality of working together, they were both able to recognize each others' realities and negotiate their time. Of course, this example from Alix (C2)'s story is a much smaller scale example of what I am seeking with this project (at least before I started planning Phase II), but I think this can be applied at large with other conflicts too.

In other thoughts about the role of power in conflict, Fran (S2) follows the logic of power as influence in conflicts, but goes a step further to treat power as the responsibility to build institutional and interpersonal trust through conflict. This was especially highlighted in a comment about how incompatible restorative justice practices are with formal processes for

conflict like Clark’s Bias Incidence Response Team. They reflected that it takes “real relationships to engage with conflict effectively” (Fran, S2, 2025), and I must agree. Formal processes like the Bias Incidence Response Team seem to intend to be a catch-all for institutions to handle conflicts that don’t work for everyone in the same ways. As of now, I don’t believe or have seen that formal processes involving restorative justice can coexist. Rather, these formal processes are at odds with handling conflicts through a restorative justice framework, which begins with a belief that conflict is a regular and normal aspect of everyday life, particularly in spaces of inequity. Power in Navy (S3)’s conflict ideology map is used as a way to return relationships under an order, while it seems like what Fran (S2) is getting at is that these real relationships must actually change the ways we recognize each other rather than simply redistributing power, wealth, or status. This intrinsic part of formal processes in handling conflict as this redistribution and subjugation to order ends up deteriorating the trust that “real” engagement with conflict can build, especially in interpersonal settings.

Another part of Fran (S2)’s (2025) reflections dwells on the idea that “the reasons that I didn’t understand her were structural, and it wasn’t like interpersonal” and I have to disagree with this a little bit. Following the qualities of power in conflicts thus far, I can agree with Fran (S2) that it’s important to acknowledge the circumstances in which conflicts are able to manifest. However, there is also an importance in acknowledging the interpersonal side of conflicts and being able to see the people impacted and the harm itself that is done. We can’t understand each other without both and I think that this is part of how power can be held accountable in conflicts to be responsible to build trust and belonging.

In a final note on the role of power in conflicts, Ibrahim (C3) has a really interesting take on their inability to separate a friend from a roommate in their conflict. Through the roles that

they take in each others' lives, Ibrahim (C3) prompted an idea that power relationships are always present, even in close relationships, and the roles power allows people to take on are not mutually exclusive either. This is because although their roommates in this suite were friends, Ibrahim (C3) still held power over this friend during the height of the conflict, because they had the other suitemates in agreement with their reality through another dimension of power, solidarity. In this dimension we can understand conflict beyond a one-to-one relationship between two people and see conflicts beyond the individual experiences. Through this conflict, Ibrahim (C3) also brings up a valid point that multiple roles within the individuals must be considered when talking about how we exist in one another's lives. This intersectionality creates complex power dynamics through tensions, such as between whether certain roles we take on with power over the roles the other takes on in conflict becomes both the prompter and the subjugated in conflict. This naturally creates imbalances on multiple levels and only makes conflicts that much harder to actually be productive in building relationships. However, rather than treating this as solely a barrier, Phase II of my project must also grapple with the ways that these complex power dynamics can also support building trust and belonging in relationships through the recognition of other realities beyond just understanding these relationships through the roles.

Characteristic 4: “But it’s really easy to gain my trust back. Unfortunately.” - Navy (S3)

Interestingly, another characteristic that was among staff and faculty [excluding Leigh (P1) and Navy (S3)], relationships seemed to be a top priority to preserve and maintain in conflicts, while for all of the students, it wasn't at all. Initially, this seemed strange to me, but as I read through the rationale for both groups, it started to make more sense. For example, Eliza (P2)

(2025) felt like relationships were a necessity to preserve because there are “bigger fish to fry” and that we don’t “have that luxury” to be arguing with each other interpersonally. Jocelyn (P3) (2025) also seems to agree saying that conflict resolution has to involve “find[ing] a way forward together without blaming people”. At face value, this seems well-intentioned, but without blame or at least the distribution of accountability, we then still fall into that desire for neutrality again. Grey (S1) takes this even further by affirming that building initial trust within teams and students can prevent conflicts in the first place. Honestly, I disagree with this perspective by Grey (S1)’s as it disregards the basic premise of conflict theory that conflict is inherent in society, but it reflects the institution’s structural-functionalist framework of conflict. I also disagree with the stance Eliza (P2) takes since I think personal gripes with values and ideologies are exactly what makes those “bigger fishes” in the first place, but I can appreciate that I think this reveals a desire to protect a status and power that is tied to the relationships that staff and faculty are protecting at a core that students don’t necessarily have at the same level yet.

This protection is of the status and power that is tied to the relationships that we have built. For students, and especially BIPOC/FG students, this network is still in the process of being built. Students such as Jamie (C1) note that they didn’t come to college for making friends purely for social purposes, but rather they would value making relationships more for college and “future success”. This brings up an interesting discrepancy between valuing preserving relationships through conflict not being the same as valuing building relationships through conflict. For the students in these interviews, I speculate that the building of relationships through conflict comes at a cost that some of them aren’t willing to cross. Ibrahim (C3), for example, made it explicit that their personal character is valued higher than the relationship itself in conflict when speaking on a story about an old suitemate issue. And Alex (C2) differentiated

between valuing the relationship with those that they are already close to, choosing to engage with those relationships to engage in resolution work, as compared to not really caring and resorting to avoidance with other relationships that aren't valued.

Relationships for the SFSF on the other hand seem to seek to make the costs (such as time, personal values, boundaries, etc.) in building the relationships worthwhile. This was an interesting dynamic to me as it revealed that conflicts are the medium in which you preserve what you negotiated on with building the relationships. I also noticed that most of these SFSF seem to desire a transformation in their relationships through conflict. This goes beyond how students may perceive conflict as purely within the roles that all parties hold. When thinking through this, I realized that in order for conflict to be productive for building relationships, we have to consider the history of the relationships of the ones involved both on an immediate personal level and on a more structural and identity-based scale. By doing so, we remind ourselves of the relationships' intended structure and conflict supports it by shaping it (anew).

Characteristic 5: “...like we should know better” - Fran (S2)

Lastly, the final characteristic that I noticed is that within the positionality of both of these groups, their age seems to distinguish them most. It's important to note that this is in the perception of both the BIPOC/FG students and the SFSF. However, I believe that this pattern can be better analyzed through the lens of race and socioeconomic position. In previous comments, the "getting along with others" and not making conflicts personal is known to be a mechanism for how racial and social power can be preserved. Many of the interviews highlighted age as an indication of maturity and carries with it the expectation of more. And this "more" is really just more of however the adult is already showing up in conflict. The expectation for adults to know

more is a key facet that my group in Phase II decided to focus on with our intervention design, as this myth is so pervasive in society as a whole. This is something that some of us grow out of as we realize as we become adults that we can't live up to "more", but in other cases it seems we self-internalize these ideas onto others.

Even still, I acknowledge this was a surprise to me to see these unrealistic expectations being put on adults by adults. All of the staff cited some instance of their colleagues needing to know better because they're "grownups", as Fran (S2) stated, wanting to educate their students because they don't know any better, as Navy (S3) stated, or how adults should have the confidence to engage with conflict better than students, as Grey (S1) stated. In all of these ways age is the rationale for desiring more out of adults for resolving conflicts “perfectly.” I think this idea of the “perfect resolution” ties back to the desire for neutrality and safety and it protects those with racial and social power in the fear of “rocking the boat” too much. With students, this positional difference in age is another extension of how power influences the ways conflict operates. Jamie (C1) (2025) laments that they “don't think [they're] likely to have a conflict with [a professor] because they have higher power than [them], so if [they] start a conflict, it would be like [them] getting scolded”. In dynamics like these, for those that already have a high power position, namely white people that hold full time jobs, the current "order" is what they would want to preserve. This makes me wonder if the desire to preserve relationships can become a self-interested way of engaging with conflict. This convergence of interests through relationships under the restorative justice framework strikes as flawed in this way. To move through this model and find another way to frame conflicts, I believe that we would need to acknowledge that the preservation of relationships for those in unequal power structures can perpetuate the same

unequal statuses. And so, if this is the case, how can we justify a framing of a common goal in conflicts to equalize power structures beyond preserving or considering relationships?

Concluding Notes

All in all, conflict doesn't seem to be a welcome force in anyone's lives yet. It seems to invade the various relationships we have at a moment's notice, prompted by the misalignment of people, and that difference is then cited to be the problem. Many of the interviews pointed towards the neutral ground as what's most ideal, but I still disagree. This belief that this is most ideal, coming from the internalization of being subjugated to an "order", rubs me the wrong way. It may be a strategy for the removal of conflict in the short-term, but to continually rely on rearticulating and reasserting the authority of the institution is not a reliable strategy at all. In the following phase, I needed to reflect on other theoretical frameworks that could build out ways to think about what would make reliable strategies in thinking about conflicts. The following two theories frame what changes how we can reckon with what conflict could look like, and how an ideological shift in thinking about engaging with conflict can create healthier and more productive modes of thinking about conflict at Clark that can result in a path forward (whether restoration, release, transformation, or relational).

Post-Phase I Theoretical Framework

What theoretical frameworks do I need to add and why?

From what was missing in my first theoretical framework, I needed a framework that helps understand conflict as more than just tolerable. I also wanted to add a framework that provides a new way of seeing what conflict can be understood as and engage with different intentions on the ways forward from conflict. These two frameworks will also challenge some of the aberrations in the data in Phase I’s findings.

Conflict is Social Change (Coser 1957)

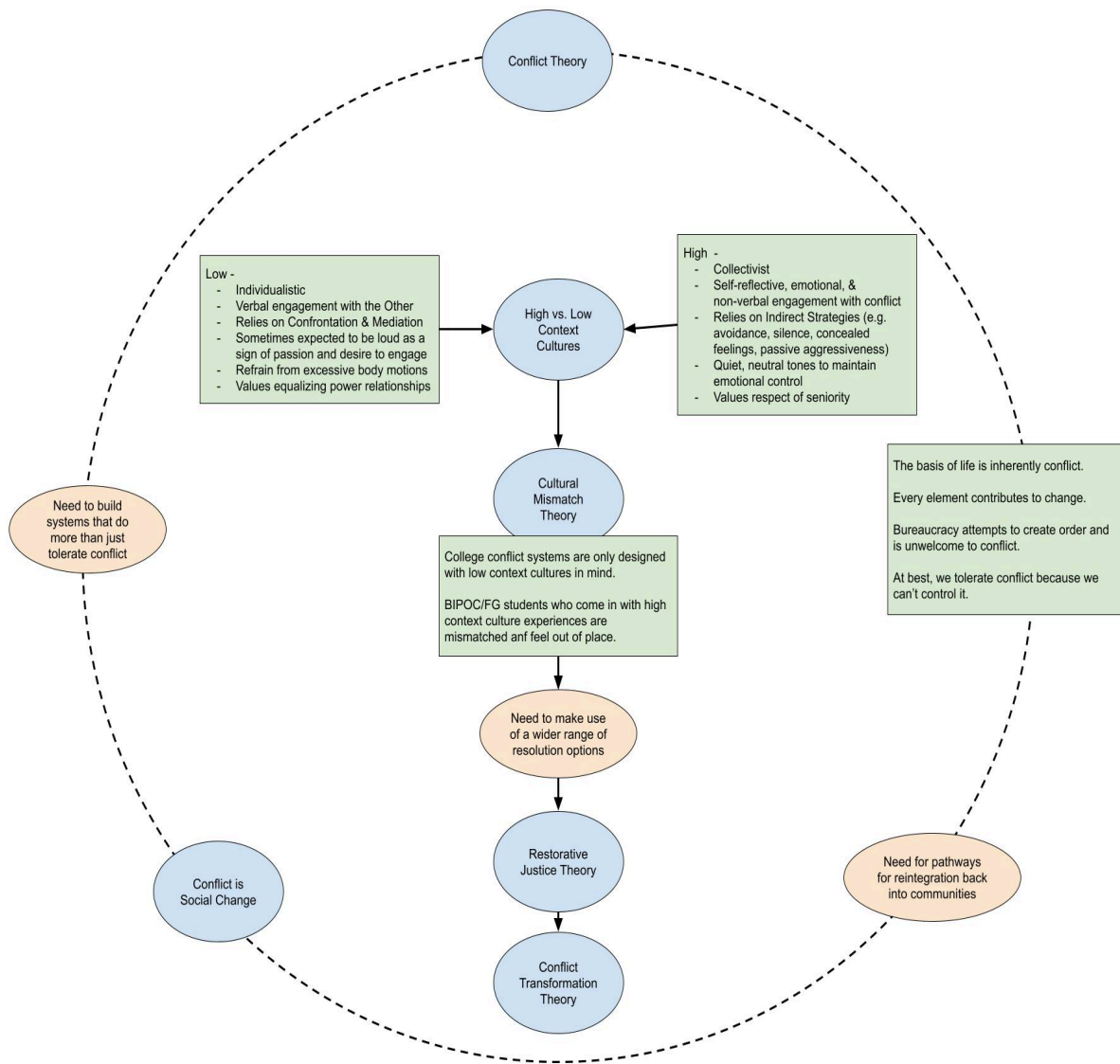
In this theory, conflict is change and change is conflict. It counters the idea that getting rid of conflict completely is possible, because there are no "final resolutions" in perpetual states of conflict. The “energy” from one interaction will be transferred subsequently to interactions with others. In other words, the possibility of removing all differences so that there are no contested "vested interests" anymore is not possible, because the history of conflicts compiles onto one another. Being in perpetual engagement with it means that there’s always opportunities for moral growth and transformation through conflict. In this, we can achieve social change through this kind of understanding of conflict, because “a well-integrated society will tolerate and even welcome group conflict; only a weakly integrated one must fear it.” (Coser, 1957, p. 205) Welcoming conflict in our systems would create new fluidly moving groups that shift their values at a constant pace, because of their openness to utilizing conflict as change. Conflict then, can be understood as the means for social change, because it is the state of a continuous movement of its own “energy”. By understanding conflict in this way, this creates a new paradigm for faith in the "order" of a society that can be found in the stability of constant change.

Conflict Transformation Theory (Mitchell 2002)

In addition to how there are no "final resolutions" in conflict, conflict transformation takes it a step further and views the reconciliation process of conflict as one towards healing deep-rooted causes. Conflict transformation theory holds faith that the inherently constant redistribution of power, wealth, and status will be equitable if we set the conditions to be open to social change. It highlights four kinds of transformations: actor transformation (who's in the conflict, their position, or ideologies); issue transformations (what the conflict is "about"); rule transformations (the norms involved and the limits in which relations are conducted); and structural transformations (a change in structure of inter-party relations). Within these four transformations, this is the “energy” conflict carries that we are able to use to prompt change that alters the circumstances in which it was possible to occur in the first place. These transformations release the old bonds from the same perceptions and allows all involved to see the relationships anew.

This is different from conflict resolution, which aims to find mutually acceptable solutions to end specific disputes and focuses on content or issues of the conflict as generally a short-term approach. Conflict management is also mentioned quite a bit, and it attempts to control the intensity of conflict without actually resolving it. In other words, it manages the symptoms of the conflict in order to maintain order and minimize negative impacts. This is the realm that Clark and many other colleges seem to operate in mainly, and I believe that many of the interviewees noticed this. Lastly, conflict transformation is also different from restorative justice, because relationships aren't framed as what's most at stake in conflict, but rather the potential to shift the "order" of a society.

In truth, all three of these other theories have a time and a place in engaging conflict, but the lofty goal for this praxis is to be one step closer to get to a point where conflict transformation is used more often than these other approaches. Realistically, I don't think we could get there institutionally with this but influence on the individual level is what I wanted to aim for in Phase II.



Please click on the chart to see the full view.

