ABSTRACT

Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Graduate Programs:
An Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Study of Dispute Resolution
and Conflict Management Alumni

Jessica W. Lunce, Ed.D.

Mentor: Sandra Talbert, Ed.D.

Universities and academic programs face increasing pressure to align educational outcomes and career outcomes for their students as a measure of program and student success (Coughlin et al., 2016). Graduate programs in the peace and conflict studies (PCS) field face similar issues in measuring student success due to the lack of evidence on career outcomes from various degree programs. Utilizing the theoretical framework of human capital theory and concepts of employability and career success, this study explored the career outcomes and perceptions of alumni from two graduate programs in dispute resolution and conflict management (DRCM) in the United States.

An explanatory sequential mixed methods design proved most appropriate for this study as it provided the most insight into the diverse careers, fields, and positions that DRCM graduate students pursue after graduation. Through two phases of purposive sampling, the researcher identified DRCM alumni from two graduate programs at private universities in the Southern United States, not affiliated with law school alternative dispute resolution (ADR) programs. To explore the range of outcome experiences,

perceptions, and differences of DRCM graduate program alumni, the researcher used two forms of data collection, survey data and interviews. The researcher integrated the quantitative data and qualitative data in the final phase with the purpose of using the qualitative interview data to explain the quantitative career outcome's data.

This study filled a significant gap in knowledge and research on the experiences of DRCM master's program alumni post-graduation. The study revealed that alumni held diverse employment in various fields and industries, largely in non-conflict-specific roles, while also describing a range of application, impact, and value of the degree to their current roles. In addition, alumni perceived themselves as employable, while also acknowledging the challenges and barriers of conflict work. Overall, the study found no statistically significant differences in objective and subjective career outcomes and perceptions between the alumni of the two DRCM graduate programs. Due to some overlap in curriculum design and practice areas between ADR, conflict resolution (CR), and peace studies (PS) graduate programs, this study impacts the PCS field, informing further research, curriculum development, and student services.

Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Graduate Programs:
An Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Study of Dispute Resolution
and Conflict Management Alumni

by

Jessica W. Lunce, B.A., M.A.D.R.

A Dissertation

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Approved by the Dissertation Committee

_____
Sandra Talbert, Ed.D., Chairperson

_____
Jessica Meehan, Ed.D.

_____
Jess Smith, Ph.D.

Accepted by the Graduate School
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J. Larry Lyon, Ph.D., Dean

Page bearing signatures is kept on file in the Graduate School.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACU: Abilene Christian University

ADR: Alternative dispute resolution

CR: Conflict resolution

CM: Conflict management

DR: Dispute resolution

DRCM: Dispute resolution and conflict management

IRB: Institutional Review Board

LU: Lipscomb University

MBA: Master of Business Administration

NACE: National Association for Colleges and Employers

PCS: Peace and conflict studies

PS: Peace studies

SMU: Southern Methodist University

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DEDICATION

To my husband, Bear, whose unconditional support and encouragement in every way made this journey and outcome possible.

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To my grandmothers, who instilled in me the value and love of educational pursuits.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Problem of Practice

Introduction

Since the Great Recession, public officials, employers, and students increasingly emphasize the issues of rising student loan debt and appropriate return on investment of college education, including graduate studies. Additionally, federal officials, state officials, and employers pressure colleges and universities to respond to the increasing cost of higher education and the rapid change in skills needed for the workforce (Coughlin et al., 2016; Rogers, 2013; Senter & Spalter-Roth, 2016). Universities compound these pressures by encouraging departments and graduate programs to either create more master's programs or boost enrollment in existing master's programs due to increasing competition for students and the fast-paced changes to the delivery of coursework (Blagg, 2018; Gallagher, 2018).

Many recognize graduate education as a means to improve job performance, increase wages, and advance professionally (Buchanan et al., 2007; Cocchiara et al., 2010), though not all programs are equal (Hodge et al., 2012). Pyne and Grodsky (2018) found that master's degree students now carry the majority of student loan debt across the United States. Higher education institutions are increasingly aware of prospective students' interests in both minimizing student loan debt and maximizing their income after graduation.

In the case of the peace and conflict studies (PCS) field, prospective students also search for meaningful degree programs in which they can help others or contribute to

positive change in their environments (Raines, 2018; Zelizer, 2015). Unfortunately, no information regarding the breadth of career outcomes exists. According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), job outlook and income for professional careers in mediation, arbitration, and conciliation will increase over the next decade; however, this information is problematic for three reasons. First, it promotes a very narrow aspect of career opportunities in the broader PCS field by focusing solely on these three positions. Next, few formal barriers exist to enter these jobs as there is no regulatory body at the federal level, and certification requirements differ from state to state. Finally, in some states, such as Texas, attorneys control either access to positions or the positions themselves (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019; Velikonja, 2009). The knowledge and skills learned in graduate programs in PCS programs apply to many professional roles and positions.

Graduate programs in peace and conflict studies are not immune to the pressures from public officials, university administrators, or students when looking at the changing definitions of program and student success. Zelizer (2015) states that the success of both graduate programs and their alumni entering the peace and conflict studies field relies on the ability for alumni to obtain employment in the field (p. 599). This study examined the career outcomes of alumni from dispute resolution and conflict management (DRCM) graduate programs, in addition to the program curriculum, to contribute to further development of the field, program success, and student success.

Statement of the Problem

Conflict is a natural and inescapable part of human interactions and society (Carruthers & Sweeney, 1996; Mayer, 2012); however, resolution and reconciliation

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often feel unnatural. Resolving conflicts requires skills, education, and experience. In the sixty years since peace and conflict studies emerged, at least 37 universities across the United States currently offer peace and conflict studies master's programs. In total, there exist over 200 programs at varying levels, concentrations, and lengths. The peace and conflict studies field includes three discipline areas of graduate program development, each with differing theories, skills, and competencies. These disciplines include peace studies (PS), conflict resolution (CR), and alternative dispute resolution (ADR). There is overlap between these three areas and other disciplines. For example, historically, ADR programs connected with law schools due to the use of dispute resolution methods like mediation and arbitration in clearing court dockets (Polkinghorn et al., 2008). While there exists no field-wide explanatory research on the outcomes of alumni from these programs, this study fills a gap in knowledge of alumni outcomes in DRCM graduate programs.

Research on the peace and conflict studies field explores many aspects of the practice in the field but contains no study on alumni outcomes. Studies on practitioners in the field relate to attorneys practicing mediation or negotiation (Velikonja, 2009) or to expert practitioners (Raines, 2018). Other research studies address the effectiveness of volunteer mediators (Harmon-Darrow & Xu, 2018) or the value of specific skills used in the field; however, no information exists on the overall outcomes or career placement success rates of graduates from DRCM graduate programs (Zelizer, 2015). This research is significant as it sought to explore what professions, fields, and positions students in the field gravitate towards after graduation. As the field continues to develop and integrate

with other trades and disciplines (Zelizer & Oliphant, 2013a), an important question to address is where the students have found meaningful work.

The U.S. Department of Labor (2019) expects job outlook in ADR, specifically for mediators, arbitrators, and conciliators, to grow by 8% in the next decade, "much faster than the average for all other occupations" (para. 5); but this statistic is deceiving. As stated earlier, the peace and conflict studies field is more extensive than just ADR and the three positions listed. Only one discipline area of peace and conflict studies, ADR, occasionally cross-lists with the legal profession or international relations. Differences exist in employment in ADR positions between non-attorney and attorney-practitioners, as well as between individuals in private practice and those in salaried positions (Velikonja, 2009). Legal professionals can also act as barriers to non-attorney mediators by controlling access to cases for mediation and selecting mediators. Velikonja (2009) states, "attorneys as gatekeepers not only decide whether and when a case will be mediated, but also who will mediate it" (p. 283). While the peace and conflict studies field has few barriers to entry, other barriers exist in competing across professional disciplines for the small amount of conflict-specific work that exists.

Adding to the problem is the still relatively unknown employment value of conflict and peace study in a broader sense. Despite the employability of soft skills in the workplace (Kyllonen, 2013; Sharma, 2018) that are common to ADR skills, programs reported that few organizations and individuals recognize ADR, CR, or PS graduate education as a pathway to employment for a variety of careers (Windmueller et al., 2009). Alumni are typically ill-prepared to talk about their skills and knowledge in a way

that makes sense to employers in non-conflict-related fields (Zelizer, 2015; Zelizer & Johnston, 2005).

Graduate programs in PCS continue to market the few job opportunities in specific ADR positions (mediator, conciliator, or ombudsman, for example) or promote the possibility for private practice that may not be available for most graduates. Previous research on the employability of ADR has focused on expert mediators (Velikonja, 2009), or the employer and workplace settings available to graduates (Zelizer & Johnston, 2005). Zelizer (2015) states that "as the costs of higher education continue to rise…programs also need to explore more how students are faring in the job market and their return on investment" (p. 600). This study filled a gap in understanding as to where students take the skills and knowledge learned, explored the graduate outcomes of DRCM programs, explained those outcomes in-depth through alumni career narratives, and provided vital information on how to improve education and provide student services.

Purpose of the Study

This study addressed the different careers, fields, and positions in which DRCM graduate alumni find employment after graduation. An explanatory sequential mixed methods study design was used, and it involved collecting quantitative survey data first, and then after, explaining the quantitative results with in-depth qualitative interviews. In the first quantitative phase of the study, career survey data was collected from alumni from the Classes of 2011 to 2015 from two DRCM graduate programs at Abilene Christian University (ACU) and Southern Methodist University (SMU) to assess whether differences existed in the career outcomes and perceptions between the alumni of the two

programs. The qualitative phase was conducted as a follow up to the quantitative results to help explain the quantitative results.

Recent studies have examined expert mediator careers, the nature of mediation as a profession, as well as negotiation skills and training. In exploring the in-depth career outcomes of DRCM alumni, graduate programs can improve and design appropriate curriculum, adapt to employment and market changes, and give students the best career development resources and information available. The field of peace and conflict studies, specifically the CR profession for this study, emerged from multiple scholars in disciplines looking to address conflict and peace together. As a return to the roots in the field, this study also explored connections to the areas of law, business, social sciences, and liberal arts, specifically related to the advancement and development of professions, use of theoretical frameworks, design of educational practices, and connection between educational and career outcomes.

The central questions addressed in this explanatory sequential mixed methods study exploring DRCM graduate program alumni included a quantitative question, qualitative question, and a mixed methods question, specifically:

1. What are the career outcomes and differences between the alumni of the two DRCM graduate programs? (Quantitative)

2. How do alumni from the two DRCM graduate programs perceive their careers, education, and employability? (Qualitative)

3. How do the themes mentioned by alumni from the two DRCM programs in the qualitative phase help to explain the initial career outcome's data from the quantitative phase? (Mixed Methods)

The results of this study highlighted the outcomes of alumni from graduate programs offering DRCM master's degrees, as well as provided recommendations to curriculum, program development, and student services.

Theoretical Framework

As the number of programs in peace and conflict studies continues to increase with no research on the employment opportunities or career outcomes, there is a need for graduate programs to understand how graduates in the field put the knowledge and skills to work (Zelizer, 2015). This study used the a priori theory of human capital, and related outcome concepts of employability and career success, as the lens in which to investigate objective and subjective career outcomes of alumni, as well as the value of peace and conflict studies education.

Applied generally, human capital theory provides a general understanding of the connection between formal education and employment. Human capital theory states that the more investment (knowledge, skills, or formal education) a worker accumulates, the more productive and employable the worker should become (Becker, 1960). Furthermore, the more society should reward them (income), and more economic growth should occur (Holden & Biddle, 2016). Born out of the field of economics, human capital theory shaped education and labor policies for decades, even into the most recent phase of changes in career norms from the traditional organizational career to the self-managed career.

Human capital theory remains a frequently used model for understanding outcomes and value of education (Baruch, 2009; Way et al., 2016) and has expanded over time. Scholars have contributed to the description of human capital outcomes to include

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additional forms of capital that higher education institutions grant to alumni, specifically

scholastic capital, social capital, and cultural capital (Useem & Karabel, 1986), as well as

inner-value capital and market value capital (Baruch et al., 2005). This expansion in

individual capital shares core elements with more recent concepts aimed at understanding

graduate success.

The concept of employability has been simply defined as "the ability to keep the

job one has or to get the job one desires" (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007, p. 25). Prior studies

have emphasized the multi-dimensional concept of employability and incorporated

individual-specific concepts including career identity, adaptability, and social and human

capital (Fugate et al., 2004), in addition to skills and behaviors, market knowledge, social

networks, and resilience (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007; Rothwell, 2015; Vanhercke et al.,

2014). Many of these measures of employability, such as knowledge and skills, overlap

with the measures of human capital theory. Tomlinson (2017) reaches further and defines

capitals as "key resources that confer benefits and advantages onto graduates" (p. 339)

and employability constitutes a range of these resources. Tomlinson (2017) also includes

various forms of capital including human capital, social capital, cultural capital, identity

capital, and psychological capital within employability.

The concept of career success also overlaps with human capital theory in that it is

an outcome measure of human capital, but it also shares the same outputs. In relation to

graduate degree attainment, measures of career success focus on the outputs of salary

increase or promotion (Hay & Hodgkinson, 2006). These external measures, much like in

human capital theory, when evaluated alone do not present the full picture of graduate

outcomes and limit understanding the multifaceted ways in which graduates define their

success. This theoretical framework, made up of human capital theory and the related concepts of career success and employability, allowed me to examine specific variables of career outcomes and perceptions of DRCM alumni, as well as assisted in coding and thematic analysis of the qualitative data.

Research Design and Methods

An explanatory sequential mixed methods study (QUAN → qual = explanation) was most appropriate for this study as it provided the most insight into the changing careers, fields, and positions that DRCM graduate students chose after graduation. According to Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), the intent for an explanatory sequential mixed methods study includes using the secondary qualitative phase to explain the results from the quantitative phase, as well as provide information for sampling (p. 77). Due to the nature of the problem and the need to examine and explain multiple graduate outcomes in-depth across the field, I identified three dispute resolution and conflict management (DRCM) graduate programs at private universities not connected to law schools as the research sites for the study. Due to changing priorities within the individual programs, one research site, Lipscomb University (LU), withdrew from the study prior to the quantitative data collection phase, resulting in the final two research sites (ACU and SMU). Data collected in the study included a diverse pool (age, graduation year, ethnicity, and gender) of alumni participants through surveys and interviews.

Given that no published research exists on non-attorney DRCM professions post-graduation, survey data and interviews served as the primary data in sequential order. For the initial quantitative phase, I modified a previously used survey with permission

(Buunaaisie et al., 2018) to incorporate foundations of human capital theory and details from the education and profession of DRCM. In addition, I added scale instruments for self-perceived employability, subjective career success, and professional commitment from a previous study with permission (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Data analysis in the quantitative phase included summarizing the data, conducting descriptive statistics, and completing inferential statistical tests to analyze differences between groups. After reviewing the quantitative results, I interviewed a criterion-based and extreme-case, purposive sample of the quantitative participants to further explain the quantitative survey results. Data analysis in the qualitative phase included organizing the data and transcribing the data from the interviews, coding the data to allow for emerging, universal codes to themes, and finally recording the themes for interpretation. I conducted the study in a sequential approach that integrated the two phases of the study at two key points in the study. The first integration point occurred after the quantitative phase to identify the sampling for the secondary qualitative phase. The second point of integration occurred at the conclusion of the study when I analyzed and discussed the two sets of results together.

Definition of Key Terms

One of the consistent issues with any research conducted in the peace and conflict studies field is the agreement on terms and definitions. The peace and conflict studies field contains multiple theories, processes, and skills that fall into the following broad definitions used by scholar-practitioners.

Alternative dispute resolution: Alternative dispute resolution (ADR) is any method used to resolve disputes rather than, or in addition to, moving disputes through the court

system. These methods include facilitation, negotiation, mediation, and arbitration, as well as hybrid models. ADR also refers more generally to non-legal means of resolving problems, disputes, and change between individuals, within organizations, and between organizations.

Career outcomes: I used the framework from the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) First-Destination Survey Task Force (2015) when addressing career outcomes. Specifically, career outcomes relate to the primary post-graduation activity, including activities such as employment, seeking employment, continuing education, seeking continuing education, military service, and volunteer service. The study continued into more depth to include industry and role.

Conflict management: Conflict management (CM) refers to processes of preventing, engaging, and resolving conflict. Raines (2020) defined conflict management as the "systematic prevention of unproductive conflict and proactively addressing those conflicts which cannot be prevented" (p. 377). For the purposes of this study, conflict management also included conflict engagement and conflict transformation.

Conflict resolution: According to Zelizer (2013), scholars in the field debate over the definition of conflict resolution (CR). In this study, I considered two overarching definitions of conflict resolution. The first includes "a set of conflict theories, skills (communication, listening), and specific processes of intervention, such as negotiation, mediation, dialogue, facilitation, and related applications that focus on ending conflict" (Zelizer, 2013, p. 319). Alternatively, conflict resolution refers to methods of resolving multiple disputes that contribute to a more significant problem or conflict.

Dispute resolution: In the context of this study, dispute resolution (DR) is as any process that resolves a single argument, problem, or dispute. Coltri (2010) defines dispute resolution as "the methods that people use in an effort to resolve interpersonal conflicts" (p. 1). Many arguments, problems, or single disputes deal with interpersonal conflicts, but not all.

Peace and conflict studies: Peace and conflict studies describe the formal education in the areas of ADR, CM, and peacebuilding. Standard courses and themes include conflict analysis, conflict diagnosis, conflict coaching, restorative practices, and peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding: According to Zelizer (2013), peacebuilding "focuses on transforming relationships and structures in society to decrease the likelihood of future conflicts" (p. 320).

Soft skills: For this study, soft skills refer to non-technical skills required for success in the workplace and society including "positive attitude, assertive communication, analytical and logical thinking, presentation skills, understanding group dynamics, and resolving conflict and leadership skills" (Sharma, 2018, p. 26).

Conclusion

Graduate students from master's programs are more likely to shoulder the majority of student loan debt in the United States (Pyne & Grodsky, 2018). In order to give students the best chance at meaningful and sustainable work, graduate programs need to understand the various careers and professions in which students find employment (Zelizer, 2015). While the U.S. Department of Labor (2019) found that occupational outlook for mediators, arbitrators, and conciliators will increase in the next

10 years, not all graduates of ADR programs move into these positions (Velikonja, 2009). This study explored the specific career outcomes and placements of alumni from two DRCM graduate programs, in addition to the alumni perceptions as it relates to career outcomes, curriculum, and student success.

The following chapter reviewed the literature about the broad state of the PCS field, curriculum and instruction used by the CR discipline, followed by the specific need and importance of closing the gap between education and career for graduate programs in PCS. Chapter Two incorporated the theoretical framework of human capital theory as it related to PCS, educational practices, and career outcomes, as well as best practices from related fields.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

Graduate programs in peace and conflict studies (PCS) deliver knowledge and skills that prepare students for addressing and resolving conflicts resulting from a changing world, yet students also develop highly marketable soft skills. Chapter One clarified the need to explore the career outcomes and job placements of PCS alumni to address the rising concerns of value and return on investment in graduate education. While most colleges and universities conduct exit surveys on student job placement, internships, and expected salary, it is difficult to translate that information to individual programs. Moreover, programs that do collect graduate outcomes may only collect anecdotal evidence of career success, only survey their graduates at graduation, or survey their students once more after a designated period. This chapter first provided a broad overview of the PCS field to situate the need for this study within the current progress in the field. Second, the chapter explored the literature on the educational and employment value that allows for generalizable career paths. Third, based on the theoretical framework of human capital theory, the chapter highlighted the importance of understanding and exploring the career outcomes in related fields to argue for closing the gap between education and practice.

State of the Peace and Conflict Studies Field

Conflict has existed as long as humans have gathered, yet the structured skills, intervention methods, and formal educational practices remain a recent development. The creation of these skills and methods did not occur all at once, nor did the studies emerge in isolation. Multiple scholars from different fields contributed theories and areas of practice and skill to develop what became known as the PCS field (Katz, 1989; Polkinghorn et al., 2008; Zelizer, 2015). In a review of graduate-level programs in the United States, Polkinghorn et al. (2008) determined that the field consists of three disciplines of theory development and field of practice: peace studies (PS), conflict resolution (CR), and alternative dispute resolution (ADR). As the field is still relatively young, it was critical to situate this study within the current state of the PCS field in order to fully understand the gap addressed and the directions for the future.

Early Beginnings

Peace studies developed out of the need to understand international armed conflicts in order to prevent them in the future. Many scholars contributed to the early developments on international peace, including political science, sociology, psychology, and economics, to name a few (Polkinghorn et al., 2008; Zelizer, 2015). Peace studies courses and later full programs emerged after World War II in an effort to better understand the causes of international conflicts, decision-making, and negotiation as it related to armed conflict. The first course in peace studies originated in 1948 at a small liberal arts college in Indiana (Drago, 2012). At first, these programs surfaced as stand-alone courses, offered in conjunction with other disciplines, sometimes using the faculty from other departments to deliver them within the coursework. As individual programs

developed, scholars saw the need for practical application coursework to complement growing peace theories.

Following established peace programs, CR programs began as stand-alone programs emphasizing heavy practical application compared to the theory-rich peace studies programs. The first graduate program in CR began at George Mason University in 1981 (Wing & Rainey, 2012). Polkinghorn et al. (2008) noted that "CR programs differ significantly from the earlier PS programs. Generally speaking, the primary difference is CR's mix of practice experience, skill-building, and theory, as compared to PS's almost exclusive focus on theory and research" (p. 241). Early development of these two disciplines in the PCS field included criticism from traditional scholars due to the lack of theory creation and development, and original coursework or degree programs (Polkinghorn et al., 2008; Wing & Rainey, 2012).

ADR found its beginnings as various practitioners addressed issues in the field of practice, for example, community relations issues through community mediation centers (Velikonja, 2009) or negotiation and mediation methods of dealing with labor strikes. ADR focused primarily on intervention methods and skills-based courses. Over time, law schools noticed the benefit of alternative methods to litigation and began to offer coursework in ADR. The three discipline areas tend to overlap in their theory and curricular development. For example, PS programs commonly incorporate conflict management and nonviolent lifestyles approaches (Drago, 2012). On the other hand, almost every ADR, CR, and PS program incorporates a skills-based or intervention course, most likely mediation or negotiation (Polkinghorn et al., 2008).

In describing the history of the field, Polkinghorn et al. (2008) used the analogy of waves to track the developmental trends that moved the field along to what scholars, practitioners, and students know today. The authors identified three significant changes that constituted the waves and subsequently created new waves. The three changes that the authors found that initiated new waves included increases in academic program development, creation of new theory or establishing new research journals, and a rise in professional associations (Polkinghorn et al., 2008). The most recent wave, wave four, included developments in scholarly journals, increases in graduate programs, and new fields of practice.

A review of the literature found that these developments included new delivery formats of graduate education, specifically online education, increasing multidisciplinary research (dignity, human rights, leadership, and reconciliation), and increasing employment value as evidenced by expanding areas of practice (environmental, healthcare, educational, and restorative justice). While changes in armed conflict or social issues initiated developments in the field, a new wave of development could be argued due to changes in social conditions, for example, the rise of the internet and social media, and economic forces such as the Great Recession. While there exists evidence of a new wave of development in the PCS field, a critical element not yet explored in research is the placement of students exiting these PCS graduate programs. This study filled this gap in the literature and explored the areas of practice and employment of alumni from graduate programs in the field.

Multidisciplinary Foundations

Early founders of the PCS field focused on theories that explained behaviors followed by theories that contributed to processes. The field emerged from a combination of fields, theories, and minor tracks of study, and has remained committed to the multidisciplinary approach through new developments in the field. Theories such as positive and negative peace by Johan Galtung and John Paul Lederach's integrated framework for peacebuilding (Lederach, 1997) focused on integrating concepts and incorporating human conditions, as well as structural issues. Other developments by scholars, such as the theory of cooperation and competition by Morton Deutsch, focused on individual behavior and actions by people in each situation (Deutsch, 2014).

Multidisciplinary scholars continue to add to the practice of PCS in more integrated ways. While current education in the PCS field relies on the foundations of the multidisciplinary theories developed in the first and second waves, the current context of the multidisciplinary field relates to the areas of practice and context. These developments address the nature of a fifth wave of development for conflict and peace studies as a stand-alone field.

Emerging Trends

In further support of the fifth wave of development in PCS, theories and research development have continued, specifically in the area of emerging fields of practice. Online dispute resolution theory has developed with the rise of the internet, and cross-border transactions have become the norm. New methods were needed to address the technological rise of online disputes and the rise of transactions across borders. As most theoretical foundations in PS, CR, and ADR centered around face-to-face

communication, a new theory, virtual interaction theory, was needed to explain the rise of the phenomenon and provide skills for practitioners (Wing & Rainey, 2012).

Since the last wave of development, other trends have emerged, including the integration and implementation of PCS with other disciplines and professions. Many recognize that the education field has incorporated PS, CR, and ADR foundations in a variety of ways through peer mediation, peace curriculum, and restorative practices. Medical malpractice and healthcare conflict increases have led to the call for CR training for healthcare professionals (Cochran et al., 2018; Zweibel et al., 2008) and the use of mediation and reconciliation for medical malpractice disputes (Szmania et al., 2008). These developments are important to note as they open new fields of practice and integration for students in the field.

As Polkinghorn et al. (2008) established the description of waves of development, the review of the literature suggests that the PCS field is now in a new fifth wave of development. As the field becomes more connected to other disciplines, a critical component that is missing is a study on graduate outcomes from these programs. The preceding discussion revealed the literature surrounding the general context of the PCS field in which this study addresses a substantial gap that has been missing from the development of the field from its inception. The following discussion illustrates the foundations of curriculum and instruction in PCS and the employment benefit for students. Critically analyzing the research on diverse curriculum and instructional practices allowed for connections between the earlier developments in the field while exploring the practice of graduates in the field.

Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and instruction in higher education seek to deliver relevant education, develop skills, and increase student achievement in the classroom and beyond. As noted in the development of the PCS field, curriculum and instruction developed differently in the three different disciplines, yet ADR, CR, and PS have since developed more integrated teaching and learning practices that blend theory and practice as related to the field as a whole. Graduate programs and scholars in the field note the difficulties in critically discussing the trends and needs in the field due to the multidisciplinary foundations, use of different terms, creation of different courses, and application of different approaches. This section highlights the trends in curriculum and instruction that are common across the disciplines and other relevant areas of practice.

Themes Across the Curriculum

Across the field, there are common themes as to the curriculum that students receive in their degree programs. In their landmark study, Polkinghorn et al. (2008) examined the similarities and differences in graduate education across the PCS field. The authors surveyed 94 graduate programs and found five common curriculum themes: practice, theory, process, research, and specialization (p. 251). Of note, 66% of the programs surveyed offered field or practicum work, 78% of programs offered theory courses, and 85% offered process or intervention courses, such as mediation or negotiation. While concentrations and tracks of study differ from program to program, the authors found that most graduate programs in PCS offered specializations related to intervention methods, unique settings, or issue-specific topics. Figure 2.1 illustrates the full spectrum of conflict prevention, management, and resolution methods and their

connections across methods (Assefa, 2001). In the 13 years since Polkinghorn et al.'s

(2008) study, graduate programs continue to offer theory courses, evaluation and process

courses, and a strong emphasis on practicum, internships, or field studies.
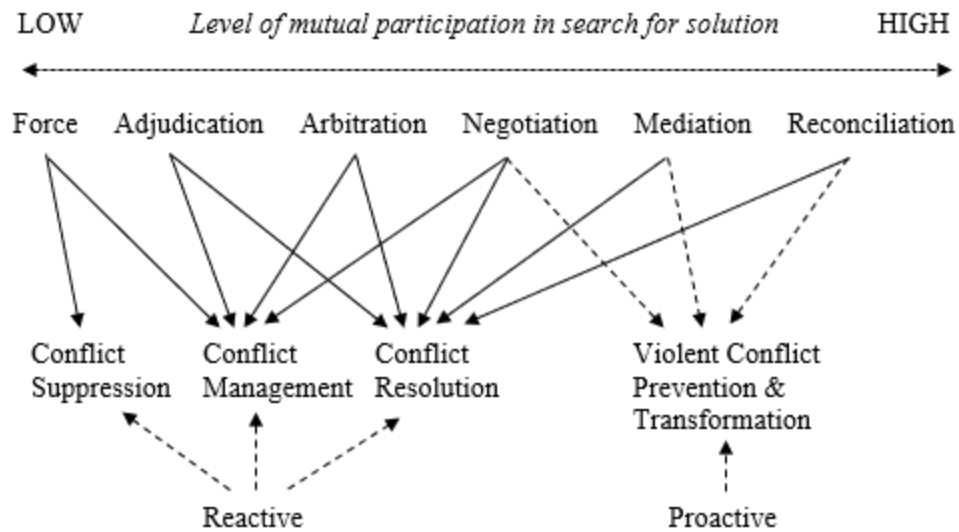
Figure 2.1. Spectrum of conflict handling mechanisms.

Note: Adapted from "Reconciliation," by Hizkias Assefa, 2001, In Peacebuilding: A
Field Guide, edited by Luc Reychler & Thania Paffenholz, p. 336. Copyright © 2001 by
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In an empirical analysis of pedagogical practices in peace studies, Haavelsrud and

Stenberg (2012) reported that across 11 recent articles, three common themes emerged

between content, form, and contextual conditions in the teaching of peace education. The

authors found issue-based content, form-dependent content, and pre-determined content.