Phase II Findings

In Phase II, I recruited an “Intervention Team” to do two things. One, review my analysis of the data and see how much of it resonated with them through their experiences at Clark. And two, once we all got on the same page answering our research questions, we would brainstorm and create an intervention measure towards changing conflict ideologies across campus. The research questions are as follows:

1. Why does conflict happen at Clark? Why does unproductive/harmful conflict happen at Clark?
2. How do we prompt people who have been socialized to believe conflict is always negative, unproductive, harmful, and an experience to be avoided, to see and utilize conflict as a productive means for social change in their lives?
3. How does engaging in a collaborative effort to reimagine an approach to conflict affect the participants' understanding of and approach to conflict?

Of course, our time was limited, so we had to focus on one aspect of the first two questions within our capacity. We met over the course of 6 weeks for one hour each week, each with a flexible agenda that I developed following the previous meeting’s progress (see Appendix A). In these 6 weeks we developed a zine based on club conflicts and made 75 copies to distribute across Clark’s campus (see Appendix B and C). Eventually when Spring Break came, we ran out of time to enact our full plan of attaching a social media account to create an online community forum space to track engagement. We had to cut the intervention a little short, as I needed to write this thesis, and they were promised this wouldn’t go through the half-way mark of the semester. Considering that they all lead very busy student lives, but still made some time for me and this project, I am forever grateful to them for engaging with this.

What did we end up talking about?

Throughout these weeks, each meeting was intended to bring us closer together as a community as well as accomplishing our task to figure out an action that we could take towards prompting change in conflict ideologies at Clark. We started with a warming question each meeting as not all of us knew each other before these meetings started. This was followed by the actual meat of the agenda and then a post-meeting email with follow-up notes and tasks that we all needed to engage with.

At first, I had intended for the warming questions to engage our deeper senses about conflict and tie back into the project. However, as two weeks passed, I shifted gears into more light hearted questions after a comment from Nahele and Chrysanthe being playfully displeased at my surprise questions not being more fun. I realized from there on that the one hour we had together had to be cherished if we were meant to do quality work, so I leaned into it each time we took a tangent from the work as much as I could. Admittedly, near the end of our time together, it was getting harder to do this and stay on track with our timeline for the project, but in the end, the challenge was overcome. This accomplished my first goal of building relationships across who I recruited and knowing that as they engage with this project, perhaps the seeds of critically engaging with different forms and ideologies around ways others think through conflict can support them in their relationships with others in their lives and one another.

To speak on what the initial meat of our agenda consisted of, we ended up discussing the data I collected from Phase I for the first two meetings. An important note that I must disclaim is that I didn't let them see my analysis directly from my writing for these discussions. This was so I could see if they noticed the same characteristics of conflict within these flowchart maps as I

did or if they would take it a step further and build their own conclusions from my thoughts. We started when I had prompted them for a one word association on what they thought was most salient in the nine flowchart maps (See Appendix F). Each of them said something different: relationships, tension, violence, personal values, emotions, and communication. When asked to elaborate, they noticed that the SFSF data had a lot to do with issues of power, and more specifically not being seen as important/valued enough to have an opinion in different circumstances. The other quality that they noticed from the SFSF data was that these systematic factors that contribute to conflict are made to sound like it was inevitable in a hopeless kind of way. Admittedly, this may have had more to do with my wording of the flowchart maps, but was an interesting take either way. Both of these characteristics of conflict were reflected in my own thoughts, with power being directly mentioned in my Phase I findings, and the hopeless inevitability of conflict being built off of the desire for neutrality and safety.

When speaking on the BIPOC/FG data, my group had a more striking noticing that I did not catch in my analysis. Many of them noted that there’s a quality of the “conflict energy” (my interpretation of their language to be in line with the language conflict as social change theory uses) that seems to be lingering after each of these conflict situations. The ways that participants in Phase I speak about conflict implies a lingering grudge held against the other that never quite goes away. This creates what they called cycles of generational conflicts at Clark, because as we pass these grudges and conflict energy through our interactions with others in the community, we create a culture that feels both like cancel culture and conflict avoidance. The mechanism for this that they noted was as follows:

1. We take first experiences with people to heart, combining our own biases from what we hear around us as these experiences comport with our interactions with the other and funnels a certain perception of them.
2. We create certain ideas with people and are stuck in this perception creating an us vs. them situation where "picking sides" is essential.
3. Rather than communicating feelings, we default to "you should know what I'm feeling right now", and add to both the perception and the avoidance.
4. We end up walking on eggshells to avoid feeling uncomfortable in a space and not bringing up any concerns to avoid further/anticipated negative reactions.

They also noted the qualities of being a small PWI adds layers to Clark's conflict culture. Some of the notable things they mentioned is that it makes it harder to avoid being physically present with one another, carries the assumption that everyone has similar beliefs to one another, and that differences tend to be treated with more intensity within conflicts (e.g. easier to make mountains out of molehills, greater levels of isolation, and ease of passing down older conflicts generationally).

At the end of our discussions on the data, we slipped into our own analysis of Clark and seeing that the Phase I data confirmed some of our thoughts, we decided to focus our attention towards good principles of productive conflict. Here is what we identified:

1. Sometimes conflict isn't the worst thing in the world, and it's ok if we don't all want the same things.
2. Conflict should prompt all involved to the need to be able to view both sides of each other's positions from a close and birds-eye view.

3. A community should be able to name its own values, and conflict is a way to surface those values.
4. All community members should have an avenue to speak against something and have it be taken seriously as equals.

Having our target audience reflect on these principles through the zine medium was what we intended for our intervention. An important note here that we acknowledged from this point on. That we weren't positioning ourselves as experts training other students, but rather a peer intervention that calls attention and pulls alarm to something that we've noticed within our community at Clark.

From here, deciding on the target audience was a bit contradictory to the original intention of the project. While I did want to focus on BIPOC/FG students, the group thought it would be more effective to speak from the lens of student organizations on campus. Specifically to combat the way that age and positional power within e-boards manifest and create tensions that are also reflected in racial conflicts. The satirical zine that was produced out of this idea honestly lost a lot of the racial pieces of the project, but I do think that many characteristics of conflict culture at Clark did get called out whether they are specifically with the racial lens or not. This included characteristics such as grudge holding, the need to understand both sides of what seems arbitrary, and wrestling with differences (see Appendix C). These characteristics may not have been intrinsically racial, but I do think that they pervade a lot of the conflicts that BIPOC/FG students see and experience on campus as affirmed by my group.

In the end of this project, we ended distributing close to 75 zines across academic buildings, dorms, and student centers across campus. When my group reflected, Chrysanthe, Nahele, A.T., and Watson all agreed that success to them would look like just knowing that the

zines are being noticed. And so while we did not collect any formal data, walking through the campus to see them moved to other locations, taken, or perhaps just cleaned up is a testament to our efforts in this larger mission. Dynami did also want to include a social media account as a part of our measure for success, but as we ran out of time, this is one implementation that we could've done better.

What did I observe from my team from my time with them?

While I don't think that I can make any claims about the development of a new critical consciousness around conflict through our time together, I do think that many of us learned a lot from being in proximity to our own diversity of conflict ideologies and actively engaging with other conflict ideologies from Phase I. I noticed that at this time, many of the initial hesitancy around discussing conflict seemed to be that to speak on it so generally risked making overgeneralizations to the benefits of conflicts without addressing that conflict is inherently not safe. The same can be said about change and I think one of the first things that we noted was that the attachment to restoring or repairing relationships was more often that we wanted to preserve what we once knew was safe. From there, Chrysanthe and A.T. identified that we need to be ok when relationships between people in conflicts don't end up well by the end. That there needs to be at least some kind of professional standing where we can still choose to engage despite this. How I understood this is that they were noting a need to be ok with changed/transformed relationships from the conflicts. I think that they were grappling with an idea that people are complex and can still provide growth and benefit to others and community spaces alongside the harm that they may create. This paradox is something that I think embodies the conflict transformation theory that I sought to bring into this space. It gave me hope that engaging with

conflict ideologies in this meta way could bring people to understand conflict in ways that don't require the kind of intensive look into conflict that I needed to bring myself to this point.

We also engaged with trying to break down why unproductive conflicts happen at Clark and were able to identify seven reasons:

1. Not building your own opinion (relying on others' anecdotes/stories of each other) and the quickness of judgement
2. Not being ok with differences, feeling the need to argue to have conformity of opinions and thereby peace/social cohesion
 - a. Us vs. Them perspective
3. Lack of communication and abundance of miscommunication
4. Small proximity of being a small school
 - a. Easier to make mountains out of molehills
 - b. Higher levels of isolation for those who do experience conflict
 - c. Passing down of older conflicts generationally (and having newer students pick sides)
5. Social power imbalances from being a PWI creating heavy amounts of cliques (i.e. roots in racism)
 - a. Homogenous campus that shares same contexts and ideals, leading to assumption of what the "average" student is (e.g. “I behave and think about events in this way and so everyone else must be similar to me in this capacity”)
6. Unknown navigation of a new environment and relying on old habits/survival skills
 - a. Centering the self in social groups
 - b. Inability to create boundaries for self

7. Fear of bad perception and internalized perceptions of how power dynamics work from our distinctive social and cultural conditioning (cancel culture roots)

- a. No space for indifference or neutrality

Something that I noticed from their additions to our list is that a lot of these came from stories that all of these came from direct experiences that they've shared with each other. And although each person in the group may not have agreed fully with each reason until we heard each other out, I do think that in listening, they found it plausible enough because of the intimacy in this kind of storytelling. I primarily saw this when Dynami shared a story about clubs that they were in that had newer students pick sides in already existing drama. Other members shared their skepticism in this being a larger thing at Clark, but as it resonated with me and Watson, we both shared other stories that shifted the ways the others engaged with Dynami's story. Reflecting on this now, I think we as a group engaged in a form of actor transformation by shifting the ways we engaged with each other. Although I still don't really know if I would label that moment as conflict, it must be to have shifted our styles of engagement with each other like that.

Concluding Notes

So what I will say is this, in self-reflecting as the primary investigator in this praxis project, I believe that this project did its job in stirring the hearts of a few. Whether that be as a group or through the zine's distribution across campus, I believe that this praxis has changed the ways we think about conflict. We were able to start critically thinking about the conflict culture at Clark and in reflecting on our personal experiences and structural identities, we were able to find a frame to conflict that took me the whole of Phase I to grasp. This is the kind of project that is much too big to try and tackle all at once, and admittedly that is exactly what I set out to do at

the beginning. I gave it my best shot and realized that the journey to effect concrete change at Clark is a long one. I hope though, that by starting these reflections that someone can pick up my project with where it's leaving off here. Maybe they'll try something again with a narrower focus, or they'll set aside more time for the intervention phase rather than the amount of time I used to seek understanding Clark's conflict climate better. It's hard to say what 75 zines concretely can do for those in the Clark community, but I know that my Intervention Team, the Wells family as we call ourselves, has reached a point in trusting each other to speak on shifts and changes in ourselves through conflict. We hope that the zine can prompt others to engage with each other in similar ways. We start with the smallest of steps, a disturbance in the waters, and hope that the ripples might reach someone, one day.

Conclusion

Summary and Collective Analysis

So while we didn't get to do everything that I originally intended to accomplish with this project, I am still proud of what we did accomplish. This project sought out to increase the trust and sense of belonging of BIPOC/FG students at Clark University through ideological shifting our understanding of conflict culture. This was able to happen on a small level and small scale through my Intervention Team and on a larger scale through interrogating the many implications of our understanding of conflict as a campus community.

Based on my findings, our campus is shaped by conflict ideologies that make us highly conflict-averse, which in turn makes it very difficult to heal and move forward after conflicts occur. We believe that conflicts often involve a high tension, heated dynamic which leads us to seek and desire moments and spaces of nonproblematic conflict/the absence of conflict. Given, this is underpinned by a desire/need for safety from the risk of harm and also concerns many dimensions of power which can create circumstances of domination on each other. However, through my analysis, these practices also come with unintended consequences. Through our conflict aversion, we submerge our conflicts and maintain the order and perceived “normality” of our relationships. When conflicts erupt, they feel abnormal. This comes with the risk of inauthenticity in our relationships and blurs our own lines between real harm, natural discomforts, and the opportunities for transformative change in our relationships (and thereby systems and institutions) through conflict. So, what I believe that we need to consider is the following needs:

1. There is a need for building trust in one another as a campus across and within Clark community member groups.

2. There is a need for understanding that conflict is part of the relationship itself (not an aberration or interruption in the relationship).
3. There is a need for discerning the lines between real harm, natural discomforts, and opportunities for transformative change in our relationships through/in conflict.
4. There is a need to critically engage with this notion of the preservation of neutrality within conflicts.
5. There is a need to recognize and understand other relationships beyond simply understanding our relationships through the roles we place on each other in the conflicts.
 - a. As a result of this, we can come to understand that relationships are what is most at stake in conflicts, as this can be a self-interested way of engaging with conflicts. Rather the most important thing at stake in conflicts are the pursuit of transforming and creating transformative relationships (in actors, issues, rules, and structures).

In creating our zine project intervention, we engaged in self-reflection and a calling out of these needs in the hopes that the Clark community would be sparked to engage with conflict in a more productive, restorative, and most importantly, transformative manner. One of my biggest goals in Phase II was to build a healthy relationship dynamic across the team, because if we had to speak on a sensitive topic like personal conflicts or how we process or navigate it, then we had to feel trust and belonging towards one another. In this, I believe we succeeded in nurturing a small space where we engaged in self-reflection and grew as a group in actor and rule transformation by shifting how we disagreed and agreed with the ways we saw our campus.

Initially, our feelings around the data reflected the hopeless inevitability of conflict. However, in our processing we also grew to accept this as a fact of life and started to understand

more productive ways of understanding conflict as a part of our lives. This new understanding covered four main areas:

1. There’s a certain lingering conflict “energy” in the ways participants from Phase I talked about their conflicts and how we talked about our own conflict, almost like a light grudge.
2. We pick certain ways of navigating conflicts to adhere to certain social groups and not be uncomfortable in spaces or bring up negative reactions where being wrong is unsafe.
3. We expect others to be able to know what we are feeling because we believe our reaction to conflicts should be standard/the same.
4. Conflict can be a productive way to surface the values of a community.

This honesty with ourselves made space for a way that we wanted to position ourselves in the intervention as a peer group that wanted to call attention to something we noticed in our community. Beyond this disturbance in the waters, we hoped that other informal spaces could be created where Clarkies, faculty, and staff would talk with friends, family, and other Clark community members to reflect and process their own engagement with conflict on campus. We believed that this could create a moment of social change on campus by making time and space for conflict to sit at the forefront of our minds as we figure out what productive and transformative relationships can look like for all of us.

Conflicts are natural and commonplace and we’d be overlooking the opportunity to create the changes we want to see in our relationships if we continue to treat it as an abnormality in our relationships. By engaging with conflict well, trust and belonging can be built and both integral to making Clark BIPOC/FG students feel like their conflicts are heard. In the zine project, all these stories have the intention of bringing together SFSF and BIPOC/FG students through being

able to see each others' sides. The zine attempts to prompt these dialogues through satire. This trust and belonging can be built when we have dialogues and can recognize the differences in our conflict ideologies, rather than treating all our minds as the same. In this recognition, we actively seek to understand each other's goals in conflict navigation and resolution and this can create the curiosity necessary to expand our capacities for grace with one another.

Future Questions & Future Ideas: Areas for Additional Research

As mentioned in Phase II's findings, we ran out of time to go through finding an answer for our research question with more formal data. If we had more time, we could've collected more formal data for Phase II in the form of engagement with an online community forum or interviews with the Intervention Team. I also believe that with a larger number of Clark constituents that would be interviewed in Phase I, making claims about the larger Clark community would be more substantiated with thematic analysis. I also can imagine a closer tie in the PAR methodology that I used in Phase II to extend to Phase I as well by building the Intervention Team from the interviewees that I engaged with.