Issue-based encompassed issue orientation, for example, human rights issues in relation

to societal problems like police violence, or intervention methods such as reconciliation

or peacebuilding. The authors found form-dependent content related to the type of

learning, such as problem-oriented, modeling, and experiential. Pre-determined learning,

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the authors found, was pre-determined skills or interventions embedded in the curriculum and learned through modeling.

Regarding the form of peace pedagogies, the analysis concluded that peace education either used actively controlled participation (experiential learning, modeling, or active participation) or weakly controlled participation (experiential learning, conscientization, and mindfulness; Haavelsrud & Stenberg, 2012). The authors also acknowledged the importance of context and the interconnectedness of the individual to the context. These three sections mirror the content in ADR, PS, and CR programs found by Polkinghorn et al. (2008).

In a study of the program assessment of the University of Baltimore's Negotiation and Conflict Management graduate program, Windmueller et al. (2009) reported on the development of overarching competencies for master's students in the field. These competencies included the analysis of conflict, constructive methods of managing and resolving conflict, use and contribution to research, and the development of professional practices in the field (Windmueller et al., 2009, p. 291). Similarly, Fitzduff (2006) drafted core competencies for graduate programs within four areas: core knowledge competencies, core skill competencies, specialist competencies, and a fourth competency based on shared values of the work. Fitzduff (2006) details core knowledge competencies including understanding, identification, and analysis of the various contributing structural and group theories, needs, intervention options, stakeholder roles, and cultural and ethical considerations, for example. On the other hand, core skill competencies include the assessment of conflicts, design of interventions, monitoring and evaluation, and conflict management skills to name a few.

Graduates of PCS programs acquire knowledge of conflict, change, and

collaboration, as well as unique skill sets that allow them to address the related micro and

macro issues. A recent contribution from Mayer (2012) conceptualized the theoretical

foundations from multiple theories in PCS. Across graduate programs in the field and

specialization courses, students analyze problems, conflicts, and potential interventions

based on a variety of contexts from human needs, historical backgrounds, structures, and

data, to name a few. The ability to view issues and problems from multiple lenses is an

employable quality regardless of the industry or position.
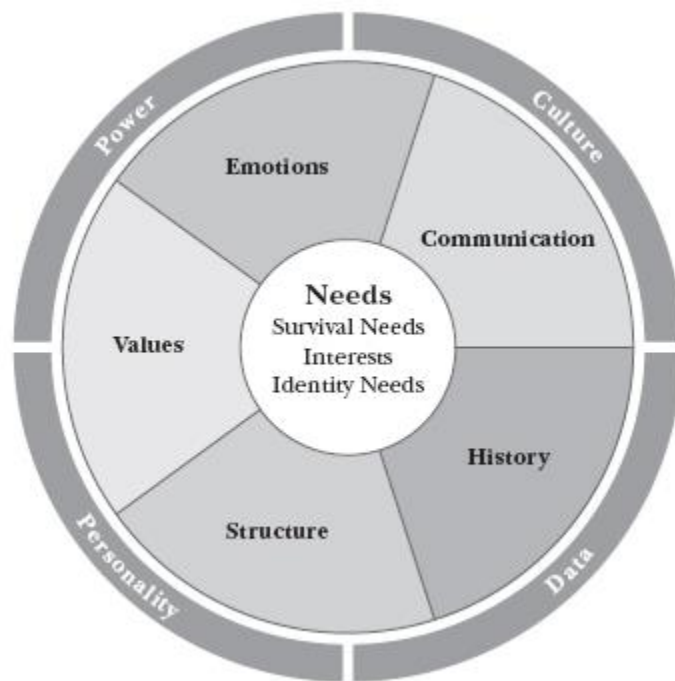
Figure 2.2. The wheel of conflict (Mayer, 2012, p. 10).

Note: From "The Dynamics of Conflict: A Guide to Engagement and Intervention, 2nd
Edition" by Bernard Mayer, 2012, p. 10. Copyright © 2012 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
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Instructional Practices

Instructional practices for peace and conflict studies focus on integration from a variety of theories and models, though not explicitly stated in the research. Research on the instructional practices in PCS includes introducing peace studies or conflict management education in K–12 settings and adult training recommendations for mediation training, negotiation training, or conflict management in various settings, such as healthcare. Recent developments in graduate program administration, such as online courses and internship partnerships have expanded the research on instructional practices within PCS coursework, specifically in negotiation and mediation courses.

One instructional practice commonly addressed in conflict and peace studies teaching is experiential learning. Experiential learning provides the opportunity for students to observe, model, and practice the skills in and out of the classroom (McLeod, 2017). In a recent analysis, Zelizer (2015) found that "simulations inside or outside classes that allow students to experience the challenges of conflict resolution, practice skills, and debrief in a reflective environment have proven to be increasingly beneficial" (p. 598). This circular motion from class concepts, to experimentation, to developing concrete experiences, to reflection is mirrored by Kolb's experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984; Kolb & Fry, 1975). In a literature review of mediation training, Hedeen et al. (2010) found evidence of the cyclical approach to learning experiences within mediation training and the use of multimedia, role-plays and simulations, and reflection.

In addition to mediation training and education, experiential learning in the form of role-plays, simulations, exercises, and reflection also dominate negotiation courses. In a study of negotiation pedagogy, Fortgang (2000) surveyed and interviewed faculty from four different schools and disciplines engaged in teaching negotiation and found that,

regardless of the discipline area, exercises and simulations, as well as reflective journals were the most heavily used teaching methods used in negotiation courses. Not all negotiation exercises or experiential learning activities are created equal, however. Negotiation scholars find that effective exercises and simulations are designed and implemented with the goal clearly articulated and the focus centered on implementation and applying (or transferring) the lessons to real-world contexts (McAdoo & Manwaring, 2009). Research on negotiation role-plays and simulations also finds three common elements in role-play design that aid with implementation, engagement, and interest, specifically the level of realism or authenticity, the amount of situational or contextual interest, and the use of authentic emotions (Crampton & Manwaring, 2019; Poitras, 2013). In addition to these elements, scholars also note the importance of tying role-play simulations to adult learning theory in order to be responsive and flexible to the needs of the learner to create the level of engagement needed for effective role-plays and experiential learning (Nelken, 2009).

Walsh (2019) provided an overview of the current pedagogy and learning theories used in the development of mediation courses and role-play simulations with the additional aim of identifying pedagogy and theories that could be used in teaching mediation courses online. Walsh (2019) also noted that increasing demand for online learning, as well as demand for mediation standards, heightens the need for pedagogy and learning theories to support mediation course development. In a review of mediation coursework across multiple levels and platforms, the author found that mediation instructors received no training in teaching and learning principles and that many organizations and departments replicated mediation courses online without specific

attention to the online environment. The author also reviewed research on mediation teaching. While limited research existed, Walsh (2019) also found that mediation courses commonly relied on experiential learning and reflective learning, with the most successful courses breaking apart larger role-plays to provide specific feedback.

Rothman (2014) demonstrated the need for reflexive pedagogy in the teaching of PCS to develop critical thinking skills and understanding of conflict responses in different scenarios. Most of the field utilizes a variety of teaching strategies to engage students in the classroom, such as simulations, presentations, and journals; however, reflexive practice offers benefits as well (Rothman, 2014). The author noted that when instructors used reflexive pedagogy in CR courses it promoted engagement, self-empowerment, metacognition skills, such as self-awareness, and modeling in the learning experience (Rothman, 2014). Specifically, Rothman (2014) stated that, "learning to see yourself seeing and understand how you filter information through your own cognitive, experiential, and cultural lenses is a powerful tool in life, learning, and conflict analysis and intervention" (p. 112). In applying reflexive pedagogy, Rothman (2014) applied the concepts through the use of reflexive journals, teacher-student engagement, and in simulations. In a review of peace education, Cunliffe (2017) also supported reflective practice and the development of communities of practice to assist students in making sense of learning experiences such as field experience or practicum.

Programs, courses, and faculty also employ social learning theory, as most students in PCS are adult learners that are learning in social contexts in the classroom from an expert (Bandura, 1971). Conflict happens at a human level and so do resolutions. Students practice these skills and learn from one another in class. In addition, once

students complete their degree programs, students model social learning theory with mediation clients, teams, and coworkers in both conflict management and resolution processes and daily interactions. Utilizing social learning theory within the classroom models, in some small part, what graduates encounter in the field and how to improve human interactions.

Germain-Thomas et al. (2019) assessed the impact on student learning when using an innovative simulated role-play that blended student design and external partnerships in order to reinforce negotiation concepts and practice. The authors integrated negotiation skill development, role-play design, and internship mentorship into the culminating role-play simulation in the advanced negotiation course. At the conclusion of the culminating simulation, the authors separated the students into eight qualitative focus groups, each lasting 45 minutes to discuss their understanding of the negotiation concepts, personal learning, and overall impression of the simulation. The students reported themes including value as it relates to career-training and real-life examples, increased challenge and motivation to perform, importance of peer feedback, and improved understanding of concepts (Germain-Thomas et al., 2019). In a final analysis, the authors also found an improvement in final course grades in the course with the collaborative role-play design compared to the previous year's course with no simulation revisions.

Curriculum and instruction contribute to the knowledge and skills development needed for professional practice in PCS, yet the skills learned have a further impact on students. Conflict and peace studies programs benefit from connecting the coursework from the program with employable knowledge and skills. The following section demonstrated the knowledge and skills that experts have found to be important for the

work in the field, as well as the practitioner. Finally, the skills learned mirror employable soft skills that employers want allowing for a stronger connection between education, skills, and practice.

<center>*Employment Value*</center>

As the previous sections noted, graduate programs in PCS provide diverse coursework with common themes related to theories of conflict and peace, underpinnings of conflict and peace dynamics, interventions, and methods. While this education has value directly connected to addressing specific scenarios related to resolving conflicts and disputes, it can be hard to see the generalizable value of the graduate education beyond these situations. Additionally, Windmueller et al. (2009) reported that most graduates of these programs do not intend to work in conflict-specific careers, making the case that even for generalizability, students need to understand the knowledge and skills within their program of study in order to communicate benefits to employers. Cunliffe (2017) reported similar findings in evaluating undergraduate and graduate students and courses for a conflict resolution program. This section critically examined the research on the employment value of graduate education in PCS through the lenses of the knowledge and skills practiced, the range of benefits attributed to those skills, and the practice of professionals in the field.

Knowledge and Skills

While previous research reported common curriculum themes, graduate programs differ on the exact coursework and skills delivered and thus, research on the core competencies of CR practice remains limited. Windmueller et al. (2009) reinforced this issue in a case study of the University of Baltimore's Negotiation and Conflict

<center>28</center>

Management program. The authors reported on the self-study process of the program to review the program curriculum, knowledge, and skills to inform program competencies in graduate PCS education. The competencies included:

> The ability to understand and analyze conflict, the ability to understand and take constructive steps in managing or resolving conflict, the ability to locate, evaluate, use and contribute to research-based knowledge in the field, and the ability to place oneself within the developing conflict management field. (Windmueller et al., 2009, p. 291)

Although not explicitly stated with the identified competencies, the authors also noted reflection as a key component of PCS education. While these competencies do not exist across all graduate programs or the field, these competencies are reinforced by similar needs for specific knowledge and skills when considering the additional research in professional roles and practice areas, such as healthcare. Recent studies in conflict management competencies in healthcare included a focus on communication skills, self-awareness skills, and knowledge in methods or processes (Cochran et al., 2018). This collection of knowledge and skills is valuable in addressing conflict and disputes at varying levels in society and in different contexts.

Other experts and scholars noted that to work in and around peace studies negotiators and mediators needed to work on competencies of trust and respect. "Fostering this image requires diplomatic skills, training, persistence, and the patience to hear and understand the voices of all parties in conflict" (Georgetown University, 2012, p. 18). The report, conducted by undergraduate students at Georgetown University, revealed similar themes across the field, such as patience, listening, and humility. Also, the report noted areas of disagreement among experts related to issues of bias, neutrality, and impartiality and the degree to which a professional operates.

Professionals in the conflict and peace studies field also reported personal benefits to training and education in mediation and CR practices. One study focused on the expert experiences of CR professionals in relation to intractable conflicts, those conflicts with significant and ingrained barriers to resolution. The Beyond Intractability Project, reported by Portilla (2006), documented information from sixty experts and found common themes in the areas of practice skills. These included the development and use of listening skills, humility, and patience. These skills also appear in specific roles. Seeking to fill a knowledge gap on how mediation specifically changes the mediator or peace worker, Raines (2018) interviewed 12 experts in the PCS field working in mediation. Similar to Portilla's finding, Raines (2018) reported that the participants believed that the peace work had contributed to communication skills, patience, and consciousness in both their practice and within the participants. Finally, additional scholars have noted the importance and benefits of specific skills. A recent study of 53 volunteer mediators found that addressing the need to relate with others was essential in preventing burnout (Harmon-Darrow & Xu, 2018). In conflict transformation work, Friedman et al. (2018) found that expressing and reframing emotions through dialogue and reflexive writing allowed for the improvement of relationships and the transformation of conflict in a research seminar composed of Jewish and Palestinian Arab students.

Formal education in PCS also includes benefits in the form of generalizable soft skills. Recent developments in the United States workforce have called for more students with soft skill development, rather than hard or technical skills. As the nature of work continues to evolve and change at a rapid pace, learning soft skills ensures that students

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thrive in the new economies. Also, many companies are now looking for candidates with soft skills that will contribute to business success. In a recent article, Clarke (2016) stated that "these [soft] skills are important transferable skills that people can use in a variety of job roles and personal qualities and attitudes that help them work with others and make a positive contribution to a business" (p. 137). Specifically, Sharma (2018) presented the soft skills that employers expect including "positive attitude, assertive communication, analytical and logical thinking, presentation skills, understanding group dynamics, and resolving conflict and leadership skills" (p. 26). The skill development in graduate programs in peace studies, CR, and ADR provides students with these skills and makes them marketable for work in general.

Knowledge and skills obtained in PCS also overlap with soft skills that have general employment value. The most prominent of these skills include listening skills, reframing skills, dialogue skills, communication skills, and relating to others. In a recent study, Malizia and Jameson (2018) revealed significant benefits to participants of mediation training due to the overlap of social-emotional learning competencies, including self-management, self-awareness, and relationship skills (p. 304). The authors also found practices such as mindfulness to parallel reflective practice in mediation, as well as reap the same benefits for the mediator, including self-regulation and empathy.

Conflict management and resolution skills have the potential to lead to other desirable employment skills as well. In a study of 320 Nigerian public servants that survived a mass layoff, Salami (2010) found that CR strategies, such as compromising, confronting, and smoothing conflict, when moderated by the participant's trait of emotional intelligence, predicted Organizational Citizenship Behavior. In contrast,

deconstructive methods of conflict, such as withdrawing and forcing, did not produce

Organizational Citizenship Behavior. Competency in constructive conflict engagement,

management, and resolution strategies takes time and education or training; however,

Salami (2010) recommended a training protocol for the supervisors in order to adopt

appropriate conflict strategies. As the nature of work has changed from more technical

work to increasingly interpersonal, complex, and at times, stressful work, conflict

management and resolution skills benefit employers.

Professionals in Practice

When looking specifically at the employability of professional mediators in

practice, studies reported differences between groups and differences that are heavily

influenced by the market. Velikonja (2009) conducted an economic analysis of mediation

exploring the professions of successful private mediators. The author conducted

interviews with 10 expert mediators combined with contextual data from public sources

and professional organizations and found three areas of work for mediators: volunteer

(unpaid) mediation in community mediation centers, salaried mediation positions, and

private practice. The author found income disparities in salaried positions; for example,

governmental mediators average salaries range from $56,580 in local government to

$109,490 in federal positions (Velikonja, 2009, p. 265). Further, the author found uneven

fee rates in private practice, specifically between the top 5% of mediators and the other

95%. In examining the economic conditions contributing to the disparities in income,

Velikonja (2009) concluded that conditions such as mediator oversupply, low barriers to

professional entry, and status barriers to obtaining mediation-specific work created a

"winner-take-all-market" (p. 290). This study echoed a similar finding by Rubinson

(2016) in that socioeconomic conditions of the participants can reduce the use of mediation, limit the model of mediation conducted, and restrict the choice of a preferred mediator.

While the skills and models learned remain valuable to professionals in the field, barriers exist for alumni and other professionals to enter the field. One example included the socioeconomic conditions previously detailed by Rubinson (2016). The findings from Velikonja (2009) and Rubinson (2016) illustrate that these barriers and limitations inadvertently promoted the work of attorney-mediators, as well as the preferred model of attorney-mediation, evaluative mediation. Other studies reported on the disagreement between the appropriate background for professionals in the field, for example a legal background over conflict management, communication, or psychology (Raines, 2018). Both barriers open the door for individuals to enter the career field with no formal training or training that could undermine the development of professional regulations and ethics.

In a review of literature on professional mediator skills and traits, Wilson and Irvine (2014) concluded that due to the state of ADR and mediation regulation and education, common traits are hard to find in the literature. This lack of common identifiable traits was due to several factors including the diverse educational and professional backgrounds of mediators, discrepancies in formal training, inability to observe skills used, and terminology. Wilson and Irvine (2014) were able to generalize about the nature of what draws mediators to the field, specifically, the authors found two groups: self-selecting, based on experience, education, or personal characteristics, and recognition-based due to community status, social standing, or eldership (p. 5).

In conclusion, the peace and conflict field offers the development of skills that are specifically applicable to employment in the field and broadly beneficial professionally and personally, but gaps still exist in the reporting of career outcomes of students who graduate from PCS programs. Research on the skills and practice surrounding mediation and other CR methods specifically demonstrated value to established professionals and experts, yet no research exists on the value of degree programs for those educated at the graduate level, either working in the field or in related areas. While programs offer diverse learning experiences and deliver employable skills, the lack of career information on alumni threatens the quality of programs and the ability to determine the skill needed for practice. The following section discussed this career gap in the literature and explored the recommendations from scholars and best practices from other disciplines.

Closing the Gap Between Graduate Studies and Career Outcomes

Universities and colleges remain invested in the career outcomes and job placement rates of their students after graduation. While previous studies recognized the essential skills, competencies, and practice of mediation and other dispute resolution methods, a consistent gap exists in the literature regarding graduate education and career outcomes in PCS. Windmueller et al. (2009) explained that "the existing gap between graduate education and professional conflict management practice undermines the quality of graduate PCS programs and leaves programs unable to ensure that their graduates have high levels of skills in conflict management practice" (p. 294). While Windmueller et al. (2009) expressed the need to explore and close the education to career gap, PCS graduate programs are not alone in this endeavor. The following section addressed the current

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challenges specific to the PCS field and lessons learned from other graduate programs that have attempted to address the gap between formal education and career outcomes.

Current Challenges in Peace and Conflict Studies

A major challenge for closing the gap in the PCS field is the lack of regulatory bodies combined with the diverse areas for practice. Many professional organizations address specific issues of practice or professional standards, but there exists no single authority on the development standards of professionals or the practice of ADR, CR, or PS. As noted earlier, a contributing factor to the creation of new waves in the progress of the field is the creation of new professional organizations. While the organizations continue to increase, they also contribute to the increasing confusion of the scope of the field and related research initiatives, direction, and development. Multiple labor markets exist for mediation (Velikonja, 2009), CR services (Zelizer, 2015), and international conflict resolution and peacebuilding services (Zelizer, 2013) making a unified scope hard to define. Lederach and Mansfield (2010) attempted to provide a clearer picture of the various peacebuilding pathways supported by the core areas of strategic peacebuilding (Figure 2.3). As the field continues to develop and becomes more interconnected, other industries exist that may benefit from peace and conflict knowledge and skills.

Adding to the challenges, Bush and Bingham (2005) examined the knowledge and skills gap that exist in the study of CR. The scholars interviewed over 50 participants and included insights at the Hewett Foundation Theory Center conference, both of which included scholars and practitioners in the field of PCS. Of the 10 themes reported, the gap that is most important for this study was the disconnect between education and pedagogy.

The authors reported this in two ways, the connection between education and career opportunities in the field, and the skills training that is most useful to practitioners in the field (Bush & Bingham, 2005, p. 115). However, identifying career opportunities and skills needed is difficult without understanding alumni career outcomes. Both insights justify the need for understanding where students are finding professional work and the knowledge and skills that they find most useful. The following research identified key studies focused on alumni from other master's programs.
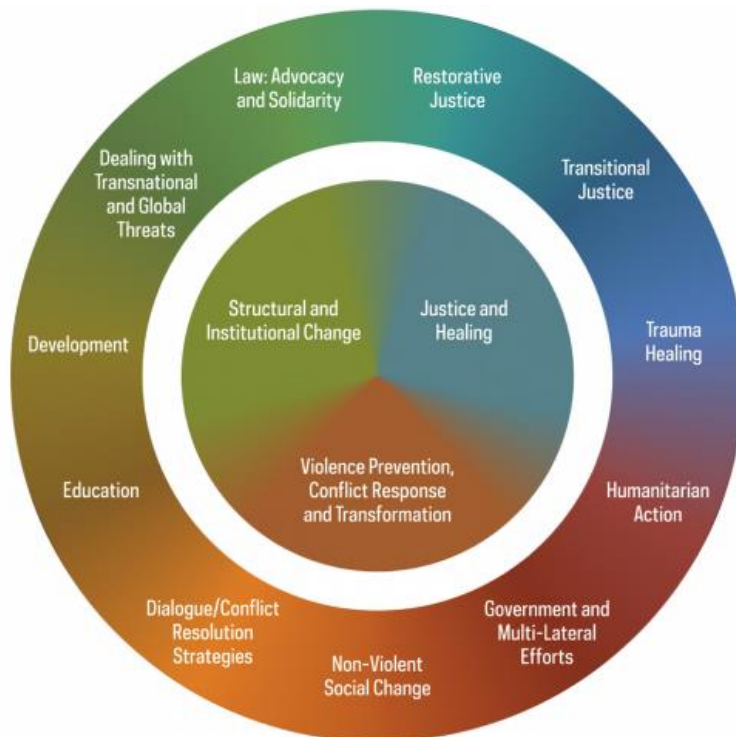
Figure 2.3. Strategic peacebuilding pathways.

Note: From "Strategic Peacebuilding Pathways" by John Paul Lederach and Katie Mansfield, 2010, Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame. Reprinted with permission.

Lessons from Other Master's Program

As previously mentioned, educational institutions face pressures from multiple stakeholders to report the outcomes from the degrees and programs they offer. National initiatives such as the College Scorecard, National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) First-Destination Outcomes Survey, Gainful Employment, and the Post-Collegiate Outcomes Framework offer guidance, but each initiative presents various challenges and limitations (Coughlin et al., 2016). To fill the gaps in needed research on graduate outcomes, some master's programs and disciplines initiated independent research on the value of their education. As such, graduate programs in PCS are not alone in the need to report on and build connections between education and career outcomes. Zelizer (2015) states:

> It is important to emphasize that this gap between academic programs and employers is not unique to the conflict resolution field. There is a growing debate and discussion about the role of higher education in training the next generation of professionals and the gap between academia and employment is prevalent in most disciplines. (p. 600)

A review of the literature from graduate programs that share some foundational theories and areas of practice proved useful for this study to fill similar gaps. The literature in this section aimed to provide a road map based primarily on master's programs in business, in addition to recreation and social work, through the lens of human capital theory to evaluate career success and employability. While not specific to career outcomes, the review of career literature from alternate master's programs demonstrated the use of career and practice knowledge related to the development of master's programs and curriculum.

A recent study by Buchanan et al. (2007) mapped the career motivations of master's students in social work (a helping field) and business (a leadership or

organizational field). These two student perspectives displayed two common notions of students entering ADR, CR, or PS programs. Many students either want to move into meaningful, helpful work (Raines, 2018; Zelizer, 2015) either in organizations or self-employment, or students want to improve the work within their current profession or organization. Both motivations were represented in the study of social work and business graduate students. Buchanan et al. (2007) found that social work students were more motivated by career aspirations and acquiring knowledge than business students who were more motivated by professional advancement. This study demonstrated a profound gap in the literature for the PCS field, specifically for ADR programs that lean toward CR (Polkinghorn et al., 2008), without the attachment to law programs. These programs lack the professional credential and field placement that typically accompanies law graduates. This study is needed to track and describe the professions, fields, and positions alumni explored after graduation.

Individuals are drawn to the work in the field due to its foundations as a helping profession, as well as the ability to affect change from individual to systemic levels (Raines, 2018). Other studies center on applicant's drive to apply to graduate programs in PCS and report that students search for meaningful work (Zelizer, 2015). These studies reflected a disconnect between how programs recruit students and design curriculum but have no formalized outcomes or goals for practice. The need to understand the specific career outcomes of graduate alumni and their relation to the specific field of their master's degree is just as urgent as understanding the experiences and motivations of students entering master's programs.

Due to the economic challenges faced after the Great Recession, many students need career outcomes and possible return on investment clearly articulated, as much as the educational outcomes from the degree or specific courses. Other graduate programs, such as Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs, research the value of the degree by reviewing the relationship between the students and alumni employment outcomes (Way et al., 2016). Gaining an MBA improves human capital across the individual, organizational, and societal levels (Baruch, 2009). MBA graduates also have an increased return on investment for the degree as long as the degree was the right fit in the beginning (Baruch, 2009).

Other disciplines have faced similar challenges in reporting career outcomes and the value of the master's degree. A recent study reported on the value of a master's degree to recreation professions through a survey of 197 recreation professionals (Hodge et al., 2012). The authors found that a master's degree did add value to a professional's salary, but the reported master's degrees were not all from the recreation field. In contrast, professionals with the recreation master's degree reported lower incomes than their non-recreation alumni peers. Similarly, for the PCS field, research conducted focuses on professionals and experts in the field, but no study exists on the career outcomes and satisfaction of ADR, CR, or PS graduate alumni. This study also echoed a similar finding from Windmueller et al. (2009) in which the majority of students intended to take the knowledge and skills learned in the program back to their original fields of study or disciplines.

Hodge et al. (2012) also found that some alternative recreation degree programs, such as the Master of Public Administration, incorporated coursework or specializations

in recreation. Integrating cross or parallel discipline concepts is a similar phenomenon with the PCS field. Born out of multiple disciplines, conflict coursework exists in numerous programs from business, law, sociology, and human rights, to name a few.

As PCS programs continue to develop and specialize, programs should be mindful of the value of specializations over general master's degrees. A lesson can be learned from both business programs, as well as other disciplines like recreation and leisure. Graduate programs in business offer numerous specializations, management, finance, and human resources, to name a few. The trend is similar in mediation in which successful mediators specialize in their practice in areas such as divorce, commercial, and environmental mediation (Velikonja, 2009, p. 261). Baruch et al. (2005) reported positive effects on salary and human capital of career outcomes regardless of general or specialized graduate business degree. One differentiating finding was that MBA alumni (general) applied competencies faster than specialists, but specialist MBA graduates developed more social capital through the development of specialized networks. As the PCS field continues to grow, expand, and develop specializations, programs need to understand the career outcomes of alumni in order to ensure active use of competencies learned, as well as develop essential networks for practice. In the PCS field, this means increasing opportunities for students to apply knowledge and concepts to current issues and problems, as well as search out internships or practical experience as part of their education.

In conclusion, research on the full picture of graduate programs and the field of PCS does not exist as they do not account for the variety of graduate career outcomes. Graduate programs face increased pressure to document goals for educational outcomes,

which include employment and career outcomes. Without capturing the experiences of students after graduation in their chosen fields and careers, research in conflict and peace studies will remain partially complete and further studies unavailable. The research surrounding closing the gap between one's education and career from other master's disciplines demonstrated the need for a robust study on the outcomes of students in PCS, specifically in ADR programs.

Conclusion

PCS graduate programs can elevate their profile by following the practices of business, social work, and recreation education, but the field needs a carefully studied assessment of how alumni in the field use their skills in the workplace and where they practice. While jobs in mediation, CR, and peacebuilding are increasing and are expected to continue to grow, there exists an opportunity to find work in fields and sectors that integrate or support the PCS field (Zelizer, 2015). Through the literature review, this chapter argued that given the state of the peace and conflict field and the employable nature of the knowledge and skills learned, a study of the outcomes of alumni from ADR programs was timely and critical. The literature review concluded with graduate program practices in reviewing specific alumni outcomes in the areas of placement, compensation, and value. Using the literature review, Chapter Three defined and explained the methodology of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction: Research Questions

The purpose of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study was to examine the career outcomes and perceptions of alumni from two graduate programs in dispute resolution and conflict management (DRCM). In light of the call for institutions to demonstrate employment outcomes and the lack of research on program-level career outcomes addressed in the previous chapter, this study filled a gap in specific career outcomes from graduate programs, specifically in the peace and conflict studies (PCS) field. National initiatives have attempted to standardize the collection of career data (Coughlin et al., 2016), such as the First-Destination Career Survey (National Association of Colleges and Employers First-Destination Survey Task Force, 2015), but institutional buy-in remains an issue. Furthermore, the PCS field has developed to a point, through increased program creation and development, and broadened skill and knowledge applicability, that exploring the career outcomes of the program graduates is a needed next step to connect education to practice. The current Problem of Practice focused on quantitative career outcome's data, and in-depth explanations of how alumni perceive those outcomes in relation to their graduate education.

In this explanatory sequential mixed methods study, I addressed three central questions, one for each phase of the mixed methods design, and one mixed methods question addressing the integration of the two methodologies. The quantitative question in the first phase was, "What are the career outcomes and differences between the alumni

of the two DRCM graduate programs?" The qualitative question examined in the second phase was, "How do alumni from the two DRCM graduate programs perceive their careers, education, and employability?" To address the integration of the two phases, the mixed methods question was, "How do the themes mentioned by graduate alumni from the two DRCM graduate programs in the qualitative phase help to explain the initial career outcome data from the quantitative phase?"