Additionally, there are some interesting avenues for continued research. In Phase II, we didn't concretely focus on race as much as Phase I was intentionally designed around, and so I wonder what would've come out of our project should we have chosen to do this. I believe that engaging with harm in conflict more deeply would also be quite generative of understanding more of the motivations behind conflict aversion. My findings and theoretical frameworks lean into conflict in a very generous way, and although I attempt to balance the real harm that can happen with the opportunity for transformation through conflict, there is still much to be understood about the implications of healing from deep-rooted harm and trauma. In further

research, I wonder what this would look like to be addressed alongside the release of relationships and movement away from groups and shared values. If we can understand the letting go point better, perhaps we can grow to be more ok with an ideology around conflict that is based in the constant shifts of conflict “energy”. Lastly, my project recognizes that the differences in conflict ideologies is a start in shifting a conflict culture at Clark. However, further research can also address what more can we do to shift a conflict culture towards understanding how to transform our conflicts.

Theoretical & Practical Implications

One of the ways that this project complicates one of the theories that was used is in conflict theory, it states that conflict is “unwelcome to the bureaucracy which must strive towards an ever-widening extension of the area of predictability and calculability of results” (Cosser, 1957, p. 205). Yet, we also want to find a way for the bureaucracy to be welcome to some level of restorative justice and transformation through conflict. Some part of me still doesn’t believe in the possibility of this with the rigidity of institutional policies, and I believe that my focus on the building of relationships that can be transformative is a significant implication here. Formal processes do set the environment for the area of possibility of interactions with one another, but it’s not flexible enough to change/transform that area of possibility when it’s needed. This is what I meant when I noted that we were constrained by time in our intervention and our focus on changing individuals through prompting informal dialogues. In future theoretical sense-making, it would be helpful to speculate the compatibility of co-existence between formal processes and social change through conflict.

Secondly, this project also challenges the idea that neutrality should be what's prioritized in engaging with conflict. This is ultimately understood as a power struggle where the preservation of neutrality, belief in the possibility of the absence of conflict in life, or belief of a conflict that is absent of power is a form of dominance over others within conflicts. Understanding conflict as normal and seeing the need to engage with it transformatively has many practical implications too. Specifically in the question of what does engaging with conflict transformatively look like? Part of what I want to bring into my future work in the Student Affairs field in Higher Education were things that I practiced in the interviews and Intervention Team. Namely, I took great care in equalizing power relations by engaging in sense-making processes together, focused on intently listening and adjusting methods of agreement and disagreement within the team, and finding space to be authentic and honest with myself to others first to prioritize building trust through storytelling. I also want to carry the question of how we can discern the lines between real harm, natural discomforts, and opportunities for transformative change through conflict to all the groups I join in the future. In the future, I also want to understand more ways that I already practice and find more ways to practice what transformative conflicts can look like.

To be more explicit about practice, within my personal life, this will be a long standing reminder that conflict can be a welcome force rather than a disturbance or a hindrance. By treating conflict like an opportunity to engage with others, we remove the us vs. them mentality that comes from the judgment made on others when confirmation bias strikes. This can ultimately be a steady reminder of a couple things as students and community members at Clark:

1. Building our own opinions and extending grace not judgment
2. Being ok in differences, that we don't need to get to the same "neutral" space

3. Being more aware of passing down older conflicts generationally
4. Removing the belief in the "average" student and knowing that we act, believe, and think in ways that aren't the same
5. Centering the community at Clark over the self when needed and able to
6. Questioning fear of others

Thirdly, many of the metadialogues I engaged in during and post-Phase I with the Intervention Team created space to understand a certain critic of restorative justice theory through our understanding of conflict transformation theory. When we noted what Clarkies, faculty, and staff prioritized in conflicts, very rarely did they mention that relationships were prioritized over the potential for change in their relationships. In other words, what's most at stake seems to be the opportunity for change in our relationships, not the preservation of the relationship itself. I believe that this carries implications to how Clark commits itself to restorative justice and the preservation of relationships, because it can be seen as a preservation of order as well. If we were to continue this research, it would be worthwhile to understand how formal processes can prioritize the potential for change in students', faculty's, and staff's relationship with the institution.

Lastly, from my Intervention Team's reflection on grudges and our own realizations with the ways that we and the participants from Phase I talked about past conflicts, there is a theoretical implication with conflict transformation theory to be hashed out as well. While the theory does well in understanding conflict through its transfer of "energy" from one conflict to another, our understanding of it implies that conflict "energy" also lingers in the state between where conflicts haven't been fully processed yet. This space draws out the importance of the interview space and the Intervention Team itself as a processing method for the conflicts in our

lives. I believe that both are effective methods in recognizing its value in processing and collective reimagination of our communities and institutions.

Significance/Closing

This topic is important to our ability to engage with each other as a campus community. At all levels we have conflicts to attempt to transform, resolve, and heal our fragmentation and distrust. By engaging with conflict ideologies, we have a chance to grow and become better people for each other in our communities. Being able to critically reflect and come to a conclusion on how we want to engage with conflict will bring about social change at Clark through taking smaller but ever-deeper steps in processing conflicts within our own lives. We build trust and belonging slowly and this is but the first step in a long journey.

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Appendix A - Phase II Meeting Agendas

Agenda Meeting 1 (Virtual) -

- Prior to the meeting, I had sent them an expectations document with a timeline, notes, and most importantly tasked them to look through my flowchart maps on each participant.
- Introductions (Names, pronouns, grade, major, and one word that you associate with conflict and why?)
- Welcome and intro to provide context for our project and what we are embarking on
- Initial thoughts reading through the data/my analysis, any questions that we might have
- How would we begin to answer this question collectively based on the data we have and what we've experienced at Clark so far: “Why does conflict happen at Clark? Why does unproductive and harmful conflict happen at Clark?”
- Lingered thoughts and comments?

Agenda Meeting 2 (In-Person) -

- Prior to the meeting, I had them brainstorm on their own time and send me an answer they had towards 3 questions:
 - Why does conflict happen at Clark? What are the roots that you are identifying?
Why should we focus on the one you chose?
 - Who should we target? (What population of students, staff, or faculty) and why?
 - What do you think can be done about it at Clark?
- Warming Question: What is a quality of conflict management in yourself or others that makes it less daunting for you?

- Patience and letting things simmer so to make space for understanding, trust, and letting others talk
- Not allowing the conflict itself cloud their judgment by conflating the person with the conflict itself
- Confidence to engage with conflict in the first place
- Having a baseline foundation of “professional” courtesy towards each other
- Spend some time reviewing our conceptualizations and asking each other questions and finding ways to compromise (use printout of their thoughts)
- Talk through how do we mitigate the effects of this and possible actions we can take
- Have a concrete answer to all three questions
- Any lingering thoughts or comments?

Agenda 3 (In-Person) -

- Prior to the meeting I had sent them one of the sources that I used, “Transforming Conflict on College Campuses” by Duong et al. to read through
- Warming Question: If we had to do karaoke right now, what song would you sing?
- Debrief about what we read for this week. Go around, what stood out to each of us?
- Reminder of our focus that we chose last week “manifestations of age and positional power in racial conflicts”
- Come up with some examples of this based on our experience on campus so far
- We ran out of time, so I communicated via email with figuring out these plans:
 - Who should we target? What population at Clark would be most effective?
 - What should our intervention be with this population?

- Plan out logistics of designing and implementing this intervention, and assign tasks based on workload

Agenda 4 (In-Person) -

- Warming Question: If you could be a mythical creature, which one would you be?
- After voting on the zine project and to focus on student clubs in particular we figured out these parts:
 - Topic of focus
 - Audience
 - Common Vision
 - Important Content Ideas
 - What is our measure of success for this project?
 - Logistics
 - What format would be most accessible for us in creating this? (Fully physical then photocopy, fully digital then print, a mix of digital print then physical embellishments?)
 - What aesthetic should we aim for? (Style of text, graphics, layout)
 - How should we section out the zine?
 - In what form do we want to see this zine? (Classic booklet to flower etc.)
 - What kind of extra embellishments might we want to add to this zine?
What will make it stand out?
 - Where can we access the ability to create this zine? We do have a small budget (~\$300 from Ed department)

- How many copies should we create?

Agenda 5 (In-Person) -

- Prior to this meeting I had created a group chat (finally!) and sent a question for them to answer which one they gravitated towards making a panel for in the zine based on our content ideas from last meeting
 - 1. Between clubs and how qualms held in grudges have long term effects on new members
 - 2. Between clubs and SLICE and the impacts of both distrust of formal processes and PoV of students having poor experience with SLICE
 - 3. Between club members in the same org and impacts of internal division and grudges getting passed down
 - 4. Between club members in the same org with an e-board and general members and tensions of anti-community and not being part of the club if not on e-board
 - 5. Between cultural clubs particularly and the lack of understanding/communication between them causing small things to build up
 - 6. Between new club members and older club members and the tensions of wanting to go in different directions with the club
- Warming Question: If you had a time machine and was limited by your lifespan, would you go to the past or future?
- Brainstorming time to come up with a two-panel idea, bring printer paper and present to each other within 30 minutes
 - 2. Dynami and Chrysanthe

- 3. Nahele and Bão
- 5. A.T. and Watson
- Figure out what we collectively want to say to our audience in a letter, brainstorm bullet points for me to write it later and send for revisions for about 20 minutes
- Agree on a timeline and who can put it together. When should we print by? When should we assemble and disseminate?

Agenda 6 (In-Person) -

- Prior to this meeting, they designed out and fully colored their zine panels and returned it to me for set up to print during this meeting.
- Warming Question: If you instantly could improve your life in any small way (nothing drastic), what would that be?
- Check through and edit/revise the letter
- Make tweaks to the zine itself, print, and assemble the zines (Dynami and I disseminated later on in the day)
- Thank you all for joining me in this project, I really appreciate all of your time and energy engaging with me.

Appendix B - Zine Project









Appendix C - Phase II's “Letter to Our Readers”

Dear Clark Community,

We hope you enjoyed reading through our zine! This zine is part of a 6-week meeting sequence in a larger project with the goal of bringing more awareness about the nature of how conflict plays out across our campus. In our discussions, we focused on student club dynamics, and recognized a couple qualities about conflict we held in mind as we created this zine. Specifically, Clark being a small school makes it easier to make mountains out of molehills, creates higher levels of isolation to those experiencing conflict, and normalizes passing down older conflicts generationally (having newer students “pick sides”). To give more space for elaboration, please see below for our intentions as creators:

1. In the first story, we framed a conflict between club members across organizations and the impact of miscommunications as small things build up into grudges getting passed down. While the scene itself doesn't highlight this division, we hoped to open with a lighter example where you can imagine that if this were to actually happen and the DJ wasn't booked for an event you planned, it'd be easy to label the other club(s) as incompetent, or worse. For this story, we hope that you can come to terms with the circumstances of why things may happen the way they do, that it's not always such a catastrophic failing, and believing that we can move forward in our relationships after processing our feelings (i.e. frustrations, annoyance, anger, etc.) with some empathy.
2. In the second story, we framed a conflict between student clubs and SLICE with the impacts of seemingly arbitrary policies without explanation or weigh-in by students on building distrust in formal processes. The scene shows the point of view of a student having a poor experience with SLICE, not understanding why there are so many barriers to having an event. For this story, we hope that students and staff weigh their perceptions of each other with integrity and see how an example like policies that seek to organize a chaotic process better for staff can also be seen as barriers towards access for students.
3. In the last story, we framed a conflict that comes from conflating individual wrongdoing with entire groups. This scene shows the point of view of an unreliable narrating student looking through a window onto what seems to be a club meeting and members still being in association with a problematic person. As it happens all across campus, the student is not surprised that they see Clark burning and wishing for something strange as the problematic person and the onlooking student use the language of “sameness” (“We are all same” + “Why can't we all just be same?”). For this story, we hope that it is a reminder on building our own opinions out of monolithic groupings, not being quick with judgement on each other, and that we break out of assumptions on what the “average” Clarkie shares in contexts and ideals, being ok that others don't think and behave similarly with us.

Between all of these stories, we hope for a few things. That you can see connections across conflicts in your own life and take this as a sign to do a deeper exploration into them whether that ends up in “repair or release”. See that conflict can be a productive means of building empathy rather than only a destructive force in our relationships. Understand that conflict doesn't just happen isolated from other factors like power, position, race, etc. and that the more complex a conflict can be understood, the more we grow into ourselves. Thank you for taking the time to engage with us!

From,
6 Clarkies with Much Love

Appendix D - Phase I's Recruitment Flyer

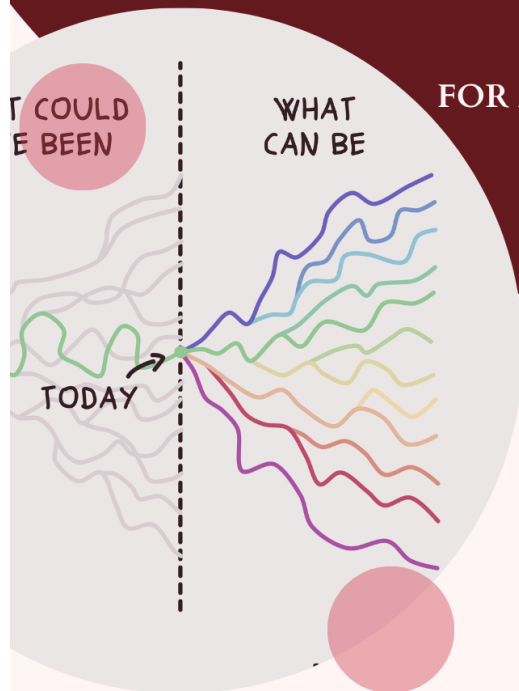
CYES Praxis Project

LOOKING FOR INTERVIEWEES

This study seeks to understand the relationship between feelings of trust and belonging on campus with moments of conflict and conflict management, particularly with first-generation and/or BIPOC students.



FOR MORE INFO:



YOU ARE ELIGIBLE IF...

- you are a current undergraduate student at Clark University of any class level
- you are aged 18+ years old
- you are self-identified as either a first-generation college student and/or student of color



If you are interested or have any questions please email me:
brnguyen@clarku.edu



Appendix E - Phase I's Interview Transcripts

Jamie (C1) Transcript

B - Alright, thank you for coming and doing this interview with me. I want to begin with some demographic questions. Can you please tell me how you identify racially?

Jamie (C1) - Latina, Hispanic.

[redacted]

B - How do you identify your gender?

Jamie (C1) - Female.

B - Do you identify as a first generation college student?

Jamie (C1) - Yeah.

B - And what is your class year?

Jamie (C1) - Sophomore.

B - Mm hmm. Um, okay. There are a series of ten questions here. is a semi-structured interview, so I'll be hopping around as needed. So let's get started. Can you recall a moment of conflict that you had here at Clark with a student?

Jamie (C1) - Yes, actually, very recently, I had a small conflict with my current roommate.

B - What happened?

Jamie (C1) - She just made a comment that ticked me off and kind of rubbed me the wrong way, and I kind of wanted to avoid all that so I kind of avoided her as a result and then in the end, I kinda- I didn't kind of- I seeked out um therapy because it made me crash out a lot and it made me want to just fully evade her and get rid of her interaction and connection or whatever and so yeah.

B - What ended up being the resolution?

Jamie (C1) - Resolution was basically what I wanted. I wanted to just be acquaintances. I wanted to just feel comfortable in the room without feeling sort of— what's the word, sort of negative feelings towards her as a result of just the small comments.

B - Do you wish you did anything differently?

Jamie (C1) - Mm. No. No. I mean, I like my peace right now. I think I would have enjoyed either alternatives, whether or not sharing with her, my opinion versus now. I think I would have liked both of them, but if I choose to not say it, it just means I'm kind of used to doing what I normally do.

B - Where do you think that this conflict came from? Like, what sparked the moment?

Jamie (C1) - I think overall academic stress piling up with like past similar comments and just kind of like the important importance that this friend's opinion had on me. Yeah.

B - Shifting here a little bit. Can you recall a moment of conflict that you had with either a staff or faculty member at Clark?

Jamie (C1) - No. It's not really, I mean, I don't think I'm likely to have a conflict with them because they have higher power than me, so if I start a conflict, it would be like me getting scolded. Yeah.