The following sections of this chapter detailed the research design and specific methods for this Problem of Practice. First, the chapter revealed my perspective and positionality by outlining my background and philosophical assumptions, then described the theoretical framework I chose to guide the study. Second, the chapter explained the research design and methodology for this Problem of Practice including the rationale for site selections, sampling, data collection, and data analysis. Third, the chapter explored the ethical considerations, as well as limitations and delimitations I addressed in this Problem of Practice.

Researcher Perspective and Positionality

This study followed a mixed methods research design in which researchers incorporate quantitative and qualitative methodologies in a single study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). As my personal development and background experiences influenced the structure of my study and how I collected data and analyzed results (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), I reviewed my philosophical assumptions. I examined my positionality in three primary ways, my axiological assumptions developed from my personal and professional experiences, my ontological beliefs acquired from my experience as an alumna and coaching alumni, and my epistemological foundations derived from my

personal relationships with adjuncts and alumni. These philosophical assumptions positioned me within this study and created a unique perspective with which I conducted this study.

My axiological assumptions derived from my earliest position as an office assistant at a university while completing my undergraduate studies. I valued student experiences and desired to support and celebrate their transition to alumni and professionals. In those early years, this included coordinating the commencement ceremonies, posting job opportunities, and supporting professional development workshops and events. Desiring a career as an educator, I spent my first half of my undergraduate career studying history with the dream of teaching high school but transitioned to an alternate career path through a minor in urban and public affairs. The study of community issues, in addition to communication strategies, interested me and connected to my passion for higher education.

After graduation, I transitioned to a new role as program coordinator at Southern Methodist University (SMU) in the Dispute Resolution Graduate Program. I promoted the graduate program through marketing and communication, coordinated the internship program, and mentored students in career development. In addition to my professional duties, SMU also offered the opportunity to study in the program. The ability to continue my study of community issues and communication strategies and also incorporate conflict intervention strategies was appealing. After two years, I completed both the Graduate Certificate and the Master's degree in dispute resolution.

As my role in the program advanced, my ontological beliefs evolved. I coordinated the entire student experience in the program from student recruitment to

alumni engagement and witnessed the multitude of student backgrounds and goals. I continued to face challenges in effectively coaching students for careers and documenting alumni success. While my experience in the master's program had a profound impact on my communication skills and how I approach problems and conflicts, I have personally experienced difficulties in applying for field-specific positions and demonstrating value of knowledge and skills learned with potential employers. After communicating with alumni, noting the lack of field-specific jobs, and researching the gap in career outcomes, I sought professional development in career coaching. In 2021, I completed the training for Facilitating Career Development offered by the National Career Development Association. While the training improved the career and mentor skills I provided to students, I still felt the gap in understanding the different careers alumni pursue after graduation.

Throughout these experiences, I maintained personal connections and professional relationships with alumni and adjuncts from SMU, which guided my epistemological foundation in the field. Adjunct instructors typically teach for more than one graduate program, which in the case of the SMU included adjuncts that also served as faculty or administrators, specifically at Abilene Christian University (ACU) and Lipscomb University (LU). While the personal connections with alumni and adjuncts represented a potential for bias, these connections also provided the opportunity to connect with alumni from multiple programs, encourage participation, and understand their career experiences.

As a result of my experiences, I have remained passionate about career services and diverse outcomes for the graduate students in my field. My hope for this study was to

collect and analyze the authentic career outcomes and perceptions of alumni in order for programs and the PCS field to construct better services and, eventually, additional career opportunities. My personal and professional circumstances developed my axiological, ontological, and epistemological assumptions that guided my research decisions to combine quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Specifically, I viewed reality and the real-world problems of employability and career success through multiple diverse perspectives. I examined the evidence of those perspectives through the use of integrated quantitative and qualitative methods that provided in-depth, robust results. My philosophical assumptions positioned me within the specific context and field for this study and created a unique lens needed to design and conduct this mixed methods study.

Theoretical Framework

This study used an a priori theoretical framework in the form of human capital theory and the related, overlapping concepts of employability and career success. Education research in the United States frequently turns to human capital theory to relate the costs of education with the benefits to the individual, employer, and society, as demonstrated by the focus on objective career outcomes (salary and job placement) to determine the value or return on investment for alumni. While the foundations and early concepts of human capital theory focused on economics around educational investments and financial returns (Sweetland, 1996), scholars have expanded the theory to include additional forms of individual human capital granted by education institutions. In addition, this study expanded the theory further through this theoretical framework by incorporating the related concepts of career success and employability, which share measures of capital, as well as outcome measures.

The theoretical framework presented here shaped my primary and secondary questions, and research design, by providing support for a broader concept of graduate outcomes than employment and salary alone. The expanding concepts of capital, career success, and employability in relation to human capital theory demonstrated the need for both quantitative (objective) career data, as well as qualitative (subjective) career data. The nature of the self-managed career, which has affected the concepts of capital, employability, and career success, also related to the subjective nature in which individuals think about their careers. This subjective, individual-focused foundations created the need for research questions that addressed both quantitative and qualitative questions in the study, as well as the development of a mixed methods research design.

Based on the combination of theory and existing research on human capital, employability, and career success, the theoretical framework provided a set of variables to examine the career outcomes of DRCM alumni across two graduate programs. In the quantitative phase, I created core survey items that addressed demographic variables, career variables relating to employment, achievements, and skills, and variables connected to the various forms of human capital within human capital theory. In addition, I used subjective career success and self-perceived employability scales to collect a measure of the related concepts to human capital theory. In the qualitative phase, the theoretical framework provided justification for the use of narrative data to explore diverse career experiences and perceptions (Hay & Hodgkinson, 2006). The theoretical framework guided the data analysis approach in the qualitative phase by guiding the coding and qualitative analysis. The multiple, overlapping descriptions of human capital

and employability provided a guide for reviewing interview transcripts and coding, as well as conducting thematic analysis.

Research Design and Rationale

In this study, I explored alumni career outcomes and perceptions of career success and employability from two DRCM graduate programs through combining quantitative data and qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). I employed the research design beginning with a quantitative cross-sectional survey to collect career outcomes and perceptions, and test for differences across the two programs (salary, perception of education and skills, and perceived employability, career success, and professional commitment) followed by qualitative interviews to explore the statistically significant results in more depth (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). In order to answer the research questions of outcomes and perceptions presented in this Problem of Practice, I found an explanatory sequential mixed methods study design (QUAN → qual = explanation) to be most appropriate.

The explanatory sequential mixed methods research design I employed consisted of two separate and defined phases, as well as specific points of integration between the two phases (Figure 3.1). In the first quantitative phase of this study, I distributed a web-based cross-sectional survey and collected demographic information, individual career data, and perception data from graduate alumni from 2011 to 2015 from two DRCM graduate programs at SMU and ACU to assess whether differences existed in the career outcomes and perceptions of career success and employability between the alumni of the two programs. Originally, I considered three DRCM graduate programs, but LU withdrew participation resulting in the final two programs mentioned above.

Phase	Procedure	Product
Phase I: QUANTITATIVE Data Collection	• Cross-sectional alumni career outcomes, web-based survey ($N = 392$)	• Numeric data (nominal, ordinal, and continuous variables) • Text data
Phase I: QUANTITATIVE Data Analysis	• Frequencies • Tests of difference between the programs ($n = 53$)	• Descriptive statistics • Inferential statistics
Case Identification and Selection through Purposive Sampling	• Purposive (criterion and extreme case) sampling from quantitative analysis	• Identified and selected cases for Phase II ($N = 4$)
Phase II: Qualitative Data Collection	• Individual interviews with selected alumni conducted via Zoom	• Qualitative data in text form
Phase II: Qualitative Data Analysis	• Coding interview text • Thematic analysis	• Themes • Categories, if present • Table diagram of cases
Integration of the Quantitative and Qualitative Results	• Summarize results • Integrate results • Discuss how qualitative interview data explains career survey data.	• Results • Discussion • Implications

Figure 3.1. Research diagram for explanatory sequential mixed methods design.

The quantitative data results provided an overarching view of career outcomes and identified differences between the programs. In addition, the quantitative data guided in identifying criterion-based, extreme cases that required additional explanation. While the quantitative survey data provided useful alumni career data, I conducted a secondary qualitative phase as a follow up to the quantitative results to help explain and provide more in-depth narrative to the quantitative results. In the second qualitative phase, I conducted interviews with four individual alumni cases to explore the perceptions of alumni in more depth, as well as explain significant results of career outcomes from the quantitative phase. I integrated the two phases at two key points, purposive sampling for the qualitative phase, and integrating the results at the conclusion of the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

I chose this explanatory sequential mixed methods research design as it related to my worldview, and aligned my intent of the study, research questions, and research design procedures. First, my worldview associated with this research problem centered on pragmatism due to the problem-centered nature and ability to be practice-oriented. Second, my intent of the study aligned with mixed methods foundations, specifically with explanatory sequential in that qualitative data explores and further explains quantitative data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Third, my research questions and procedures for this study lent themselves to mixed methods research. Institutions and professional associations typically collect quantitative data due to the need for reporting, while individual programs utilize more alumni testimonials due to the recruitment value of the narrative data. Both methods have value; however, conducting either a quantitative or a qualitative study proved insufficient to address the stated problem and purpose of

examining objective and subjective measures of alumni outcomes. In summary, the explanatory sequential mixed methods design provided the best design to address the research questions of both career outcomes and perceptions, as well as my worldview. While the previous section revealed the justification for the mixed methods design of this Problem of Practice, the following section elaborated on the site selections and participants and provided background information and rationale for the choices.

Site Selection

Originally, I chose three research sites in the form of university DRCM graduate programs for this study including ACU, LU, and SMU. Over 200 programs exist relating to peace and conflict studies in the United Studies including various degree program types (certificate, master's, and doctorate) and concentrations (peace studies, conflict resolution, and alternative dispute resolution). Additionally, many alternative dispute resolution programs connect or overlap with law school and programs. These three DRCM graduate programs concentrate in conflict resolution and alternative dispute resolution. To examine the larger field of DRCM alumni and analyze differences in alumni career outcomes, I chose multiple research sites to address the research questions. I selected each research site based on three specific criteria for the study, my personal connection to the site, private university, and that the institution provided a non-law-school-based DRCM master's program. While each program's degree title varied slightly, all three programs delivered a DRCM-focused Master of Arts program, provided at least 30 hours of graduate study and maintained regional accreditation with Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. I targeted specific graduate classes of alumni from the DRCM graduate programs from the Classes of 2011

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to 2015 in order to report established career outcomes. After selecting the research sites and receiving the necessary approvals, LU withdrew participation due to changes in institutional and program priorities resulting in the final two research sites, ACU and SMU. The following sections detailed the background of the research sites specific to the degree program and coursework offered.

Selected Universities

The first research site I selected was SMU due to my employment and personal experiences as a student and alumna of the program. Located in Dallas, Texas, SMU created the Master or Arts in Dispute Resolution in 2006 as an interdisciplinary graduate degree focused on resolving conflicts and disputes across various sectors and settings (Southern Methodist University, 2020). Graduates of the SMU master's program from 2011 to 2015 completed 42 credit hours of study within the program (Table 3.1) including 18 credit hours of required coursework and 24 credit hours of electives. The required coursework in the master's program provides an overview of conflict, intervention strategies, research, and field-based application (Southern Methodist University, 2007–2021). Students in the program typically complete the program in two to three years. Lastly, the program offered an on-site mediation and conflict resolution (CR) clinic wherein students could complete their field requirement. While not all students utilized the clinic, all students must have completed a field-based activity, such as clinic practicum or internship.

The second site, ACU, I selected due to my professional relationship with an SMU adjunct that also served as an ACU administrator. ACU's main campus is located in Abilene, Texas; however, this specific online master's program, along with its

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professional services arm, Duncum Center Solutions, is in Addison, Texas. Graduates of

ACU's Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation from 2011 to 2015

completed 36 credit hours (Table 3.1) and usually finished in two years. Much like SMU,

the ACU alumni in this study completed six credit hours in foundational study, 24 credit

hours of major requirements covering theory, intervention strategies, and interpersonal

communication methods, and situational context class, and six credit hours of practicum

(Abilene Christian University, 1906–2011; Abilene Christian University, 2010–2016). At

the time of this study, the program offers four concentrations in organizational settings,

healthcare organizations, practitioner-based, and general application. The program also

requires its master's students to attend an on-site residency program for skill development

as the primary instruction for the program occurs online.

This study explored the overall career outcomes and perceptions of DRCM

graduate alumni, but also investigated differences between the two groups of master's

alumni. While both programs offer similar coursework from the same multidisciplinary

foundations within the PCS field, differences exist between the two programs that

justified examination of graduate outcomes. First, as noted above, the ACU master's

program offers their degree program online with the exception of a required, on-site five-

day residency providing skill development. SMU's master's program occurs face-to-face

in small classes on-site. Second, as ACU draws students from across the country,

differences may exist in the student body related to career outcomes and job availability

in their local markets. Third, SMU requires an additional six credit hours of instruction in

dispute resolution and conflict management than ACU offers that may impact the effect

of the degree on the skills or career outcomes.

Sampling Methods

To address the research purpose and research questions exploring career outcomes, I focused on a population of DRCM alumni from graduation classes of two DRCM graduate programs from 2011 to 2015. This study utilized the sequential sampling procedures of sampling a subset of participants from the first phase to best provide explanation for the secondary phase, as recommended by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018). The following section detailed the sampling methods for quantitative and qualitative phases.

The first phase of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study included a cross-sectional survey study design in which I selected participants from specific alumni class years from the two final DRCM graduate programs noted above. As the purpose of the study was not generalizability, I followed nonprobability, purposive sampling in the form of criterion sampling (Alvi, 2016; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Fowler, 2014) to identify specific graduation classes at each of the research sites. Currently, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) works with many institutions conducting employment and graduate outcome surveys with classes of graduates typically within their first year of graduation from their academic program. NACE designed the First-Destination Survey to capture the initial employment outcomes after graduation. As my criterion, I avoided recent graduates and I targeted DRCM alumni five to 10 years post-graduation to include the graduating classes of 2011 to 2015 for two primary reasons. First, for some individuals, building a career takes time and individuals needed at least two years of experience post-graduation to reflect on career outcomes. Second, NACE collects initial career outcomes post-graduation. This study focused on later outcomes and established careers. Through connections with the research site's

program office and alumni office, I recruited a total of 392 alumni from the two DRCM graduate programs for the quantitative phase after removing alumni with missing emails, directory restrictions, and deceased status. Of these, 186 alumni graduated from Abilene Christian University and 206 alumni from Southern Methodist University (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

Quantitative Population

University Program	Location	Completed Program Hours	Alumni Population
Abilene Christian University	Abilene, Texas Online program	36 credit hours	186 alumni Class of 2011–2015
Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation			
Southern Methodist University	Dallas, Texas On-site program	42 credit hours	206 alumni Class of 2011–2015
Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution			

At the conclusion of the quantitative data analysis from Phase I, I evaluated the recommended practice of sequential sampling (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018), I used purposive sampling in the form of criterion and extreme case sampling to identify nine alumni cases from the survey participants in the quantitative phase. The combination of the two sampling methods allowed the flexibility to address various needs in the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). As this study employed a two-phase sequential approach, the qualitative phase sampling criteria first included those identified as participants in the first phase, completed the survey, and agreed to participate in one-on-one interviews. The second sampling method I utilized was extreme case sampling, which allowed diverse, extreme variations to be represented in the sample (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Through

quantitative data analysis, I identified nine individuals that both agreed to participate in

the interview phase and represented extreme cases based on the scale instruments (self-

perceived employability and subjective career success). Of the nine individuals, four

responded to the interview request, two from each program.

Both of these sampling methods utilized together, allowed for multiple, diverse

cases to be examined, as well as allow for triangulation. As this section details, I selected

the participants and research sites to provide in-depth information on the career outcomes

of alumni graduating from programs in the PCS field. The following section described

the data collection procedures for the two phases that align with the stated research

questions, study design, as well as the purpose of collecting career outcomes and

explaining them in more detail.

Data Collection Procedures

Utilizing an explanatory sequential mixed methods approach, I conducted specific

data collection techniques within the two phases, both phases conducted separately but

the second phase building on and explaining the first phase (Creswell & Plano Clark,

2018). In the first phase, I collected quantitative data in the form of an electronic web-

based survey. The second phase of data collection included qualitative data in the form of

interviews conducted via Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The blending of survey

data and interview data is one of the most used mixed methods data collection approaches

(Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Due to the condensed time frame for this Problem of

Practice, I used a shorted data collection cycle conducted over a roughly three-month

period (Table 3.2). The following section detailed the two phases of data collection

including the data collection procedures, instruments, as well as the validity and

reliability of the data collection approaches.

Table 3.2

Summary of the Research Plan for the Problem of Practice

Time Frame	Action	Purpose/Focus
Fall 2020 Term	Obtain IRB approvals for research and research sites	Receive IRB Exempt status
October– January	Connect with research sites Identify gatekeepers Schedule meetings with ACU, LU, and SMU	Engage in informal conversations about the study
February	Identify participants and institution recruitment procedures	Communicate purpose of study
March	Distribute quantitative survey via Qualtrics	Communicate purpose of study Obtain consent
April–May	Conduct quantitative data analysis	Identify outcomes, differences, and groups
Late May	Identify qualitative participants through purposive sampling	Recruit qualitative participants Obtain consent
Early June	Conduct qualitative interviews via Zoom	Collect interview data
Mid-June	Qualitative analysis and apply findings to quantitative results	Use qualitative results to explain quantitative results
Late June	Interpret findings and write results and discussion	
July–August	Complete Chapter 4 & Chapter 5	

Quantitative Data Collection

The first phase of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study began with a

quantitative study of alumni career outcomes utilizing a survey as the data collection

approach. According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), the strength of surveys as a data

collection method includes the ability to gather self-reported information, attitudes, and

beliefs about a subject, as well as the benefits to conduct them at low cost with a quick

response time. As no data exists on alumni from DRCM graduate programs, I concluded

that a cross-sectional survey instrument to be the most appropriate given the research question and the time frame available to conduct the quantitative portion of the study. In this first quantitative phase, the survey directly addressed the first research question, "What are the career outcomes and differences between the alumni of the two DRCM graduate programs?" In addition, the survey related to the theoretical framework of human capital theory, specifically that education, knowledge, and skills form human capital and investment in human capital increases productivity and employment.

After receiving Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from Baylor University and all final research sites, ACU and SMU, I distributed invitation emails (Appendix C) to valid email addresses belonging to alumni of the two programs from the graduation years of 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, and 2015 ($N = 392$). The invitation email included the link to participate in the career outcomes survey via Qualtrics. Prior to obtaining access to the survey questions in Qualtrics, each individual electronically signed an informed consent form (Appendix B) that appeared as the first page of the survey (Appendix E). The survey remained open for three weeks in Spring 2021 and then closed. Participants received the initial emails with notes from the program or administrators of the programs, as well as three reminder emails before the survey closed. While attrition and incomplete responses are a weakness of surveys (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), utilizing five graduating classes and including larger numbers of participants addressed this weakness. Some attrition occurred with emails returned undeliverable, resulting in a small reduction and a final total of 186 ACU alumni reached, and 190 SMU alumni reached. Sixty-eight respondents (17.3% response rate of population $N = 392$) started the survey (at least one question answered). I removed 15

participants with responses deemed incomplete due to missing data on either ordinal

Likert-type questions or Likert scale questions. The final sample ($n = 53$; 13.5%)

completed the majority of questions including all Likert-type and scale questions for data

analysis.

Instrumentation. Through the review of the literature on career outcomes, I found

and modified the survey for this study (Appendix E) based on an existing survey

(Appendix D) with permission from the author (Buunaaisie et al., 2018), and added

modified scale instruments for self-perceived employability, subjective career success,

and professional commitment based on an existing study with permission from the author

(Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). The original survey and study explored the career outcomes

of alumni from a specific master's program in public health and addressed the education,

knowledge, and skills from the program (Buunaaisie et al., 2018). The first part of the

modified survey included demographic characteristics of the participants, educational and

professional development experiences, and objective career outcomes. Buunaaisie et al.

(2018) used Likert-scale items in the original survey; however, I modified the Likert

scales to Likert-type questions relating directly to knowledge and skills gained from PCS

graduate programs (Carstarphen et al., 2010; Polkinghorn et al., 2008; Windmueller et al.,

2009). I used the Likert-type questions to assess perceptions of value and impact of the

DRCM master's degree. The second part of the survey included three instruments,

specifically self-perceived employability, subjective career success, and professional

commitment.

Given the theoretical framework of human capital theory and overlapping

concepts of employability and career success, and the research question, I added survey

scale instruments of self-perceived employability, subjective career success, and professional commitment from a single previous study with the only modification relating to changing United Kingdom English to United States English (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). The self-perceived employability scale (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007) was used to assess an individuals' current self-reported perception of employability addressing internal and external employability, and personal and occupational attributes. The scale consisted of 11 Likert items on a five-point scale from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). The 11 items form either a singular scale, which is used in this Problem of Practice, or two subscales, internal employability (four items) and external employability (six items). The study originally tested 16 items but retained only 11 items due to "moderate overlap between the self-perceived employability and subjective career success items" (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007, p. 30). Scoring the instrument included taking the sum of the scores divided by the number of items, or the mean score. The overall self-perceived employability scale demonstrated internal consistency reliability in the scores reported (Table 3.3). Rothwell and Arnold (2007) reported high reliabilities for self-perceived employability (Cronbach's α = .83; Table 3.3). The items of this instrument also represented validity in demonstrating the full construct under study (Field, 2018). The authors found "encouraging evidence that self-perceived overall employability is separable from, though correlated with, subjective career success and professional commitment" (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007, p. 35). Prior to this Problem of Practice, previous authors used the instrument either in whole or in part (Donald et al., 2019; Niu et al., 2019) looking specifically at self-perceived employability and other related constructs, such as subjective career success, with distinct populations. This Problem of

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Practice collected data from the original 16 self-perceived employability items but

retained only the 11 items found to be valid and reliable by Rothwell and Arnold (2007).

Table 3.3

Validity and Reliability of Quantitative Instruments

Instrument	Validity	Reliability	Sample Size
Self-perceived employability (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007)	Construct Validity (Discriminant)	$\alpha = 0.83$	$N = 200$
Subjective career success (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007)	Construct Validity (Discriminant)	$\alpha = 0.88$	$N = 200$
Professional commitment (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007)	Construct Validity (Discriminant)	$\alpha = 0.80$	$N = 200$

In testing self-perceived employability, Rothwell and Arnold (2007) also assessed

the subjective career success scale used to measure an individuals' career progress and

satisfaction. The scale consisted of eight Likert items on a five-point scale from *strongly*

disagree (1) to *strongly agree* (5). Scoring the results included taking the mean score

across items. Rothwell and Arnold (2007) reported internal consistency through high

reliabilities for the subjective career success score (Cronbach's $\alpha = .88$; Table 3.3). In

addition, Niu et al., (2019) used the seven of the eight subject career success items and

found the scales to be reliable and valid.

In concert with self-perceived employability and subjective career success,

Rothwell and Arnold (2007) also evaluated the professional commitment scale used to

assess commitment or attachment to a profession. The scale consisted of nine Likert

items on a five-point scale from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (5). One item, the

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seventh professional commitment statement requires reverse-scoring. Scoring the responses included reverse scoring the one item, then taking the mean of the nine items. Rothwell and Arnold (2007) reported satisfactory internal consistency reliability for professional commitment (Cronbach's α = .80; Table 3.3). The authors tested for construct validity across the three instruments in the form of discriminant validity as the constructs correlated and items were removed that overlapped (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007). Table 3.4 includes all scale instruments added to the survey.

Table 3.4

Instrument Scale Items from Rothwell and Arnold (2007)

Item	Item Text	Factor Name
SPE2	Even if there was downsizing in this organization, I am confident that I would be retained.	
SPE3	My personal networks in this organization help me in my career.	
SPE4	I am aware of the opportunities arising in this organization even if they are different to what I do now.	
SPE5	The skills I have gained in my present job are transferable to other occupations outside this organization.	
SPE6	I could easily retrain to make myself more employable elsewhere.	
SPE8	I have a good knowledge of opportunities for me outside of this organization even if they are quite different to what I do now.	Self-perceived employability (SPE)
SPE9	Among the people who do the same job as me, I am well respected in this organization.	
SPE11	If I needed to, I could easily get another job like mine in a similar organization.	
SPE13	I could easily get a similar job to mine in almost any organization.	
SPE14	Anyone with my level of skills and knowledge, and similar job and organizational experience, will be highly sought after by employers.	
SPE15	I could get any job, anywhere, so long as my skills and experience were reasonably relevant.	
SCS1	I am in a position to do mostly work which I really like.	
SCS2	My job title is indicative of my progress and my responsibility in the organization.	
SCS3	I am pleased with the promotions I have received so far.	Subjective career success (SCS)
SCS4	I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.	
SCS5	I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my overall career goals.	
SCS6	I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income.	

Item	Item Text	Factor Name
SCS7	I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.	Subjective career success (SCS)
SCS8	I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.	*continued*
PC1	I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help make my profession successful.	
PC2	I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working in areas that are associated with this profession.	
PC3	I find that my values and my profession's values are very similar.	
PC4	I am proud to tell others that I am part of this profession.	
PC5	Being a member of this profession really inspires the best in me in the way of job performance.	Professional commitment (PC)
PC6	I am extremely glad I chose this profession over others I was considering at the time I joined.	
PC7	Often, I find it difficult to agree with this profession's policies on important matters relating to its members.	
PC8	I really care about the fate of this profession.	
PC9	For me this is the best of all professions to be a member of.	

Note. Participants choose from 5-point scale from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree.*

Qualitative Data Collection

In the second phase of this explanatory sequential mixed methods study, I collected qualitative data in the form of one-on-one interviews with alumni over the web-based video conference platform, Zoom. As stated in the research questions and purpose of the study, I used the qualitative interviews to explain the results of the quantitative survey results in-depth (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The following section detailed the qualitative data collection procedures and interview protocol for Phase II of this mixed methods study.

In qualitative research, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend 10 steps for researchers to engage in the data collection and interview process. The first two steps relate to identifying research questions and participants. While I addressed the research questions and sampling in a previous section, it was important to note that I required participants in the qualitative phase of the study to first participate in the quantitative phase. The remaining steps of interview data collection included making decisions about

interview type and recording method, finalizing the interview protocol and testing

questions, determining the location, acquiring consent, completing the interview, and

transcribing the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 166–167). Due to the need to explore

and explain the quantitative survey results, as well as address the career outcomes of

alumni, I developed a semi-structured interview protocol as it provided the flexibility to

discuss specific questions related to the survey data (career and educational experiences,

and Likert items and scales) and explore them in more depth, but also employed an open-

ended format to allow more discussion and relationship-building with the participant

(Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

I grounded the interview protocol for this Problem of Practice in the quantitative

results from the initial phase of this study, as well as the qualitative research question.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) underscore the intent of the explanatory sequential

design in using the qualitative data to explain the quantitative data in more depth. As the

statistical tests (Mann-Whitney and independent samples t-test) found no significant

differences between the ACU and SMU alumni responses, the interview protocol

included open-ended questions to address the perceptions of the reported career

outcomes, as well as the Likert-type items and scale instruments. Four questions explored

the career experiences and outcomes of alumni.

Due to the extreme cases represented in the qualitative alumni sample, seven

open-ended questions examined different components of employability, such as

perceptions of career identity, market and employment expectations, related to the

theoretical framework and challenges reported by alumni in the quantitative phase.

Another three open-ended questions explored the perceptions of career success and

professional commitment, including professional development. Three questions investigated the value and impact of the degree, skills, and courses, explaining the Likert-type items in more depth. The concluding two questions explored student recommendations for the graduate programs. The final interview protocol is available in Appendix F.

After I determined the sample of participants, I corresponded with participants via email (Appendix C) to schedule one-on-one interviews for the month of June 2021. Once I finalized the date and time with the participant, I confirmed the interview with Zoom invitation information included. I recorded the interviews onto an encrypted local drive using the Zoom platform and each interview lasted between 45 minutes and one hour. Each participant also provided preferred contact information in the event I required follow-up information and to assist in member checking. I also utilized detailed field notes to immediately write down important or relevant information during the interview.

In summary, the use of multiple forms of data in the form of semi-structured interviews and survey data across the two phases of the study worked to establish credibility in the study through triangulation. In most qualitative studies, Creswell and Poth (2018) recommend that "researchers engage in at least two of the validation strategies" (p. 259). Within the qualitative phase of the study alone, I addressed validation through the use of rich descriptions and direct quotes from the interview participants, the creation of a relationship through the interview, and the use of different forms of data. The triangulation of the multiple forms of data, as well as the validation strategies, also established credibility in the study. The next section built on the data

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collection and described the process of data analysis utilized in the two phases of this study.

<div align="center">*Data Analysis Procedures*</div>

Due to the sequential nature of this mixed methods study, the data analysis process took place over three phases, one for the quantitative phase, another for the qualitative phase, and a final integration phase. In mixed methods designs, significant emphasis is also placed on the point or points of integration of the two phases that typically follow data analysis as the integration points connect the multiple phases of the design. For this explanatory sequential mixed methods study specifically, I analyzed the quantitative data, then gathered and analyzed interview data to explain the results with thick, rich descriptions, as recommended by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018). This section described the steps and procedures of the quantitative data analysis, qualitative analysis, and integrated analysis of this Problem of Practice connected to the research design and research questions (Table 3.5).