B - You say started conflicts. So would I be right to assume that you say start conflict is the only way to have a conflict with someone for you? Can someone start a conflict with you? Or someone else?

Jamie (C1) - Yeah...

B - Has that happened with certain staff or faculty?

Jamie (C1) - No.

B - We will put this aside. Okay. Um, how would you describe your style of conflict management?

Jamie (C1) - I think it depends. I think when it's more of like an emotional connection, it's more avoidance. Just because I really dislike- I just dislike feeling uncomfortable in the sense of like dealing with the conflict. I also dislike yeah, just overall avoidance in general just cause I feel like there's a lot of impact on both sides, but I focus mostly on the impact on me because it

physically if not physically, but like it affects me more strongly in comparison. I can't compare it, but I know myself and I know how much it can affect me. And then when it's with other strangers, I think it just depends just like, just let them let them be right. and just get over it, which is also avoidance, but I feel like it's at a different scale. in my opinion. Yeah.

B - Where does both of these versions of conflict avoidance from, for you?

Jamie (C1) - Where? Um. I think it to some extent, it can be cultural only because I think internally, I think that this type of conflict is not really worth wasting time on, but I can't really stop myself from like feeling a certain way if that makes sense even if I think such a waste of time to be sad about somebody or to be sad about that or to be angry about that yeah and I feel like that's a very big part of culture because like, for example, when I told my mom about the scholarship and that I didn't get to the final round rather than like it's not really a conflict, but in the sense of like, she didn't put as much importance because she said, oh, there's other scholarship, there's other things. It's kind of like the emotional impact. It's not as important as much as other things. If that makes sense. Yeah.

B - From this, do you feel confident in your ability to navigate conflict on campus?

Jamie (C1) - No, no. I think after the most recent conflict, I kind of like, originally, when I first came to campus, I still wanted to deal with conflict the way I do it avoid it just get over it but then after my friends it's kind of like they wouldn't take that form of of conflict management, which makes sense. So it's kind of like, I'm kind of forced to deal with it to some extent, which deal with it can be in many different ways, not necessarily as straightforward as it can seem in some ways, but after that conflict, I want to like revert back to my original form of conflict management because I think I kind of start to forget that like oh college is not really only about like what college for me in the beginning is not about friendship and all that. It's more about like, I want to get a degree and I want to get a good job and if I get friends, I'm happy and if I don't then yeah.

B - You mentioned that coming into contact with your friends here made you have to deal with it in different ways that's not just direct. Could you tell me more about that?

Jamie (C1) - As in like, like, I mean, the most recent example about, like, my roommate for example, I say I try to change the way I avoid conflict that doesn't mean I'm gonna straight up like for example the day that she might have said the comment that doesn't mean I'm gonna go the same day and tell her oh this is how I felt about... like it took me around almost a whole month of avoidance to finally tell her, which is not straightforward. It's more like a zigzag, everything..

B - And what happened in the month that you waited?

Jamie (C1) - I just entertained myself. I like distract myself with like school, other friends and I think I kind of overthought a lot. I think I know that, like, when there's a phase, when I'm going through, like, similar conflict, I'm very, like, observant of like small changes so I mean, I think I was pretty observant about that in relation to her, like, every change I would like take it into consideration and stuff like that. Yeah. A lot of crashing out.

B - How has this conflict affected your ability to, um trust other students, um, and or belong on campus?

Jamie (C1) - I think this conflict make me overthink a lot about my interactions with other people. I think like first, like there's like a few different things. First would be because we have the same, basically same circle of friends, it's kind of hard to like, like for me, it's like oh, I tell my friends about how I feel, but telling to some extent, I feel guilty because I felt like a bad mouthing, but like, I mean, the therapist and other friend said, it's not bad mouthing, if it's, like, mostly about my feelings and whatever. So that kind of felt a little reassuring to some extent. And, like, I don't particularly want. Like, I didn't want other people's opinion to be like, like, I don't know. I don't. I don't know how to phrase that, but that's that. Another thing was, like, can you ask your question again?

B - Mm hmm. Um, like, how have this conflict affected your, like, feelings of trust in this in other students? And also, like, your belonging on campus?

Jamie (C1) - Okay. And then with her, specifically, I think. It kind of decreased my trust, but, I mean, that's natural. But then within the same time, I was kind of like, very emotional, so I kind of shared another, um like stuff about myself to like a few friends that is kind of like, very secret to me because I guess I felt some form of ease and it just made me feel oh well, I already shared this so it's okay. I can just share this and I feel a little bit at ease because it didn't really matter. If I trust him or not because it's just something that I just want to say it doesn't matter if you keep it or not and then the second, in terms of connection with whatever at Clark, I think at least most recently, it makes me feel like kind of weird in a way. I don't particularly like, like, I have friends. But I spend, like, quite, maybe a lot of time alone to some extent, like just doing my own thing, just doing homework. But.. let me think. But it makes me feel like, like, for example, if I'm sad, I think, hmm, who can I like go to right now? And it makes me, like, think, well, this person, yes, this person is busy, though. Like, this, in terms of like process of elimination about questioning, about our relationship in general and then the fourth thing was about my belonging at Clark. I think it just make me think- it doesn't really matter that much to me to some extent about it. It matters more what I get out of Clark rather than how much of a belonging I feel because of it. Yeah.

B - I'm gonna switch gears a little bit. Do you think that your identities, as you said, a female **[redacted]** college student impacts the way your role in the conflict that you have?

Jamie (C1) - Mm, yeah. I think. I mean, I think it's mostly my ethnic identity that affects most because I grew up with a lot of like I grew up in the U.S. a lot so my mindset is affected by that and that's like quite different from home in the sense of like I'm sure this type of conflicts appear at home, but not in the way that like is as emotional. Like I'm sure people go through something similar, but here in the US. it's kind of highlighted or engraved or something like that that when you deal with conflict, the right way to deal with it is to state your like just say like oh, your actions make me feel this way. I would like if you didn't do that again that's the way that like I sort of think conflict is dealt here whereas at home, people would just be like, you're such a bitch for doing that. Like I don't, I don't know how to explain it. It's like more straightforward that I don't focus on. Oh, your words hurt me, don't do that again. It's more like this person is so bad. It's more like that. Which is kind of like in a negative way, but I think I like that way more. Yeah.

B - What about it makes you like it more?

Jamie (C1) - I mean, it's quite, it's a form of avoidance to some extent. If you look at other forms of conflicts, which it is still at home and I like that. I think I like that there's not a lot of like, I don't have to reflect on how I feel about it. I just know I don't like it. Like, something happens, I don't have to think, why don't I like it? It's more like, I don't like it. So, no. Like, just, just done. Get rid of it. Yeah. It's straightforward. And less less tiring.

B - I'm going to ask the last question in this category of questions and then I have two more for you all. Okay. So, last question in this category is, um, so who do you talk with about the conflicts in your life?

Jamie (C1) - I mean, I think it depends. There's a lot of conflicts that are, like, if it's within friend groups, I mostly talk about within the friend group. If it's conflicts within my home, I mostly talk about it maybe with friends as well, but I mean, I talk about it with my boyfriend as well and if it's like something that might be a little more like, like, not stronger, but just a little more like, vulnerable. I think it just depends in the spur of the moment. And I don't really need to have, like, specific person.

B - Why do you end up talking with them and by that? I mean, like, what are you hoping to get out of that conversation?

Jamie (C1) - I think to some extent, at least for the situation, I know that all the people know this person. So I feel like it's just gives like more than my perspective to some extent I think it's like..

I don't know. I think it's I also interact with them a lot, so it's easier to talk about it. And I think it really depends on which friend it is, but you can get it like multiple reactions out of different people, like for example, I have this friend who reacts in like a more, like, not nonchalant, but like quite nonchalant way. And then there's this other person who gives you more like a, like more like thought provoking, like more try to dig into more and whatever. And then there's a person that, like, listens and kind of, like, acknowledges. And then there's a person that can, like, maybe agree with certain behavior and kind of feel more like kind of the contradicting the person that listens and acknowledges and the person that tries to, like, make me think more in the sense of like, oh, like, like- kind of more supports my impulsivity, but to some extent, does. Yeah.

B - At the end of the day, are these conversations helpful to you?

Jamie (C1) - Yeah, I think because in a lot of the situations, when I explain the story, I don't know, I just always end up crying like every time like I share it like tears just come down. So it kind of like helps release some of like if I feel tension from that, like it just helps release a lot of that and it helps me like think of, like, kind of just reflect more about it and think if I'm, like, maybe if I'm being irrational or if it's okay, if, yeah, just kind of make me think more and kind of distress.

B - I'm going to switch gears now to the final two questions. These last two questions, one of them is an opinion based question. And the other one is a more imaginative question. I'm going to ask the opinion based one first. So it's whether or not you agree with this statement and then why or why not? So, some people say that at Clark, there is a cancel culture and or conflict avoidance style of conflict management. Like there's a culture of this. Do you agree with this? And why or why not?

Jamie (C1) - I've heard about cancel culture, but low key, I've never seen it, aside from somebody like this stranger, that's the only time that I've like heard about actual cancel culture at Clark I don't really know if I agree with it. I think I'll disagree just because I haven't particularly seen it. As for avoidance management or whatever, I think I've heard of that more in the sense of, like, political stuff. I think that's more on Clark's behalf that they tend to avoid it, but that's because like it's politics and it's kind of like, it's very hard when you have a student body of like, very different opinions. And, yeah.

B - When you say Clark avoids it, do you mean the student body? Do you mean the administration.

Jamie (C1) - Administration.

B - What do you notice in the student body, if anything?

Jamie (C1) - I mean, the student, I mean, from what I see and from people that I surround myself with, a lot of them, go against the avoidance that the administration has, like they're pretty open about their opinions and pretty like like willing to take action, if that, yeah.

B - And, um one last question for this. Uh, you say that you haven't really witnessed cancel culture. Um, how would you define cancel culture?

Jamie (C1) - I guess it's kind of like if you take out whatever controversial action or thought the person did and you just take the person and what a group of students do to this person, I lowkey would consider it like bullying to some extent, but if you put into like consideration, the controversial thought or action they did, then it's not really bullying. It's more like a righteous act in some way I guess like I don't know, at least from what I heard, this person had like, what was it, like very Republican thoughts? Not thoughts, beliefs. And I mean, knowing that a lot of the student body at Clark is Democrat, and, like, supports mostly the Democrat Party versus this person who's Republican and supports not just Republican, but as well supports Trump or supported Trump, I guess. Like, it's common sense what's gonna happen with them. Like, it's mostly just like people are not really gonna be willing to talk to them or people are generally gonna tend to avoid them, which I know I'm bullying, I say bullying in the sense of like, they're gonna physically do something to them, but I'm in bullying in the sense of like, it's kind of like ostracizing and that form and I mean, yeah, like, that's about to happen if it's conflict of thoughts and majority has similar opinion.

B - This is the last question. This one's going to ask you to imagine an ideal conflict management culture for Clark. What would that look like to you? What would be your role in it? Other students' role in it? Like, how would an ideal culture of conflict management would look like to you here?

Jamie (C1) - I think in a bigger scale, in terms of overall Clark, I feel like something that happened at least for example, was, like, the thing with, like, the jobs and pay and such, I remember that the dean kind of said, oh, we'll make this group of students that will help with like dealing with that. But a lot of people said that's just creating another leadership group, but it's not actually doing anything, but like, I don't know if anything actually changed from that. So in an ideal world, I feel like rather than thinking that creating some form of support systems, I don't even feel like that's actually a support system. It's just like putting students to deal with, to give, like basically get the put face towards other students when in reality doesn't actually- may not- actually help the cause of it. And, I mean, you can't really at least politically, it's kind of hard to be neutral when you have students of different opinions, but I think no, you can't even like. It's kind of hard, honestly. Mm hmm. I mean, you could acknowledge both sides, but there's always,

like, yeah, I mean the best you can do is just acknowledge the size, at least and political stuff, acknowledge both sides. In terms of like um paying students, that's more like a physical, physical contribution type of thing, which in terms of conflict management, I think. Okay, I guess the best answer would just be more transparent on how you deal with things in terms of like show the students factual factual-like proof behind your statements. So if you say Clark doesn't have enough money to fund something, then show that it doesn't– like I don't know like it's kind of hard to do that, but like just be very transparent about why you can't do something. Yeah. In terms of the smaller scale, I mean in a perfect world, a perfect world would just be people go and they say this, like just like what I said before this makes me feel this way. I would like it if you didn't do that and then all good. That's the perfect world but it's kind of hard because it's like two sides to a coin or whatever. Like, what one person feel doesn't mean the other person will feel the same way in some way or agree with it like, yeah, like they might have the perspective of the other person. But maybe. Yeah, I mean Yeah, I can't really expand on that, because it's kind of, like, very individual. Yeah.

B - Alright, I'm gonna end the interview here.

Alex (C2) Transcript

B - Alright. Well, thank you for your time engaging with my research project. I very much appreciate it. I want to start off with some demographic questions. Can you please tell me how you identify either racially or ethnically?

Alex (C2) - I'd identify as Cuban, Puerto Rican, Latino.

B - And how would you identify your gender?

Alex (C2)- Non-binary.

B - Do you identify as a first generation co student?

Alex (C2) - I guess not first gen, but, I mean, [redacted] told me about a term, like, one and a half gen, which I guess I could kind of relate to. So.

B - And what is your class year?

Alex (C2) - 2029.

B - Mm hmm. Alright. So this interview is gonna be semi structured, which means I'm gonna hop around with the questions as we see fit, but there's a series of nine questions on here. So we'll hop right into it. Can you recall a moment of conflict that you've had here at Clark so far with a student, if any?

Alex (C2) - Only I guess it wasn't really that much of a conflict right. I remember, like, in September for my ecology class, we had a group project and I was working on it through like the weekend and I'd noticed my partner hadn't like done like anything and I texted him. I was like, what's going on? Do you have your parts lined up? And he was like, oh, yeah, sorry, you know I'm an athlete. And my schedule's really busy. I'll finish it by like Friday, which would have been our next class or our next next class... And then, but that was the wrong due date. The due date was like Tuesday and it was Monday evening, and I was like, bro, you got the wrong due date. And he was like, "Oh shit, I'm sorry. Like, I'll get to work immediately and stuff. But, yeah, it was. I feel like that's like the closest thing I've had to a conflict so far. Like, I haven't had a lot of other serious, like, things happening. And yeah, and it ended up totally fine like we did great on the presentation, I think.

B -You said it was close to a conflict. Would you label that conflict or not at all?

Alex (C2) - Um.. I. It was like. I don't even know if I'd call it a kerfuffle, you know? Like, I don't know. I guess just as like a situation, but, yeah, it wasn't very, like, tense or anything, and we were both, like, really understanding and stuff, so...

B - Then, if you had to, like, define what conflict is or, like the characteristics of what a conflict looks like and, like, what would that look like to you?

Alex (C2) - I think it would be like.. like more heated situation, probably more personal, more emotional, stuff like that. Where everybody involved is kind of upset.

B - Okay. I'm switching gears a little bit. Have you had a moment of conflict at Clark with a faculty member or staff member yet? And do you remember what happened?

Alex (C2) - **[redacted]**

B - I got you. Yeah. Okay, I'm gonna switch here again. Since you haven't had too many or too many months here Clark yet, maybe we can talk more about conflict as an idea. So like, how, like in moments of conflict are you, how would you describe, like, your conflict management style?

Alex (C2) - I think. I'm not. I don't like confrontation a lot, because, like, I don't know, growing up, if I was like, like, if I was upset with my parents, I would just suck it up because I I wouldn't want them to get, like, I would want them to get upset at me. And I kind of also do that with like like outside of home, with other people. Just not good. Like, I remember even like one time I had a dream about, like, literally running away from conflict because like my friend was, like, somehow upsetting me. And instead of, like, telling them, or actually, I don't even know if they were upsetting me, but I was upset. And so, like, talking to them about it, I just, like.. I ran away, and it was, like this weird parkour landscape. And we were looking super cool while they were like running after me, like, “Hey, **[redacted]** come back. We have to talk.” And then I was just making the situation worse by not talking about it. Which was like, I was not expecting to be clocked in my sleep, whatever, whatever. But yeah, with conflict, I think I'm getting better with it. Um, especially as it gets like, I think, like more important in my life and more relevant with like meeting so many new people. But um yeah, I can be like kind of avoidance sometimes so I'm trying to work on that.

B - Do you think that, um, when you're meeting all these new people and because your style is conflict avoidance, do you register when things happen as conflict, when you avoid it? I'd be curious.

Alex (C2) - Like. So for me, it's like, I have social anxiety, and I'm like, whenever I'm in like a conversation. It's also gotten better, like, as I've gotten more, like mental health help and stuff. But like, I'm always kind of trying to analyze the social situations that I'm in, which is not always very, like, my reading isn't always not necessarily accurate, but, like, the same as everybody else's, because, like, I'm neurodivergent, I have, like, a big, like, I guess, yeah, a different understanding of, like, social situations and other people. But um I guess, like, I'm always, like, very, like, what's it called? Like, proactive, but in a bad way about, like conflict, and I'm always, like, trying to, like, see, oh, is it gonna happen here? Is it gonna happen here? And sometimes, like, I'll be so focused on that that I don't even realize that there's another conflict happening. Or I'll be like in a, like a social situation with multiple people, and there'll be a conflict that I didn't even realize, because it was like subtle. Like people were being passive aggressive and stuff and I'll just be like, oh, I have no idea what was happening. So.

B - I appreciate that. I also feel you because I can also tend to and I have too. When you when this is your style of conflict management, do you anticipate that it's going to affect the way that you get to trust other people or that you belong on campus or groups?

Alex (C2) - I think that it can be like. Yeah, I think like, it's like in my dream, I think, like, when you, like, keep away in conflict instead of just talking about it, you know, it just makes stuff worse. And so I have to be like, really conscious of like, how I approach that kind of stuff and what I do because like, I'll just intuitively start like pulling away and trying not to engage with it. because, like, I'm only be in an uncomfortable situation, but, um. I think, like, being, like, conscious and also being rational about it and not letting, like, my anxiety dictate, what I do and also, what's it called? Oh, I just had it. I just had the right word... one minute.. And being honest about, like, how I feel stuff will be really important, because, like, yeah, if I just, like, run into a problem with somebody and I just avoid them, like, it's just gonna mess up whatever relationship I have, because with another person, because, I mean, if you're, you know, avoiding people isn't really cool.

B - So, would you say, or what I'm understanding from this is that you're saying that the goal at the end of a conflict is to still be in working, relationship with one another. Is that right?

Alex (C2) - I would say so, yeah. Okay. It doesn't always have to be like that, but like if I'm in a conflict with like friends and loved ones and stuff, that's definitely the goal.

B - Do you think there are other goals to resolving a conflict?

Alex (C2) - Probably like, yeah, called. I think, like, you don't have to still have a relationship with somebody after a conflict. Like, if they, like, did something really bad to you or you did something bad to them or something like that, like, you don't have to keeping each other's lives

after the conflict, you can just, like, you know, do your own thing and stuff and leave each other alone.. And then also, like, you know, stuff like being able to come to compromise and, like, meet the other person where they're at, I think also is a goal.

B - Okay. How much confidence do you have in yourself to be able to navigate conflicts at Clark? And why?

Alex (C2) - I think. I think probably like a moderate amount of confidence. I think, like, it'll definitely be hard for me to navigate that. Which is why I'm really glad I don't have a roommate. Whew! [redacted] Well, I'm really, I would like, I think one of the things that I like, probably lean on a lot, is, like, any resources, like, as mentors or my prementor or my RA, stuff like that. Or, like, what's it called? Or I can just do one of like, the Choices office hours and just yap to [redacted] about it. [redacted] Yeah. And also, like, being able to talk to my friends about it, was there involved in the conflict that I have to be, like, my dog what I say, I guess. So, um. Yeah, I think just, like, taking advantage of the resources would help a lot. And I would say, and also talk to my family about it, but um yeah, I think it, like, it's still, like, kind of hard for me, but I think I am doing better. And I also recognize, like, this is like a really important skill that I have to look. I have to get used to practicing because I'm gonna have it to use it a lot, you know?

B - Mm hmm. I'm curious with all the people that you just named, when you have conversations with them, what is it that you want to get out of that conversation? Like, I guess what is it that you want to hear from them?

Alex (C2) - Like, if there was a conflict? I guess.. there definitely be a part of me that's like, oh, please validate me, bro. Please validate me. But, um I think the most important part is, like that they give me some perspective on, like, things I could do. and, like, maybe how the other how the other people or person in the conflict feels, like, just getting another perspective on what's happening, I think hope's, like, actually, oh my gosh, wait. I kind of have another conflict that I just remembered. So, it's not like, there's nothing direct happened so far, I think, but it's like, like, for like, I'm a, like, I'm friends with these five other people, and for all five of us, hate one of our friends's new boyfriend.'cause he's weird and smelly and stuff. Um. And I was kind of wondering to myself if I was like being too much of a hater.. And so I asked my dad, like, dad or I told my dad about like the whole situation. And then like, and then the boyfriend did this and it was like kind of weirded out. And then my dad was like, yeah, he sounds like a moron. So I was like, okay, clock it. But like, also just like, um, I guess that's also, like I said, like getting that kind of validation from another perspective can be helpful, although I think, like the more important thing is to just like get another perspective in general, like— but yeah, like getting another perspective, just to see, like, how, like, how rational is the thing I'm feeling. Is it really, like, fair, you know, to think that way? Or am I being unfair to somebody, like, too harsh or something.

B - I do have follow up questions that I'm not gonna ask them. looking at time. Okay. I'll hold myself.

Alex (C2) - That's okay, that's okay.

B - Um. Okay. Let me...So, the last question in this category of questions. More like, I guess theoretical questions about conflict. But I'm curious what you think about like, do you think that your social identities as a you say non-binary Cuban Puerto Rican **[redacted]** has a role in any of the conflicts that you have experienced in your life?

Alex (C2) - I think definitely, like, being nonbinary, it's weird. I like I like to think of it as like, lowkey cheating at life because everybody complains about boys and then people complain about girls and it's like, well, you can't complain about me though, I'm perfect. No. But like, it's also like, very weird and kind of lame sometimes because, like, as much, like, new acceptance of nonbinary people that there is, it's still, like, the world is still getting used to it. Like, nonbinary people being more visible and everything. So it's like. Like sometimes I'll hang out with my gay friends and be so interested in my gay little world, and I look out. it's like, oh, wow. People are still, like, arguing if boys and girls can really only just be friends and I'm like, come on, now. Like but I think that anyways, I feel like that's definitely, like, given me into perspective about, like, gender and stuff and how that, like influences different situations, especially, like, in regards to like being nonbinary, like, trying to find my place in, like, a social landscape that's like still very used to the gender binary. With with my like ethnicity, I feel like, I don't know, I think that within what that looks like, in Latin American culture, there's like, you know, that like the conception or like the perception in that we like that we' like really loud and confrontational and stuff, which definitely true for some people. Like my dad. And my mom sometimes too. But um. I think that's definitely true for some people, and I think like, I don't know, like just, like thinking about, I feel like there are, like times where I can be like very confrontational. Like, I will admit, sometimes I have pushed buttons in my mouth. I will be real. And, like, there are times that I feel like, I feel like eager to be confrontational and stuff, which are typically like situations that don't like involve, that don't like, what's it called? Where I'm not really worried about like, my relationships with my loved ones, because like, that's where I get, like, nervous, you know. because I want to keep that all safe and everything. And then, like, those situations, like, where I'm happy to be confrontational, I definitely feel that the Latin American be really coming out, you know. But, I think that what it comes to, like, family disputes or like from disputes, I really start to like, yeah, I start to like retreat and get nervous about everything. And I'm like, um dang, where's that Latin American when I need it? Um, but, yeah.

B - Okay, I'm gonna do a hard shift here. These next two questions, one of them is an opinion based question. The other one is a more imaginative question. And the last two questions. The opinion-based one, you haven't been here in Clark for too long, but just curious to see if you

have noticed or heard anything in relation to these two things. And so whether you agree or disagree with this and why. So the statement is, some people at Clark say that Clark has a conflict management culture of either cancel culture and or conflict avoidance. Would you agree or disagree with this and why?

Alex (C2) - I definitely, I don't- do you know Fizz the app? Yeah, I've heard like a lot of stuff about that. Like on there, like, Clark has like such crazy cancel culture and stuff. And I haven't heard as much as the conflict like management part of it, but yeah, I've heard like the whole cancel culture thing, which I think a lot of people attribute it to the fact that Clark is has a very progressive, like, student body and then, like, the admin also tries to be progressive so they don't piss off the student body too much. But, I think that when it comes to, like, smaller scale, like real life, cancel culture business, I don't take it very seriously because I feel like I don't know. I don't want to say that, like the cancel culture is always justified, but I won't, because, like, I'm sure there's, like, been a situation where's just been stupid. I feel like to make people, like, so upset at you, and, like, such, like, a big number of people be so upset as you that you, like, canceled, so to speak. I feel like you gotta do something, like, pretty wrong. So it's like, I don't know. I know, like, I don't think that I would be in that situation. I never know what happens, but, like, I feel like I'm a pretty... Like, with mine, within my environment and the environments that I run and stuff, like, I'm a pretty, like, inoffensive person. So, like, I guess, and also just because I don't have a lot of personal experience with it, I don't take it very seriously. Like, if there is an event, like a big cancel, cancellation of somebody, I'll like make up my mind about that, but like right now I don't really take it very seriously, because I also feel like, like I've seen a lot of people, like, to say, oh, doing cancel culture so stupid when it's like, people being rightfully mad at somebody for doing something bad. And I think it also has like a— it also has like a connotation of like, oh, it's all those woke people and stuff. You doing all the cancel culture and stuff. So that's another reason why I don't take it like super seriously is because it seems like a lot for... Like, um like like a thing that people, like more conservative people would just like finger wag at and stuff instead of critically looking at the situation and everything. But yeah.

B - My last question for you. Um more imaginative like I mentioned. I'm going to ask you— this might be especially interesting since you don't have too many years here. So you have more room to imagine. But if you had to imagine an ideal conflict management culture at Clark, one that meets all the goals that you might want out of the conflict, one that addresses like, what's your role in these conflicts? What's other people's roles? What might, what might this look like at Clark?

Alex (C2) - I think my high school, I never got to, like, see it, like, actually, in action, but my high school was like working on some kind of, like peer conflict management thing. where, you know, like, you would be trained to help, like, you would be trained in, like, different, like, forms

of conf management and stuff. And then you could, like, help out other people in your grade with that. So, um, I think like, if there was some sort of student group, maybe with, like, some faculty, um I think that would be a nice way to like bring like more perspectives into it because like, that's people, like, it happens to everybody. Me included, like, you know, we all get, like, stuck in our heads about, like, with our side of the story is. And so just to be able to have that as a resource, that's always available to, like, just hash things out, I think would be cool. But let's see.. Yeah, I lowkey can't think of anything else.

B - It's all good. Alright, I'm going to end the interview here.

Ibrahim (C3) Transcript

[redacted]

B - Thank you for all of that. So here we have a series of nine questions that I'm going to be hopping around with. It's a semi-structured interview model. Alright. So I'll go straight into it.

Can you tell me, or can you recall a moment of conflict that you had here at Clark with another student?

Ibrahim (C3) - Like an internal conflict or like, or like, with someone else? Like, one person?

B - Uh, this is a conflict that interpersonally between you and someone else and whatever comes to your mind first.

Ibrahim (C3) - Okay, the suite last year. Oh, brother. Yeah.

B - What happened?

Ibrahim (C3) - Oh, um Well, we were in a suite, and then [redacted] was in that suite, and then there was a falling out near the end of the second semester, and it was very awkward. A lot of it started from just not being a very good roommate, like leaving stuff out in the common room. being very messy and like not cleaning things up, like basic things like this. And then it became more like, um just like, bad roommate and then bad friend, because then the whole thing with, like, [redacted] and saying things about— talking behind your back and stuff like that. Mm hmm.

B - How do you think you handled the conflict?

Ibrahim (C3)- Oh, well, it was stressful, but got through it. Um, It was kind of awkward, because she and I were somewhat like, pretty close, I would say. Um and so we were probably— I was probably the closest person in the suite. And so I think it kind of like put me in the middle of things, especially because [redacted] is my roommate, and then, yeah, so I was kind of like, and it was between [redacted] and [redacted], kind of. The big part. And so then I was just kind of like there. And yes, did that answer the question?

B - Well, what did you do to handle it?

Ibrahim (C3) - What did I do? Um, I agonized over it in my head, and then. That's a good question, actually. (I don't think I'm not a good person to interview, I think. I don't think this is going to be very.) Um, um, what did I do? Well, when I first found out, uh, I didn't say anything originally, because [redacted] was going through, like, really difficult time at that point. And so I didn't want to be like, "Oh, by the way, look at this thing, I just found. Here's another reason to, like, want to, like. I don't know. Another reason not wanting to live, I don't know. But then, [redacted] found it, where [redacted] found it, and then [redacted] told [redacted]. And then [redacted] told me. And I hadown. And then that's when I realized, like. now it's, like, out in the open. Like, there are more people that know about it. It's not just me that's keeping it to myself, but then that kind of like, introduced the question of, does [redacted] should [redacted] know?

Or should [redacted] not know? Because now three people knew. Plus the person that did it so poor. But. So I think that was very difficult. But, um I think I eventually confronted. I think I confronted her about it, [redacted] about it. And then she was saying that it was just like mistake and like she was trying to delete it and stuff. But [redacted] found out eventually, and so, yeah. I don't think. Oh, my God, I'm not... Okay. It's okay, it's okay.

B - Um, what was the resolutions in this conflict?

Ibrahim (C3) - Move on. Yes. Mm. I don't know. Luckily, it was the end of the year, so she moved out, and just kind of came to the conclusion, like, even as friends this is not gonna work out, even though it was a big mistake and you are you are apologetic about it and it started just as like roommate problems. Like, it's a greater character thing. Like, if you're doing this to someone you did consider it to be your friend, who's to say you wouldn't do it to the rest of us? And also, it's just like, is this something you could have just talked to her directly about? or not talked about at all, [redacted]. We're literally anything that a friend would do, would be mind their own business, probably. I don't know. Yes. So. that was the end result, just no longer friends. "

B - Were you satisfied with that result?

Ibrahim (C3) - Yeah. I I don't know if I want. I don't know if it's okay, is it, but I don't think about it too much. I don't I don't really. I think I have a harder time missing people and stuff, and so, for me, it was out of sight, out of mind, but. So I don't really. Or maybe that maybe I just don't miss her. Maybe it's not people in general. I think it, yeah, I don't know. I think we never really had a-, like, it was always kind of like a weird relationship we had because I feel like I wouldn't know what to talk about with her sometimes. Even though we were supposedly close. And that felt kind of odd, because I had felt that way with, like, [redacted] in the beginning of, like, in freshman year. But, like, I was understandable. Like, I only really got close to [redacted] through CS classes that we took together. And then by sophomore year, like, we were much more familiar and like chitchatty. And so, I don't know, for me, being able to chitchat with someone is a sign of closeness. And so it was kind of awkward when it was just like.. I don't know. (Wait, what was he? Oh, my God. I'm sorry. I don't think you should use this. Oh, my God.)

B - (This transcript is gonna be so funny.)

Ibrahim (C3) - (Oh, my God, I'm sorry.)

B - Do you wish you could do anything differently?