Quantitative Data Analysis Procedures

In the first phase of data analysis in this explanatory sequential mixed methods study, I analyzed quantitative data gathered from the alumni career survey. The career survey captured numeric data in the form of nominal, ordinal, and continuous variables to address the research question, "What are the career outcomes and differences between the alumni of the two DRCM graduate programs?" At the conclusion of the data collection period in Spring 2021, data analysis for the first quantitative phase started. The data analysis process began with four sequential steps that occurred over a period of four weeks in May 2021 including data preparation, exploring the data, identifying tests, and

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completing inferential statistical tests (Simpson, 2015). Following the statistical tests, the

next steps included creating representations of the data, interpreting results, and

validating the data and results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Table 3.5

Data Analysis Connected to the Research Questions

Research Questions	Data Analysis
Quantitative Question: What are the career outcomes and differences between the alumni of the two graduate programs in dispute resolution and conflict management?	Survey questions: Frequencies, descriptive statistics Likert-type items: Frequencies, descriptive statistics, assumptions, Mann-Whitney U tests Survey instruments: Frequencies, descriptive statistics, assumptions of normality, independent t-tests,
Qualitative Question: How do alumni from the two DRCM graduate programs perceive their careers, education, and employability?	Interviews: Coding, thematic analysis

The first step of the quantitative data analysis process included procedures

required to prepare the data for analysis. Fowler (2014) described four steps that prepare

the raw quantitative data for analysis including creating codes, adding the codes to the

data, entering the data, and checking the data. Prior to analysis, I created and entered

numeric codes into IBM® SPSS® Statistics (*v.* 27), a statistical software, and then added

the responses from Qualtrics matched to the codes. I checked and cleaned the data by

removing participants with responses deemed incomplete due to missing data on Likert-

type questions and Likert scales. After checking and cleaning the data, I prepared select

items for the second data analysis step, including recoding one reverse-coded survey item and computing new variables for the scale instruments (mean scores; Rothwell & Arnold, 2007).

The second step in the analysis process was to summarize, or explore, the data. For each variable, I calculated frequencies using IBM® SPSS® Statistics (*v.* 27). For one open response variable, reported accomplishments and challenges, I coded the responses into accomplishments, challenges, and none, in order to calculate the frequency. After calculating frequencies, I removed "not applicable" responses from the impact Likert-type question only as it did not follow an inherent order for comparing differences in ordinal variables (Field, 2018). In addition, I conducted a review of descriptive statistics and examined data visually to check for normal distributions in the data (Simpson, 2015). As I incorporated scale instruments in my survey, I also completed a reliability test, Cronbach's alpha, to measure internal consistency of the individual scales (Field, 2018).

The next steps included identifying and completing statistical tests. As this Problem of Practice quantitative research question aimed at exploring career outcomes and differences between program alumni, statistical tests are needed to test for and examine differences. After calculating the mean and creating new variables, the scale instruments, as well as post-degree salary displayed continuous variables allowing for an independent *t*-test (Field, 2018). I analyzed the descriptive statistics and met the assumptions of normality; then, I administered the independent *t*-test (Simpson, 2015). In contrast, the Likert-type items for value and impact of the courses, skill, and degree were ordinal variables necessitating the need for a non-parametric test, Mann-Whitney *U* test (Field, 2018). I reviewed the descriptive statistics and met the assumptions of the test;

then, I administered the Mann-Whitney U test. These inferential statistical tests addressed the second part of the research question referring to the differences between the alumni of the two programs. At the conclusion of the quantitative data analysis, career outcome results emerged from the alumni for purposive sampling and in-depth exploration in the second qualitative phase.

The final steps of the quantitative data analysis related to creating representations of the data and interpreting the results. Representations for demographic information, education, and employment experiences included narrative summaries and tables and figures as needed. I chose word clouds to create visual representations of reported job titles and frequencies. For each continuous variable tested with independent t-tests, I created a summary of the statistical results including the mean and standard deviation for the dependent variables, as well as the t-statistic, significance value, confidence interval, and effect size utilizing Cohen's d to report the statistical difference by using means and standard deviations. Field (2018) encouraged reporting effect size, regardless of the significance of the t-statistic, as "effect sizes are not affected by sample sizes" (p. 89). Given the use of Cohen's d, I interpreted the effect sizes for the independent t-tests as $d = 0.2$ for small effect, $d = 0.5$ for medium effect, and $d = 0.8$ for large effect (Field, 2018). For the ordinal, Likert-type items tested with the Mann-Whitney U test, I created a narrative summary and included bar charts for the highest rated items. The narrative summary included the reported median for the dependent variable, U-statistic and significance value, z-score, and effect size utilizing Pearson's r calculated $r = \frac{z}{\sqrt{N}}$ with the z-score as Pearson's r is appropriate with categorical variables (Field, 2018). Unlike

Cohen's *d*, I interpreted the effect size as $r = 0.1$ for small effect, $r = 0.3$ for medium effect, and $r = 0.5$ for large effect (Field, 2018).

Qualitative Data Analysis Procedures

In the second phase of the data analysis for this explanatory sequential mixed methods study, I analyzed qualitative data from the alumni interviews for the purpose of answering the second research question, "How do alumni from the two DRCM graduate programs perceive their careers, education, and employability?" I conducted the data collection for the secondary qualitative phase over March 2021 with data analysis beginning in April 2021. Creswell and Poth (2018) described the qualitative data analysis process as a spiral process that begins with data, and circles through various activities, such as managing data and recording notes, creating and using codes to identify themes, comparing the themes, and ending with the reported findings displayed visually. While these steps are not sequential, this qualitative data analysis section detailed the five steps of the data analysis spiral.

The first step in the data analysis spiral pertained to preparing and managing the data collected in the qualitative phase. As each interview concluded, I transcribed the interview recording into usable text via Microsoft Word to save and manage the data and create ease of access to review the information multiple times. In the second step, I returned to the transcripts and completed several reviews while adding notes and memos to the transcript to highlight important concepts (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Once I conducted all interviews, transcribed, and reviewed the data, I established codes to aid in the process of identifying themes. Stake (2010) explained that "coding is sorting all data sets according to topics, themes, and issues important to the study. Coding is for

interpretation and storage more than for organizing the final report" (p. 151). Once I completed coding of all interview transcripts, I took the emergent, multiple codes and elevated the codes to themes. After developing the themes, I incorporated the theoretical framework of human capital theory and the concepts of career success and employability. Finally, I created a table of the data, codes, and themes to visually represent the data and assist in the process of interpreting the data (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Stake, 2010).

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

The integrated phases of quantitative and qualitative data in this explanatory sequential mixed methods study occurred at two key points, qualitative sample identification and integrating quantitative and qualitative results, to answer the mixed methods research question, "How do the themes mentioned by alumni from the two DRCM programs in the qualitative phase help to explain the initial career outcome's data from the quantitative phase?" The intent of the explanatory sequential mixed methods design for qualitative findings to illuminate and provide additional explanation to quantitative results provided an additional point of integration during the quantitative data analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The following section detailed the integration procedures.

The first integration step I took in this mixed methods study related to the analysis and note taking of the quantitative results from the lens of integration (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Bazeley (2018) detailed that incorporating an integration point in the first phase of the study allows for the flow of findings to directly impact sampling and interview questions for the second phase. During the quantitative analysis, I noted survey items and instruments that warranted further exploration and explanation. When

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connected to the second integration step, sampling, the quantitative analysis informed selecting participants based on criteria (those that completed the quantitative survey and agreed to participate in interviews) and represented extreme cases. Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) detailed one benefit for integration at this stage, specifically the ability to locate a sample "that can best provide explanation" (p. 235). When criterion-based sampling combined with extreme sampling, the integration allowed for a detailed and thorough explanation.

The third integration step informed the collection and analysis of the qualitative data from the quantitative phase through well-documented sequential data collection method, survey then interview (Bazeley, 2018). According to Creswell and Plano Cark (2018), sequential studies that are well connected, informed, and shaped by the first phase decrease the need for confounding comparisons of the two sets of results and make way for deeper insight and explanation (p. 238). After qualitative data collection and analysis concluded, I progressed to the fourth step of integration in which I created a joint display table of the combined quantitative and qualitative matched findings including quantitative results by survey item, qualitative interview themes, and interview excerpts in the form of meaningful quotes. Finally, in step five of the integration, I interpreted the mixed methods findings by absorbing the quantitative and qualitative together and determining how the qualitative findings explained the quantitative findings. While the previous section addressed the quantitative and qualitative data analysis methods and integration procedures, the following section addressed the ethical considerations across the entire study.

Ethical Considerations

In this explanatory sequential mixed methods study, I examined the career outcomes and perceptions of adult graduate alumni from two DRCM programs located at two different universities. As the study did not rely on previous data sets, I considered ethical standards and protocols as I recruited and engaged human participants for the purpose of collecting personally identifiable demographic information, employment outcomes, and career perceptions. This section detailed the ethical considerations I anticipated and addressed prior to the start of the research study and how I ensured ethical standards were maintained, including issues related to the approvals to engage participants, the specific study design, and the protocols related to the conduct with participants.

The first ethical consideration I addressed prior to initiating this study related to approvals for human subjects' research and for the research sites. As federal guidelines require IRBs to review research proposals (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), I completed the application for approval to conduct this research study from Baylor University's IRB indicating that all participants were adults over the age of 18 and did not include vulnerable populations. After obtaining Baylor University IRB approval (Appendix A), I provided the letter documenting approval to the specific gatekeepers and IRBs for each original research site, ACU, LU, and SMU. The Baylor University IRB exempt approval assisted with obtaining subsequent IRB approvals for each original university research site (ACU, LU, and SMU), as well as approval for the use of alumni records from the three original sites (Appendix A). As noted earlier, once the approvals moved to the department levels to initiate data collection, LU withdrew participation, which resulted in two confirmed research sites.

The second ethical consideration I addressed related to the research design for this study, specifically the guidance of professional associations' code of ethics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), and the specific design methods. While the literature review revealed no professional organization or professional association governs research in the PCS field, I included guidance from one organization, NACE, as NACE provides guidance on standards in career outcome surveys that establish consistency across graduate outcome's data collected nationwide (National Association of Colleges and Employers, First-Destination Survey Task Force, 2015). To address this ethical consideration, I used the NACE guidelines for identifying variables for employment data within the revisions to the quantitative survey. As I maintained professional relationships with alumni and the research sites, I additionally utilized NACE guidance to protect professional boundaries and keep participants safe through the survey questions.

A third ethical consideration I examined related to the protection of the graduate alumni participants I invited to take part in the study through obtaining consent and protecting identities. Prior to completing the quantitative survey in the first phase of the study, alumni participants provided their consent through an electronic form (Appendix B) that appeared as the first page of the survey. To ensure consent, participants did not advance to the survey questions until they provided consent. In the second phase, I asked the smaller qualitative sample of participants ($N = 4$) to consent to participate through two mechanisms. First, participants provided their contact information in response to the final question on the survey inviting participants to participate in follow-up interviews. Second, after I completed qualitative sampling, I attached the interview consent form

(Appendix B) to my email invitation (Appendix C) during the interview scheduling process.

Throughout the data collection, data analysis, and reporting results, I ensured the protection of alumni participant identities by coding individual survey responses with numerical codes and assigning interview participants pseudonyms. I took precautions with the survey and interview data (raw survey data from Qualtrics, cleaned data for statistical tests from SPSS, Zoom audio and video recordings, and interview transcripts) to ensure security by storing the information on a personally-purchased encrypted external hard drive. As an additional measure of security, I kept the external hard drive locked in a filing cabinet when not in use. I stored and maintained the collected data, transcriptions, and notes for five years, then destroyed the data. The ethical considerations I addressed in this section maintain the safety and identity of the participants in this study, as well as provide ethical guidance throughout the procedures of this research study. While considering these ethical issues is important, it is also important to note conditions in which I had no control. The following section evaluated the limitations and delimitations as it relates to uncontrollable conditions and influences within the research study.

Limitations and Delimitations

Throughout the research process, I considered five limitations in this study, in particular I reviewed response rate, sample size, data collection methods, reporting differences and interview protocol. The first limitation related to survey response rate of participants in the quantitative phase. While not every survey receives 100% completion or response rate, it is desirable to receive enough responses to conduct quantitative data

analysis or statistical tests, as well as conduct purposive sampling for the qualitative

phase. In relation to response rate, I also considered compressed timing allowed for data

collection and analysis. Career outcomes surveys conducted by higher education

institutions typically reserve six months to one year for data collection. As I did not have

this time available, I proposed a strict time frame that included follow-up emails and

reminders to encourage responses. The second limitation I addressed related to sample

size. In this study, I utilized a two-phase sequential mixed methods design that began

with a large quantitative population ($N = 392$), leading to a small quantitative sample, and

concluded with a small qualitative sample to explain the quantitative results in-depth. As

the quantitative sample ($n = 53$) represented 13.5% of the targeted alumni population,

responses may not reflect the total alumni population. In the quantitative phase, small

sample sizes also affect some statistical tests and significance. As such, I reported effect

sizes as they are unaffected by sample size (Field, 2018). In addition, as the qualitative

sample ($N = 4$) is typically smaller in a sequential mixed methods study (Creswell &

Creswell, 2018), not every survey data point will be explained in-depth. In order to

address this limitation, I used criterion-based and extreme case, purposive sampling to

select specific cases to provide in-depth responses.

   The third limitation I researched included the nature of the data collection

methods I proposed, specifically the use of self-reported survey and interview data. While

Buunaaisie et al. (2018) addressed the issue of social desirability in self-reported data

prior to their study, Chan (2009) dispelled the multiple misconceptions of self-reported

data including construct validity, correlation interpretations, social desirability, and

perceptions of premium value of non-self-reported data. In addition, the most common

data collection method reported in alumni career research relied on self-reported measures. As such, I limited the scope of the data collection in this study to review objective measures of career outcomes, as well as subjective measures which necessitated self-reported data. The fourth limitation I addressed related to the reporting of ordinal data in the survey and the limitations of reporting differences from the original survey. The survey questions modeled from Buunaaisie et al. (2018) were revised to address the DRCM education experience, rather than public health education. While Buunaaisie et al. (2018) tested the internal consistency of the Likert-scales and reported means and differences, more variability in their answer choices was needed. I used Likert-type questions and tested differences through Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U tests and reported medians and differences. The final limitation I addressed involved interview protocol and the current state of the global pandemic, COVID-19. In-person interviews are a hallmark of qualitative data collection (Creswell & Poth, 2018); however, the issues of out-of-state alumni and COVID-19 created possible inconsistencies in data collection.