Ibrahim (C3) - Um... anything differently. Yeah, maybe. I think the way it was handled. Like, things turned out okay. Um, but just in general, I'm very unsure about a lot of things. I'm very

uncertain about most things, everything. So I think in the beginning, like when I was debating whether or not I tell [redacted] and not anyone else, because I didn't want it to become a further suite problem, because at that point, it was already getting a little more tension in the suite because of a bad roommate things going on and so I didn't want it to become an additional suite issue, or an additional tension. And so, um I was kind of finicky about that, I think probably, and and there was stuff I wanted to tell [redacted], but then stuff I did not tell her, and then I think I wasn't really too sure where I stood, like with [redacted] stuff, in the very start of it. Because it's still not good to, like, be someone's friend who said that stuff. And so, had [redacted] not found out and had [redacted] not brought it up to me, I do wonder if I would have just been quiet about it, but I think it was like eating me alive, low key, those weeks waiting until [redacted] brought it up. So I'm not too sure, but I was kind of in a weird spot where I was still. I was leaning towards not really wanting to be friends with her. But then if I don't stay friends with her, then it kind of like the reason "why" comes up, because then if you like, I don't know, it just pops up naturally. Like, you're like, I don't want to be friends with this person anymore. And then it's like, "Well, why?" And then it's like, "Well, it's because she, like, totally did something evil to you. And so it would come up eventually, but anyways, I don't know. So I think I could have had a stronger stance, maybe, but also, I think that just came with the longer it progressed and then I realized it just, it made it much easier, I think, in in the final decision.

B - Mm hmm.. Okay. I'm gonna switch gears a little bit from the situation. This time, I'm gonna ask if you can recall a moment of conflict that you've had with either faculty or staff member at Clark?

Ibrahim (C3) - Conflict with faculty or staff? I don't think anyone. No, I tried to avoid conflict. I'm, like, number one conflict avoider. Well, kind of, yeah. It scares me.

B - Wait, is that how you would describe your conflict management style?

Ibrahim (C3) - Yeah, just avoid it. Okay. If it doesn't, don't cause trouble, trouble is not needed. I feel like there must be conflict between one faculty. At least one, trying to think about all the professors have had. Conflict like, I've had with the professor.. like, I was fighting them and stuff?

B - I guess so. When you were in a moment with conflict, with a faculty or staff?

Ibrahim (C3) - No, I don't really. No. I don't think so...

B - Where do you think that your style of conflict management comes from?

Ibrahim (C3) - Um, like like being avoidant? I don't know. I think. What do you think? My mother and I and now have very good relationship when I was younger sometimes, and so I think I'm very stubborn. And so and she is very stubborn as well, and also she's like the boss because she's like my mother. And so I think we fought a lot. And luckily we don't and we don't so much anymore. Now it's her and my sister, so I gotta pass it along. But, um, I think it's probably from that, because then. Yeah, I don't know. Also, she was going through, like, she has, like, oh, wait, now I'm just, like, blabbering. But, like, I think at the time, like, her health was really bad because she was like all these um, like thyroid problem and thyroid, like, does all this hormones and stuff. And so it probably was not helping that I was like teenager and also super mega stubborn and also very troublesome, and being argumentative, and then she has the hormone hormonal issue, and then stubborn, and then is my mother and has to deal with a teenage child. Yes. So I don't know, it's probably from that. I'd rather not experience that, again.

B - Hmm. Wait, so yours if I'm understanding you right. You're saying that from your argumentative teen self to your now conflict avoidant self, the reason for that is because you want to avoid the kind of conflict that showed up when you were in argumentative mode?

Ibrahim (C3) - Yes. Does that make sense? Okay. Yeah, I would say so.

B - I see, I see. Then how much confidence do you have at Clark with managing conflict?

Ibrahim (C3) - Um, out of 10 stars, I would say, is that the scale? 10 stars. Out of 10 stars, I would say. a five. I'm a neutral. See, that's like the whole thing of, I don't know. I just try to be neutral, but it's not a good way to it, but. It works.

B - Why 5 stars?

Ibrahim (C3) - Five stars because I'm indecisive and– wow. indecisiveness, is like the enemy of like life. Anyways, um. I don't know, I haven't gotten into too many conflicts, fortunately. I know, like, um, like [redacted], for example, she has a lot of arch nemesis enemies. Then again, a lot of people have, like genuinely done terrible things to her. I don't know if it's her personality or what, but, like, people think that they can be mean and stuff. So she does have quite a few people that I know she has conflicts with, but I don't have anyone. I don't think, except for [redacted] now. She's my first person that I've never. Otherwise, I've never had someone I, like. I don't know. [redacted], [redacted] calls them opps, like her opps, I don't have any opps. Except now I do, so... adding one to the roster, but.. poor [redacted].

B - Does having an opp in the way that you manage and resolve that conflict affect your trust and belonging on campus with like other students?

Ibrahim (C3) - Does having that opp affect your belonging?

B - Yeah, like the way that you manage that conflict, does that– did that affect the way that you felt belonging on campus?

Ibrahim (C3) - Ah, I see. Hmm, the way I managed it... I don't know, I think for a good amount of it, I managed it internally. I did not say anything confrontationally because I get my words mixed up and I like get all nervous and and she was pretty confrontational. Like [redacted], she'd be like, [redacted], like, we should talk. And I'd be like, I don't know if we need to talk." Because also this is not my problem. But, like, so. Yeah. So, I don't know. So I think a lot of it, I did a lot of thinking up here. But I did not manage it as well, externally, I think, until maybe near the end. And even now, like, when she text messages over the summer or, like, was calling me over the summer, I just ignored it. Like, I didn't pick up or anything instead of responding and being like, don't text message or call me. And I could have said that. I could have blocked her. But it's just too neutral. I'm too neutral. Oh, my God. Anyways, but yeah. Who was that? Um. I don't know, maybe I'm too neutral in my life. (That did not answer. Dude, I don't think you can use this. I don't think you can. Like, this is not useful. Oh, my goodness.)

B - This is going to be whatever it needs to be. Okay?

Ibrahim (C3) - Okay. I don't know. I guess I realized that I think a lot about belonging now. I don't know. Any conflict I see on campus, I think about it, but I do not get involved. I try to avoid it. I turn the other way.

B - When you say you think about it a lot, how so?

Ibrahim (C3) - That sucks. And then that's terrible. Should I be doing something? I should probably be just doing something. And then usually, usually it's just, uh, I know we talked about this before, but like in the [redacted], probably, it's very non- diverse sometimes. And so I would say, that's conflict for me to be honest. I think it's just internal conflict. I think I'm just agonizing. This is a lot of self reflection.

B - Yes, then I think this will jump into my next question I would rather nicely.

Ibrahim (C3) - Oh, brother.

B - One of my questions is, do you think that your social identities, as you said, a Korean woman has a role in the conflict that you've experienced here?

Ibrahim (C3) - I think a lot of it I put on to myself, and it's not necessarily because I'm Korean or a woman. I think it's just the way I view other people so I create that conflict because I don't think I've been treated differently or lesson? Compared to other students of other identities, but I think it's just like, the way that I think about the classroom in my head—classes in my head or just like the general atmosphere of being in a class. I think that is probably what— so it does have some relevance, like being Asian, but I don't know, people aren't, like, out to get me.

B - Can you tell me more about the... I'm assuming you mean, like, self-inflicted?

Ibrahim (C3) - Yeah.

B - That this is self-inflicted. Can you say more on that?

Ibrahim (C3) - I don't know, because then sometimes you're in like a pretty full classroom and it's like 20 kids. No, not 20. Maybe 15. One, two, three. I don't know. It's some number of kids, but you look around and you realize, like, man, there's a bunch of white people in here. And then you're, like, jump scare, and then, oh, wait, actually, let me think about my FYI. Self-inflicted. This was my very beginning of self-inflictedness. Um. Yes, [redacted], uh, with [redacted], who is [redacted]'s.... I got them to meet. But anyways, um, [redacted] is [redacted]'s advisor, but in this [redacted], she was teaching that of, oh, and and [redacted]. But anyways, Yeah, I think because I remember [redacted], she she was in [redacted] with us and she was also in that FYI. And although she left the next semester, but she and I were the only people of color in that class. And that class had over 20 kids, like maybe 25 kids. And so I found that very uncomfortable. And I think that's why I had such a— One of the reasons why I had such a hard time transitioning into college, to be honest, or at least at Clark. And the reason why this class affected me so much more compared to like philosophy where it was also pretty white. It's probably because it was my FYI. And so there was a lot more emphasis on that community and they're like, I kept hearing people be like, oh yeah, like a lot of the people I know today are from my FYI. Or like, people, like the admin or whoever, they were like, you guys like, get to know your FYI groups. And then you all go and you sit there on Wednesdays in a classroom and you like listen to your peer mentor talk and you all have to be together and you're supposed to be friends with them. You see these guys like multiple times a week in class and then out of class and then all like you're a cohort almost. And so you're supposed to have like some similarity, unless you signed up for an FYI, really late and you got stuck with the stupid FYI, which is the case for some people, like [redacted]. But yeah, Yikes. And so I'm sure she did not like it and she did not become close to anyone in her FYI I know, but I think in my case it was a very special it was kind of like. I don't know. I think people that took that class wanted to be there and they—people wanted to be there, though. And so it feels even worse, though, when people want to be there. And so you're supposed to have similarity. But then you don't connect to anyone there. Yes, awkward.

B - Why couldn't you connect with them?

Ibrahim (C3) - I didn't like them. Oh, my God. I think it's just because I alienated myself the moment, I saw my group, because I remember on orientation day after [redacted] had ended, we met with the rest of the group, because I remember we had [redacted] was our peer mentor where and we had met with [redacted] prior to the orientation prior to like when all the other kids got into campus and I remember it was me [redacted] and so we like talked to [redacted] and stuff um And so I was pretty excited to meet everyone else in the FYI I think. And then on Orientation Day, when they were grouping FYIs together and such, I saw my group and I was like, okay. it'll be good. What time is it? Oh, brother. I'm jibber jabbering. And I thought, like, this isn't too bad. Like, these people look friendly and stuff like that. But then I realized, like, I do not have very much in common with these people. Either— I don't know, it's just, I think coming from high school, this was very stark, surprise, and I know people warned me of the white wave, but man, was this. It just made me angry to even see it. I don't even know it was nothing that they did. It just like was upsetting to me. Cause you kind of stick out like a sore thumb, like, and I don't know. Yeah.

B - I have more questions, but I'm going to save those because we should move forward. All right, very last question for this category of questions. Who do you talk with about conflicts in your life?

Ibrahim (C3) -Anyone? Even the wall, like. I talk to myself off too. I don't know. I talk to everyone. I talk to you, I talk to. I talk to my roommate, I talk to myself, I talk to the air, I talk to [redacted], I talk to [redacted], [redacted], [redacted]. What was am I talking to? [redacted]. Basically, all my little, all my friends. Yes. Oh, and my parents, although they usually don't respond to my text messages. But I still send it to them anyway. Got to keep them updated. They don't care. It's okay.

B - Why do you talk to these people/ like, what are you hoping to get out of the conversations?

Ibrahim (C3) - That's, like, really deep. Why do we even talk to people? Sometimes, I think it depends. Like, I think you have very good advice. And then [redacted] is very emotive? Is that the word? She's very expressionful, and is very, like, just empathetic and stuff. And so if you go to her, she's going to be, like, outraged with you. And so that's kind of joyful. And also, she has very similar experience, so I feel like if I'm complaining about something like this she's able to relate and it's not, it doesn't feel like, oh, why do you feel that way? Like, that's so weird. And so that's kind of reassuring. And then I tell [redacted], um I don't know, [redacted] also gets outraged a little less hotheaded, though, sometimes, to be honest. Oh, [redacted], um [redacted], sometimes, I don't know, it's very down to, I think, and just, like, chill with a lot of

things. So I could be, like, blubbering about who knows what and [redacted] will just sit there and listen, because she's so kind. But, yeah, I don't know. I think it depends on the person.

B - That's fair. Okay. We move on to the last two questions of this interview? These two questions have to do with an opinion based question and a more imaginative question. The opinion-based question is this. Some people say that Clark has a conflict management culture of either cancel culture and or conflict avoidance. Would you agree or disagree with this? And why?

Ibrahim (C3) - What the hell, yeah. What other conflict management is there? I don't know. Yeah, they're kind of like the two ends at the extremes, which is kind of funny. You're either getting way too involved in the conflict, which is like the cancel culture part, or you're getting not involved enough, probably, which is the avoidant. Yeah, I would say so. I think, I think being on a small campus, wait, what was the question? I'm sorry.

B - Just whether you agree or not? And why?

Ibrahim (C3) - Oh. Yeah, I would agree, I think. I think being on a small campus— kind of like. Is it perpetrated or perpetuate? Is perpetuate a word? I don't remember. Whatever word is the right version. Wait, which one is the right version for this context? A small campus perpetuates avoidance, maybe? Just because I guess it could also cause the cancel culture. But I think when you are in a small campus and everyone knows each other and people are in your business and you know other people's business, it's very easy to just not want to get involved and to just look the other way and be like, I'm not going to deal with this right now. I'm not gonna deal with this tomorrow either. I'm probably never gonna deal with this ever. Um, yeah, put it on the back burner. I never look back. But I think that's going to a small school can make it very easy, especially if it's like a conflict with another person. And then I think. On the other end, being in a small school, it can make it very easy to cancel someone because you're like, oh, I did I know that because you know people personally often enough or you've had a class with them often enough to like have an idea of who they are. So they're not just like some rando that you seem like, I don't know. But, like, there's someone that you've interacted with where you've been in the very presence of or something like that. And so I feel like sometimes it can make it easier to cancel someone just because you've seen snippets of them. So if you see the way they act in class, for example, and it's kind of like obnoxious. And someone tells you something that they did, I feel like you're more enthused too, or it's like the confirmation bias or whatever. That psychology, term or whatever it is. You're like, yeah, you know what that checks out. Like that checks out for them. Or like when you have interactions with someone, like just little interactions, like maybe they're an acquaintance or just like, someone you used to know um I don't know, I feel like sometimes you're just like, yeah, that makes sense that they did that. Like, I'm not surprised. I don't know. And it can be easy to, like, get your whole friend group to get in

on it, and be like, yeah, we don't like this person. And then your entire friend group is like, yeah, yeah, yeah, we hate this person. And then, and then that's like 10 people canceling this one person and then it spreads. So, yeah, I don't know. But I agree. Long winded. Good grief.

B - My last question for you. Yes. This was the imaginative one. Oh. I'm going to ask you if you had the power to restructure Clark in your image and come up with an ideal conflict management culture, what would that look like? What would your role be in it? What would other students' roles be in it like, how would this play out?

Ibrahim (C3) - Interesting. Ideally, you be in the middle, but I think that is like for every single case in the entire world. I think, because we're in Massachusetts and because we attract a certain demographic of students, which is oftentimes, and this isn't a bad thing, but oftentimes, um, well, white neurodivergent and like, what's the other one? LGBT. I sound terrible. This is, like, terrible, but it's true, it's true. We That's, like, I would say, one of the primary groups of our student body. And so I think a lot of the, I'm not going to say everyone believes this because this is not true, but I feel like a lot of the people that I have met that follow this trope kind of have like certain ideologies that they get from consuming media from other people that are very similar to them. Like, very just like radical and like, like quick to accuse, quick to be like, that's terrible. Like, not to say names, but like someone I went to high school with, actually, that came to Clark and they were like, if you— wait, if this was like last year when we were voting for the presidential election, if you vote Kamala, you're supporting genocide. And it was like, Kamala or Trump. Like, at that point, like voting third party was not to be that person, but like, I'm not trying to be, like, we should only have two parties. But like, at that point, like, dude, look at the state we're in. Like, look at how bad things are right now. And think about how bad things are going to be for their next four years. And then they're like, no, you're supporting genocide. If you vote for Kamala. And like, you're just standing with it and you want to kill like all the Palestinians or something or I don't know, things like that. Or Ukraine, too? I think it was about Palestine though. But anyways. And it's just like, take a look at Trump. And so it's just like, it's people that say that. It's a lot of people from liberal states. Maybe that would be the better way to put it because when you're saying that and then there are people from like Texas or like middle of nowhere, states and like the mid-middle of the country. It's just, it's such an ignorant thing to say. Like, you've never been out of like New England. Like, maybe you've been along the East Coast and stuff, but out of New England, we're out of, like, the blue state areas, like, be so serious. Because when you're saying this, it's just like, it totally disregards like, basically everyone else. Like, if you choose to not vote, whatever, because you're from Rhode Island. Rhode Island votes blue. So it's, like, you can throw it away. But I feel like it's so hurtful to say that when you have, like, like, you're trans yourself. Like, why would you be saying that? And you, when there's like trans people in Texas, like, where are they going to do when you're, I don't know. It's just [redacted], [redacted] felt very strongly about this as well, just because they knew some of their friends were going to get surgery and stuff, but then this kind of like was jeopardizing it,

like the whole election stuff. I don't know. But anyways, the point is, like, a lot of Clark students are from the New England area as well. And so I think that also influences how they feel politically and things like that. And so that's why they're very strong. But I think if we were to have a better, wait, where was what the hell was I even doing with this? I got to start writing stuff down, I think. Um. Sorry, I'm locked in. Oh, yes, certain demographic. So that is why I think we are the way we are. That does not answer the question. I think the solution, because we are to get to the middle, which I think would be the right place to be, would probably try to, I don't know, I guess you could argue that we already have a diverse student body because we are so accepting of and welcoming of LGBT culture and neurodivergence, like, oh, did you know, like, I think SAS, like, like an absurd percent of the student body is registered with SAS compared to like, 20 to 20% in like other schools, it's like 40 to 50 here. Like it's it's very high. So we're very, we do make a lot of accommodations in, I would say, these are all good characteristics to have in this school. But I think it also attracts a lot of extreme thoughts and opinions. And so yeah, and not wanting to listen to people. that come from different experiences of yours. And so maybe listening, listening is always good. You have to listen to people, especially when, especially to minorities. So that can include people from other states out of New England, like the Southern states or wherever they're from, the places from nowhere. I think listening to them instead of being like, I don't know, being like, go blue! And, well, yeah, go blue, but I don't know. I think just listening in that aspect and also, of course, listening to the voices of people of color, because I know in some of the psychology or education classes that people have taken, a lot of the way people talk over the issues of like people of color in education, which is kind of ironic, but they're like, I don't know, I think [redacted] had a class, it was like maybe urban education or whatever and maybe they were talking about how students of colored get education versus white students and then white students would always talk over people, which does not make sense. So also visiting in that part, I don't know, just being better listeners. Like, we are so quick to say, you're wrong. That's terrible. You're evil. (I'm still not giving you a right answer. Um. I don't know. I'm sorry.) Oh, my God. Yeah. I think I can be a better listener too. Especially to the way people, I low key, why am I scared of them? It's probably because I'm assuming the worst from them. Like, I'm assuming that they're gonna be, like, have low opinion of me or, like, be a lot, like the people I've described, like have very extreme thoughts and opinions, which alienates, which would alienate me more, but these are all assumptions I'm making. And if I were to just listen to them and get to know them and interact with them, I would probably not be canceling them the way I am. But like, totally. Yeah. So that's, like, another thing. (I still don't think I answered. That's my bad. I gotta stop talking.)

B - Okay, I'm gonna end the interview here.

Leigh (P1) Transcript

(Please reach out to bbnnguyen16@gmail.com if you would like access to this transcript.)

Eliza (P2) Transcript

(Please reach out to bbnnguyen16@gmail.com if you would like access to this transcript.)

Jocelyn (P3) Transcript

(Please reach out to bbnnguyen16@gmail.com if you would like access to this transcript.)

Grey (S1) Transcript

(Please reach out to bbnnguyen16@gmail.com if you would like access to this transcript.)

Fran (S2) Transcript

(Please reach out to bbnnguyen16@gmail.com if you would like access to the transcript.)

Navy (S3) Transcript

B - Hello. Thank you for agreeing to do this interview with me.

Navy (S3) - Of course.

B - Um, I want to start with some demographic questions. So can you please tell me how you identify racial and/or ethnically?

[redacted]

B - And how would you identify your gender?

Navy (S3) - Female.

B - And what is your role on campus and how would you describe it?

[redacted]

B - Okay. All right. Thank you for answering those. There's a series of eight questions on here. This is a semistructured interview, so I'll be hopping back and forth as needed. So let's hop into it. Can you recall a moment of conflict that you've had here at a Clark with either a faculty or a staff member?

Navy (S3) - Yeah, um. Hmm. I feel like with the faculty and staff member only? Hmm okay. I would say. with faculty, some conflict that like came up with some, it came up in the conduct case and they it was because there wasn't clear rules or like, like guidelines on like how the student could ask permission to do to like hold post something in the halls. And the conflict that came up there was the faculty member didn't ask for permission, so we were to that student that was in the class got conducted, and the faculty was like, hey, why is this person getting conducted when it's my assignment? And it's like, yeah, but they didn't follow the rules. And, like, just trying to explain that to them was difficult because they're like, well, it's my class. They should be able to do the things that they should, you're like inhibiting them from doing academics. I'm like, no, I'm not, I'm just telling them how to properly do this. Did I answer the question, alright?

B - Mhm, what ended up being like the resolution to this?

Navy (S3) - So we— I told my supervisor and they reached out to that faculty member and the other and like people in the [redacted], they just let them know that they need to ask [redacted].

B - During the conflict did you feel a certain way about it?

Navy (S3) - Yeah, I was pretty upset, and, like, was just, like, what the hell? Like, why didn't you ask more questions, instead of just, like doing the thing? Like, there's steps, there's procedures. Why didn't you ask that before you just said, "Go ahead and do it." So that's, like, more of my feelings were probably frustrated and upset.

B - And my last question for this scenario, do you wish that you had done anything differently with the student and with the faculty member?

Navy (S3) - I guess something that was that, I wish that could have been done differently was, at least, like, at the beginning of the semester, letting faculty know what policies and procedures we have, that they don't necessarily know, so that they are not so like I don't want to use the word butthurt— but like so like angry at us when we're like, no, that this is how we this is how we run and operate. And obviously you don't know that, but it's okay, because we're here to educate you on that, but it doesn't seem like they want to know. I don't know if that answered the question, but...

B - I'm going to switch gears a little bit. This time, I'm going to ask you if I can recall a moment of conflict that you've had a Clark with a student?

Navy (S3) - Yes. I've had many. Conduct is really, really where it's at. I would say. **[redacted]** And I'm like, that's great. Wish you would have told us, we would have let you told you the steps on what to do on how to actually do this, but they just, they weren't understanding that people were scared. People were like, what the hell's going on at 10 o'clock at night? So, yeah, just, it was— that was the situation.

B - Mm hmm. And I assumed this process was also resolved through conduct?

Navy (S3) - Yeah. But it went like in and out of conduct. So like there was a lot of involvement through, like, my supervisors, so we had the parents call, so we had to talk through it with them, even though, yeah, they had the FERPA file, so we could talk through it with them. But really, how that whole thing resolved itself was just speaking with the parent and having the parent be understanding of what was happening, and then they could calm down their child.

B - Do you feel that the conduct process is effective in navigating these kinds of conflict?

Navy (S3) - Yes and no. I feel like the the letters are a little scary at first, and it just heightens students to, like, a level where it just like, oh. I don't think they need to be at that level. But I say

conduct meetings are also very important to have because they're mostly educational. Like, that's how at least I run my kind of meetings to be, is educational because obviously they're not aware. We know the students are not reading the handbook and reading all of the guides and stuff that we give them. So at least in those meetings, we are able to educate on policy and procedures and just help them a little bit understand what we're here for and like, we're not here to get you in trouble. We're here so that you're comfortable and safe. Yeah.

B - Okay. I'm going to ask this question next. How confident do you feel at handling conflict at Clark?

Navy (S3) - It's definitely.. I'm not that confident. I- It's definitely kind of scary when we're reaching out to like students, like either when they've had a policy violation or not attending classes or not doing the things that they need to do when we know that they're that they can be heightened, but most of the time, it's been pretty good. Like, when I have to talk to a student and I know that they are not doing the things that they need to do, and it's pretty- I get over it because I'm like, oh, they're actually nice. Okay. We're good. But I feel like the Clarkies are just perceived to be a lot and to be already heightened with the emotions, so that's how, I guess we come in prepared is, okay, they're already gonna be heightened, but then you actually get there and they're like not heightened at all and they're just like, I just want, I just want to be left alone. And I'm like, I hear you, but you have to answer me.

B - What would make you feel more confidence?

Navy (S3) - Um. I would say. Honestly, just. I think it's more of an internal thing than, like, an external thing of just, like, knowing meeting people where they're at. And understanding that. Yes, so people will be heightened in some situations, but they're not all going to go like that. So.

B - That makes sense. Okay. In terms of your conflict management style, how would you describe them?

Navy (S3) - I'm in my personal life, I am pretty avoidant of it, but in my professional life, I try to hit things like head-on um so I'm more confrontational in my professional role. Because I have to be. So I would say I also just approach things with empathy and understanding first before I go into the, why did you do this conversation of just like, tell me, just explain to me what your thought process was so I can understand it to help you. And I try to also accept feedback and all that stuff. So I know that can also go into some type of conflict management because people are not good at taking feedback, but...

B - Is there one that you prefer over the other in terms of resolving?

Navy (S3) - I definitely like to be the like, empathetic understanding person when it comes to conflict, because I don't. I know in my personal life, I don't like it, so I try to make it as easy as possible.

B - Alright. I'm switch gears a little bit again. Okay. Um.. Do you think that your social identities, you said, as [redacted] has a role in the conflicts that you've experienced here?

Navy (S3) - No, I wouldn't say so.

B - How come?

Navy (S3) - I don't think they've affected any. I don't know. I just feel like Clark is very diverse and I know that it's a PWI, but I just feel like a lot of the students here are very different, they're diverse, they're like their thinking is so diverse and they're so like, they're just accepting of everyone, so I don't feel like [redacted] if that makes sense. [redacted] They just treat me like a person.

B - That makes sense. Okay. Then I guess outside of that, does the way that these conflicts happen and they get resolved, does it ever affect your ability to trust or belong with other like faculty, staff, or students on campus?

Navy (S3) - Does it affect my trust with them? Yeah. I would say so. [redacted] it took me longer to have to like, go through, to check their work in that made me lose a lot of trust in them and, like, making sure that they're completing what they need to be doing. So I would say, yeah. But it's really easy to get my trust back. Unfortunately.

B - Would you say— like, if you start at 100 with you full, do you start 50, zero? Like, level of trust with people?

Navy (S3) - I'm definitely, I don't trust 100%, like, I first meet someone, so I guess it would be like, a 50. and then, I mean, [redacted] I am at 100% and when they do things, I do go down to 50, and then they can slowly work their way up again, but, yeah.

B - Okay. Alright. So these six questions were part of one category of questions that I made. These last two are switch gears a lot. One of them is an opinion-based question, and the other one is more imaginative. So I'm going to ask you the opinion based one first. I'm going to see the statements and it's whether or not you agree or disagree with the statement. And why? So there are some people here, Clark, students, staff, faculty, say that Clark has a conflict management culture of either cancel culture and or conflict avoidance. Would you agree or disagree with this and why?

Navy (S3) - I unfortunately agree with it, because I think we. I think Clarkies definitely write off people way too soon. It's so unfortunate, because I do like, think so highly of Clarkies, but as soon as like, somebody does something wrong one time, it's immediately, like, we have to, what are you doing to address this? And it's like, okay, but did they learn from it? Did they like, are we holding them accountable to the point of like, did they learn from this? And are they acting better or are we just, we just saw this one thing and we're writing this person off and and that's how it feels here of like we just write somebody off as soon as they do something wrong. And it's just like, no, we're here to learn. Everyone does something wrong. We're all human. We're all and this is such a- the age of like, where you can do something wrong, where you can fail, where it's okay to do these things because you're not out in the world as an adult yet. Like, you're still in this phase of I am an adult, but I still have people who support me. And that is okay to make mistakes and say something wrong because you had people who will be like, okay, why did you say that? And why did you think that that was okay? And then help them reflect on, like, yeah, maybe that was it. It's something that I should have said or do or something along those lines. Yeah.

B - I guess following up on that. What would you say, like, the goal of, like a conflict resolution would be, like, what's like the end goal after a conflict happens?

Navy (S3) - I would say for me personally, not like personally/professionally, it's just, um getting everyone to be on the same page and understanding. And if you don't, even if you don't agree with what the resolution was that you can either compromise or just be accepting of it because it's what's best for everybody and it's not going to change the outcome if that makes sense of like, because I'm like trying to think of like a situation where it could where it would be like, no, I don't, I don't want to accept this or I don't want to compromise, where there aren't. There are some people that will not compromise and you'll have to come up with a different solution, but I rather come up with a different solution and find a solution than leave it to be whatever it is, and build resentment and all of that

B - So if I'm understanding this right, that the goal of conflict is to come to a common understanding.

Navy (S3) - Yes. Sorry, if that was more words, than...

B - I just wanted to make sure, so that I have an idea in my mind. Wait, so how would you define conflict then?

Navy (S3) - A really good question. I would define conflict as, like, either two parties, not agreeing. Somebody did something to another person where it made them upset or rubbed them the wrong way. I guess that would be like my definition of conflict.

B - And I guess with these two things in mind, I'll ask the final question here, which is more the imaginative one. If you have the power and the ability to imagine an ideal conflict management culture for Clark, what would that look like your role in it, what would like other students' roles be in this? How would you I guess restructure?

Navy (S3) - That is a really good question. Honestly, I would just like people to have more dialogue with each other. So I guess having some debate clubs and having— not more like clubs, but like just sessions to air out your grievances. Let's talk about it right now. Let's have this space to do it and let's come up with, if we can, let's come up with the solution in that time. I know that this will probably never happen at any university, but just like having a forum for students, faculties, staff, to just really air out their grievances, like having leadership be able to come up with solutions with them and, like, work with them instead of leadership doing it themselves. Like, it should definitely be a group effort instead of just one person, like one group making decisions. 'Cause if we're all Clarkies, then we should all be treated the same personally.

B - When you say one group making the decision?

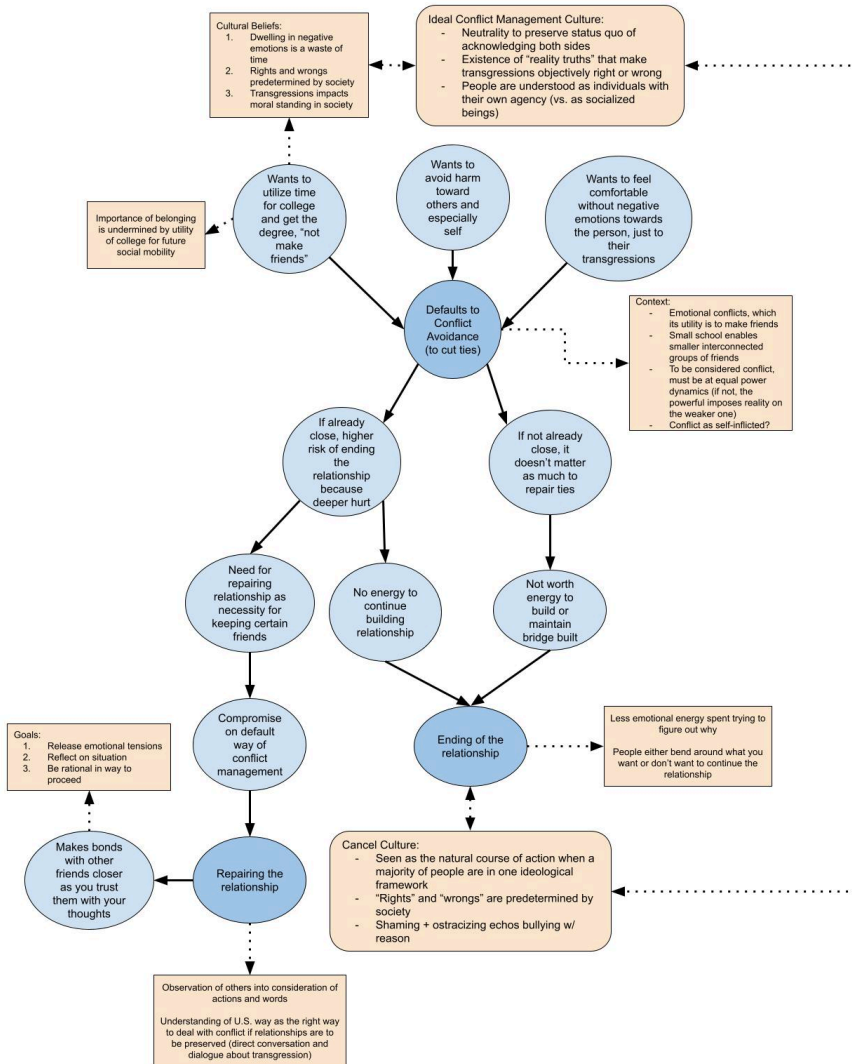
Navy (S3) - Like, it would be like, leadership making decisions. Or, like, the senior team. And it's, like, not even considering everyone else. And we're like, we don't agree with that. And leadership be, like, I don't care. This is what we say." And we be like, it doesn't work. We see it doesn't work.

B - I'll end the interview now.

Appendix F - Phase I Conflict Ideology Flowchart Maps

Please click on each map to see the full view.

C1 (Jamie) Conflict Map



Legend:
Dark Blue - Main ideas
Light Blue - Supporting/branch ideas
Orange - Heavily my thoughts, interpretations, or questions
Green - Ideal asks from participants
Yellow - Paraphrased stories from interviews

*Please note that all maps are my conceptualization of the data I collected, it may or may not be completely accurate to the spirit of the interviews.

Salient Identities:
 International student, Hispanic, first-generation student

Roommate conflict; made a comment that made them seek therapy and completely evade roommate and get rid of the interaction and connection; importance of this friend's opinion on them; took a month to finally talk directly and in-between was full of 'zigzag' (I interpret this to be hints towards the full picture, sidestepping); talks to others about it but feels like it's like bad mouthing friends to friends

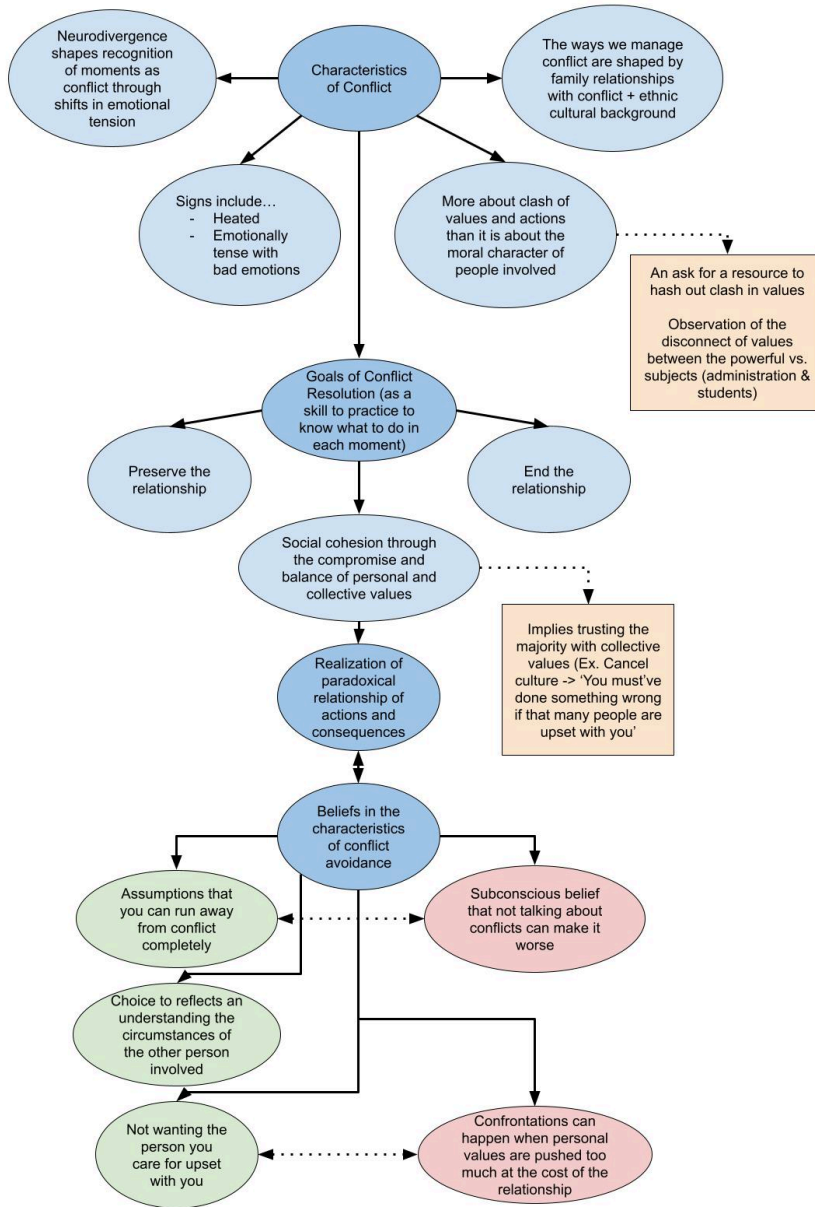
Conflict with those with 'higher power'; fear of being 'scolded' so they never start a conflict with faculty or staff

Half-conflict with mother about not making it to the final round of a scholarship; not that their mom reacted poorly but more the emotional impact of disappointing

Conflict in home country -> more straightforward, 'your words hurt me, don't do that again' and expectation follows to conform to that; conflict in U.S. -> state how your actions made you feel a way and then find compromise, more emotional

Political conflict on campus; attributes it to having a student body of different opinions and while institutionally Clark avoids it, students engage in cancel culture for it (described as bullying to an extent); 'common sense' what's going to happen to the Republicans at a Democrat majority campus

C2 (Alix) Conflict Map



Legend:
Dark Blue - Main ideas
Light Blue - Supporting/branch ideas
Orange - Heavily my thoughts, interpretations, or questions
Green - Ideal asks from participants
Yellow - Paraphrased stories from interviews

*Please note that all maps are my conceptualization of the data I collected, it may or may not be completely accurate to the spirit of the interviews.

Salient Identities:
 Latine, neurodivergent, 1.5 gen student, first year student

Group project conflict; partner not doing their part, asked about it and they had a busy schedule and had the wrong due date so promised they'd do it by Friday; ended up being perfectly fine on the presentation; not really described as a tense situation, but understanding

Conflicts with parents; would 'suck it up' to avoid them being upset; relates it to how they handle conflict with other people too even in dreams about conflict

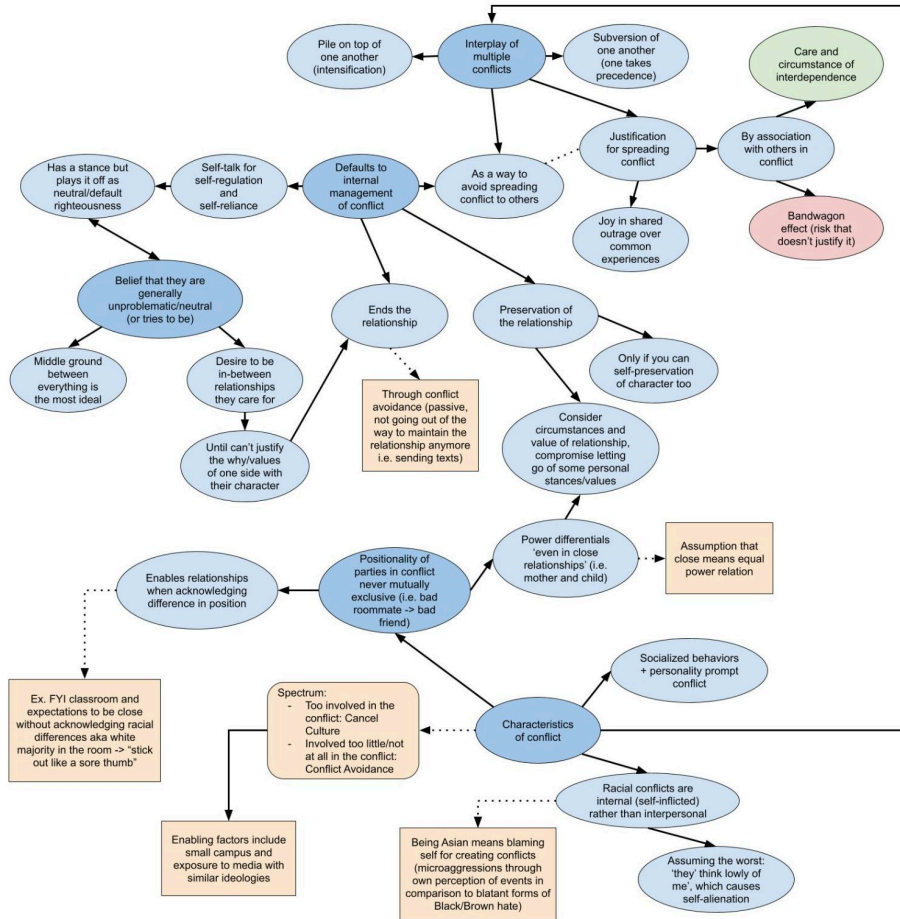
Conflicts with neurodivergency; different understanding of social situations and other people and because of this needs to be more proactive about conflict and recognizing it (i.e. in the form of passive aggressiveness)

Conflict with friend's partner; self-reflected with family if they are being too much of a hater, and got validated for thinking that they are weird; questions if they are being fair to others with others

Conflict as a Latin American; perceived as loud and confrontational

Cancel culture conflicts; you have to have done something pretty wrong to get that many people upset with you; they'll make up their mind about each case but the feelings are stacked against those that are cancelled

C3 (Ibrahim) Conflict Map



Legend:
 Dark Blue - Main ideas
 Light Blue - Supporting/branch ideas
 Orange - Heavily my thoughts, interpretations, or questions
 Green - Ideal asks from participants
 Yellow - Paraphrased stories from interviews
 *Please note that all maps are my conceptualization of the data I collected, it may or may not be completely accurate to the spirit of the interviews.

Salient Identities:
 Asian, non-first gen student, junior

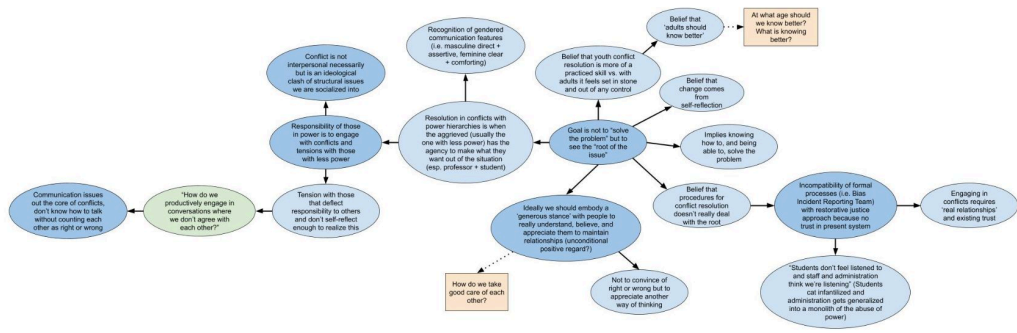
Suitemate and friend conflict; a falling out at the end of a semester; started with not being a good suitemate by leaving things out and not cleaning up, then turned into talking about other suitemates behind backs; made them feel awkward for being in the middle and questioning if they should tell those involved since they were all friends and this would add to additional already existing suite issues; ended up not being friends because it's a greater character thing of 'if this person could do this to other friends, than what could they do to me' moment even if considered a close friend; wishes they had a stronger stance on this earlier

Conflict with mother; stems from them being stubborn and relationship has changed in age with her and in circumstance with her health

Racial conflict in their major; they feel that it is self-inflicted because it's the feeling of uncomfortability with majority white classrooms, feeling like they are out to get them; can't connect because 'self-alienation'

Cancel culture conflict; it's easier to cancel someone here at a small school because you probably have confirmation bias from being more likely to know at least snippets of their life, or more often or not it happens in friend groups

S2 (Fran) Conflict Map



Legend:
 Dark Blue - Main ideas
 Light Blue - Supporting/branch ideas
 Orange - Heavily my thoughts, interpretations, or questions
 Green - Ideal asks from participants
 Yellow - Paraphrased stories from interviews

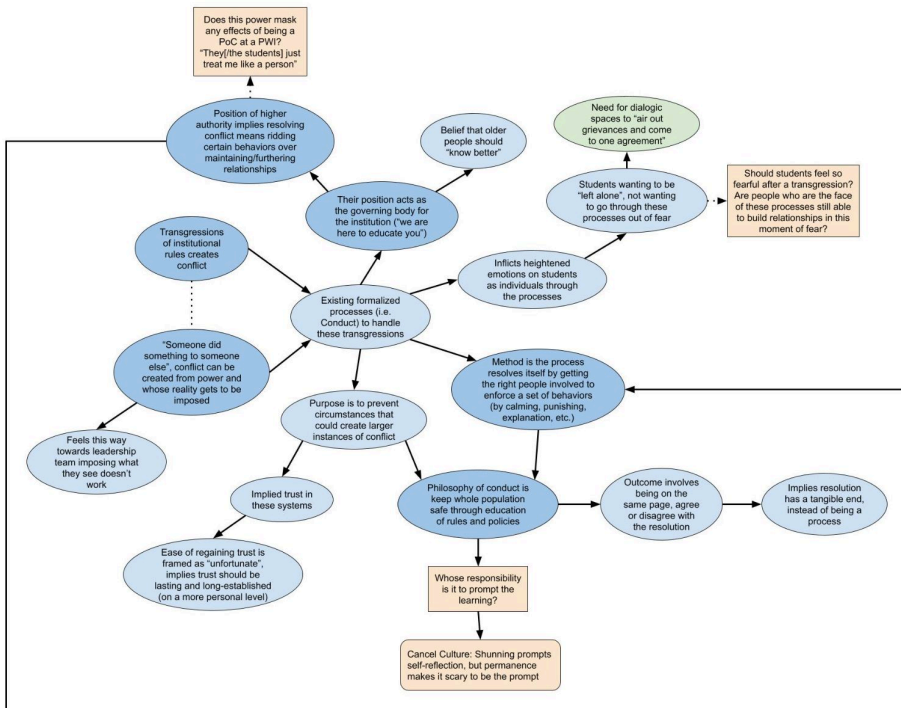
*Please note that all maps are my conceptualization of the data I collected. It may or may not be completely accurate to the spirit of the interviews.

Salient Identities:
 White, woman

Peer conflict: feels that it is harder to talk with other staff than it is with students; highlights a story about a student who called them out on a problematic belief in class and how easily listening to this student came to them, but for colleagues a lot less preferred; cites age and power dynamics as two things that explains this

Cancel culture conflict: having students who post in class about political issues and canceling other students in front of their face; no resolution just a feeling that we have procedures rather than dealing with the things themselves; another case is fear of Main South being a cancelable feeling as it's seen as racist

S3 (Navy) Conflict Map



Legend:
 Dark Blue - Main ideas
 Light Blue - Supporting/branch ideas
 Orange - Heavily my thoughts, interpretations, or questions
 Green - Ideal asks from participants
 Yellow - Paraphrased stories from interviews

*Please note that all maps are my conceptualization of the data I collected. It may or may not be completely accurate to the spirit of the interviews.

Salient Identities:
 BIPOC

Transgressions conflict; a student got a Conduct notice for doing a sales assignment for a class by knocking on dorm doors; they had to mediate this transgression of rules with the professor and student

Conflict of trust; they are a supervisor for students who didn't do the work they needed to do; this didn't get resolved presumably but the space for trust is open to build back again "easily"