In an effort to specify the narrow parameters of this study and issues within my control, I also addressed delimitations in the study. One delimitation I considered included diversity and number of participants in which I included participants from five different graduation years to include enough participants for the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. Another delimitation I addressed related to constructing the interview protocol around the web-based, video conferencing platform, Zoom. My chosen use of this platform created a standard across all interview sessions. Additionally, the required technology for the platform resulted in no financial burden on participants. Participants signed up for a Zoom account for free or attended the interview session

without creating an account. I addressed the limitations and delimitations in this section to discuss potential issues with transparency and build trustworthiness in the study.

Conclusion

This explanatory sequential mixed methods study examined the career outcomes of DRCM alumni from two graduate programs, as well as alumni perceptions and explanations of those outcomes to address the gap in research in the field. The previous chapter outlined the specific methodology choices for this study including the study design, sampling, data collection, and data analysis. The results of this mixed methods study have implications for career knowledge in the PCS field, graduate education improvements, and graduate student support services. To that end, the following chapter examined the results of initial quantitative and secondary qualitative phases, integrated the results of both phases, and discussed the implications of the career outcomes research findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results and Implications

Introduction

This explanatory sequential mixed methods Problem of Practice explored the career outcomes of dispute resolution and conflict management (DRCM) master's alumni, examined the differences of career outcomes and perceptions between programs, and reviewed possible improvements for graduate programs and the general field of peace and conflict studies. By looking at the careers of alumni from 2011 to 2015, this study provided in-depth career experiences to better understand how alumni use the knowledge and skills gained in their respective programs. The previous chapter detailed the justification, rationale, research methodology, and research plan for this study. Due to the nature of the mixed methods explanatory sequential research design, quantitative and qualitative data collection methods allowed me to answer three research questions created to explore career outcomes and perceptions of alumni, examine differences that exist between program alumni, and explain the results in depth through objective and subjective means.

This chapter revealed that DRCM alumni bring diverse educational and professional backgrounds into their equally diverse current careers, and alumni perceive their DRCM education to have value and relevance in their careers. In addition, alumni represented different levels and types of application of the knowledge and skills in their current roles. While alumni interviewed represented extreme results in employability and career success in the quantitative phase, alumni also reported generally positive views of

employability while making use of various forms of human capital, some of which alumni acquired through their course of study. Overall, there exist no significant differences between outcomes of the programs.

In this explanatory sequential mixed methods study, I addressed three research questions, one attributed to each stage of the mixed methods design, and one question directly related to the combination of the two methodologies. The quantitative question from the first phase addressed, "What are the career outcomes and differences between the alumni of the two DRCM graduate programs?" The qualitative question explored in the second phase was, "How do alumni from the two DRCM graduate programs perceive their careers, education, and employability?" In order to address the combination and integration of the initial quantitative phase and secondary qualitative phase, the mixed methods question sought to answer, "How do the themes mentioned by graduate alumni from the two DRCM graduate programs in the qualitative phase help to explain the initial career outcome data from the quantitative phase?"

The following sections of this chapter detail the presentation of findings of this Problem of Practice. The presentation of the findings unfolds in five steps. First, the chapter details the data preparation and exploration prior to data analysis. Second, the chapter examines the quantitative findings from the alumni career survey and analyzes the difference between institutions. Third, the chapter explores the qualitative findings through the analysis of four in-depth alumni interviews. Fourth, the chapter details the integration of both the quantitative and qualitative findings in the mixed methods analysis. Finally, the chapter examines the discussion and implication of findings in

relation to alumni careers, dispute resolution and conflict management graduate

programs, and the peace and conflict studies field.

Quantitative Data Preparation and Exploration

This section discussed the results of the steps used to prepare the quantitative data

for data analysis, explore the data through descriptive statistics, reliability, and

assumptions, and ultimately, run specific statistical tests for data analysis. Prior to

analysis, I prepared the raw survey data by importing the data collected from Qualtrics

into IBM® SPSS® Statistics (*v.* 27) and checking the numeric codes for accuracy. I

cleaned the data by removing 15 participants with responses considered incomplete as

data was missing on the Likert-type questions and scale instruments. I also prepared the

data by recoding one variable and creating new variables for the scale instruments as

detailed by Rothwell and Arnold (2007). Item seven on the professional commitment

scale instrument indicated a reverse-coded statement, so I transformed the variable and

recoded it into a new variable utilizing reverse coding to change the values from *strongly*

disagree (1) to *strongly agree* (5) to *strongly disagree* (5) to *strongly agree* (1). After

reverse coding, I computed new variables for the survey instrument items of self-

perceived employability, subjective career success, and professional commitment. Unlike

other instruments that utilize summed totals for scale instruments, Rothwell and Arnold

(2007) created mean scores. I took the sum of the items related to each instrument and

divided the sum by the total number of items for each instrument separately. The process

of creating new variables for self-perceived employability, subjective career success, and

professional commitment based on calculated mean scores introduced continuous

variables for testing.

I followed data preparation with exploring variable descriptive statistics, checking reliability of the survey instruments, and investigating assumptions in preparation for testing. For each continuous variable, I explored descriptive statistics including distribution or frequencies, central tendency, and dispersion (Field, 2018). For nominal variables, I explored frequencies. For open text responses in the survey, I coded the responses and explored frequencies that were present.

Beyond descriptive statistics, the scale instruments of self-perceived employability, subjective career success, and professional commitment required two types of data exploration prior to testing, checking reliability and investigating assumptions of normality. First, for each survey instrument, I completed a reliability analysis of the items within the instrument in IBM® SPSS® Statistics (*v.* 27). Results in Table 4.1 found each of the survey instruments reliable as having Cronbach's alpha of above 0.8 (Field, 2018). The second exploration method required for post-degree salary and the scale instruments included confirming the assumptions of normality for each scale.

Table 4.1

Reliability of Quantitative Instruments

Instrument	Reliability	Sample Size
Self-perceived employability (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007)	$\alpha = 0.88$	$n = 53$
Subjective career success (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007)	$\alpha = 0.93$	$n = 53$
Professional commitment (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007)	$\alpha = 0.85$	$n = 53$

Field (2018) describes the five assumptions including confirming the independent variable includes two independent categorical groups and the dependent variable is a continuous variable, verifying no significant outliers exist in the sample (box plots and Q-Q plots), confirming the dependent variable is normally distributed for both groups (Shapiro-Wilk Test of Normality), and verifying the variances for each group are equal (Levene's Test for Equality of the Variances) or reporting the secondary output for "equal variances not assumed." The independent t-test included Levene's Test for Equality of the Variances in the IBM® SPSS® Statistics (v. 27) output. I retained outliers in the data as they represented extreme values needed for the qualitative phase. Post-degree salary and each scale instrument (continuous variables) passed the assumptions of normality (Appendix G) warranting the use of the independent t-test to examine alumni differences between the programs.

The Likert-type items in the survey consisted of ordinal variables. After examining the frequencies of the Likert-type items, I removed the "not applicable" responses from the impact question to maintain the inherent order in the available responses. In order to test for alumni differences between the two programs, the only test available was the Mann-Whitney U test. I used IBM® SPSS® Statistics (v. 27) to run both the independent t-test for post-degree salary and the scale instruments and the Mann-Whitney U test for the Likert-type items in testing for differences in education and career perceptions.

Quantitative Data Findings

This section sought to answer the quantitative research question, "What are the career outcomes and differences between the alumni of the two DRCM graduate

programs?" The quantitative data came from an electronic survey developed from

Buunaaisie et al. (2018) that I modified with permission for the purpose of this study. In

addition, I added valid and reliable scales instruments (Rothwell & Arnold, 2007) with

permission to test for self-perceived employability, subjective career success, and

professional commitment. I distributed the survey (Appendix E) via email to all master's

alumni from Abilene Christian University (ACU) and Southern Methodist University

(SMU) who completed their respective programs from 2011 to 2015 ($N = 392$). After

data collection and data cleaning, the final sample included 53 participants with

representation from both program institutions as detailed in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Participant Sample Institutions

Institutions	Total n	Sample %
Abilene Christian University	34	64.2%
Southern Methodist University	19	35.8%
	$n = 53$	100.0%

Demographics of Participants

  I collected demographic information as part of the survey, including gender, race

and ethnicity, age, and prior educational experiences. Table 4.3 includes overall

demographic information and by program institution. Across both programs, the majority

of participants identified as females ($n = 31$, 58.5%), White ($n = 38$, 71.7%), and non-

Hispanic ($n = 51$, 96.2%). Participants' reported ages ranged from 30 to 71 years of age

($M = 50.02$, $SD = 11.21$; Table 4.4). For ACU respondents, the majority of alumni

identified as females ($n = 18$ of 34, 52.9%), White ($n = 25$ of 34, 73.5%), and non-

Hispanic ($n = 34$ of 34, 100.0%) with a mean age of 54 ($SD = 9.80$). Similarly, the

majority of SMU alumni identified as females (n = 13 of 19, 68.4%), White (n = 13 of 19, 68.4%), and non-Hispanic (n = 17 of 19, 89.5%) with a mean age of 42 (SD = 8.99).

Regarding educational background prior to enrolling in the master's program in dispute resolution and conflict management, alumni represented a wide range of undergraduate degrees (Table 4.5) with many having obtained a Bachelor of Arts (n = 21, 39.6%) and few having earned a prior professional or graduate degree. Other degrees included 12 participants (22.6%) with a Bachelor of Business of Administration; one (1.9%) with a Bachelor of Fine Arts; and 14 participants (26.4%) with a Bachelor of Science (Table 4.5). Four respondents (7.5%) reported "other" as their undergraduate degree including Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences, Bachelor of Laws, Bachelor of Theology, and Bachelor of Sociology. Four respondents (7.5%; Table 4.5) indicated that they had earned a previous graduate or professional degree prior to attending their respective master's program in dispute resolution and conflict management (including Master of Fine Arts, Master of Science in Management, Master of Arts and Doctor of Philosophy, and a Master of Liberal Studies). The highest frequency of ACU respondents reported having earned a Bachelor of Arts degree (n = 11 of 34, 32.4%) with no prior advanced degree (n = 32 of 34, 94.1%). Similarly, the majority of SMU alumni reported having earned a Bachelor of Arts degree (n = 10 of 19, 52.6%) with no prior advanced degree (n = 17 of 19, 89.5%).

After completing their last degree, respondents reported waiting 0–1 year (n = 6, 11.3%), 2–4 years (n = 14, 26.4%), and five or more years (n = 33, 62.3%) before enrolling in the master's program (Table 4.6).

Table 4.3

Demographic Characteristics of Participant Sample

Demographic Characteristics	Total	Total Sample	ACU	ACU	SMU	SMU
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Graduation Year						
2011	9	17.0%	7	20.6%	2	10.5%
2012	9	17.0%	5	14.7%	4	21.1%
2013	12	22.6%	7	20.6%	5	26.3%
2014	13	24.5%	8	23.5%	5	26.3%
2015	10	18.9%	7	20.6%	3	15.8%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%
Gender						
Male	20	37.7%	15	44.1%	5	26.3%
Female	31	58.5%	18	52.9%	13	68.4%
Prefer not to say	2	3.8%	1	2.9%	1	5.3%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%
Race and Ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Asian American	2	3.8%	1	2.9%	1	5.3%
Black or African American	13	24.5%	8	23.5%	5	26.3%
Hispanic or Latino	3	5.7%	0	0.0%	3	15.8%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
White	38	71.7%	25	73.5%	13	68.4%
	n = 53	107.6%	*n* = 34	102.8%	*n* = 19	115.8%
Hispanic or Latino						
Yes	2	3.8%	0	0.0%	2	10.5%
No	51	96.2%	34	100.0%	17	89.5%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%

Table 4.4

Current Age of Participant Sample

Current Age	Total	Total Sample	ACU	ACU	SMU	SMU
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
30	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
31	2	3.8%	1	2.9%	1	5.3%
33	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
34	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
35	3	5.7%	1	2.9%	2	10.5%
37	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
38	2	3.8%	0	0.0%	2	10.5%
39	2	3.8%	1	2.9%	1	5.3%
41	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
43	3	5.7%	1	2.9%	2	10.5%
44	2	3.8%	2	5.9%	0	0.0%
45	2	3.8%	2	5.9%	0	0.0%
46	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
48	2	3.8%	1	2.9%	1	5.3%
51	2	3.8%	2	5.9%	0	0.0%
52	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
53	2	3.8%	2	5.9%	0	0.0%
56	3	5.7%	2	5.9%	1	5.3%
57	4	7.5%	2	5.9%	2	10.5%
58	2	3.8%	2	5.9%	0	0.0%
59	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
60	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
61	3	5.7%	3	8.8%	0	0.0%
62	2	3.8%	2	5.9%	0	0.0%
63	2	3.8%	2	5.9%	0	0.0%
65	3	5.7%	3	8.8%	0	0.0%
66	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
71	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
Not reported	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%

Table 4.5

Educational Background of Participants

Educational Background	Total	Total Sample	ACU	ACU	SMU	SMU
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Undergraduate degree						
Bachelor of Arts	21	39.6%	11	32.4%	10	52.6%
Bachelor of Business Administration	12	22.6%	9	26.5%	3	15.8%
Bachelor of Fine Arts	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
Bachelor of Science	14	26.4%	9	26.5%	5	26.3%
Other	4	7.5%	4	11.8%	0	0.0%
Not Reported	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%
Other undergraduate degree						
BAAS	1	1.9%	1	1.9%	0	0.0%
Bachelor of Laws	1	1.9%	1	1.9%	0	0.0%
Bachelor of Theology	1	1.9%	1	1.9%	0	0.0%
Bachelor of Sociology	1	1.9%	1	1.9%	0	0.0%
	n = 4	7.5%	*n* = 4	7.5%	*n* = 0	0.0%
Previous advanced degree						
Yes	4	7.5%	2	5.9%	2	10.5%
No	49	92.5%	32	94.1%	17	89.5%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%

For ACU respondents, the majority of alumni reported waiting five or more years before enrolling in the master's program (*n* = 25 of 34, 73.5%). In contrast, SMU alumni reported the highest frequencies both in waiting 2–4 years (*n* = 8 of 19, 42,1%) and five

or more years (*n* = 8, 42.1%). Across all participants, nine (17.0%) graduated in 2011,

nine (17.0%) graduated in 2012, 12 (22.6%) in 2013, 13 (24.5%) in 2014, and 10 (18.9%)

in 2015. Thirty-four respondents (64.2%) graduated from ACU and 19 (35.8%) graduated

from SMU.

Table 4.6

Length of Time Before Enrollment in DRCM Master's Program

Length of Time	Total	Total Sample	ACU	ACU	SMU	SMU
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
0–1 year	6	11.3%	3	8.8%	3	15.8%
2–4 years	14	26.4%	6	17.6%	8	42.1%
5 years and more	33	62.3%	25	73.5%	8	42.1%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%

Alumni also reported the multiple educational experiences they participated in as

part of the master's degree program (Table 4.7). As the survey did not include a response

for other educational experiences or no educational experiences, nearly half of

participants did not answer the question (*n* = 26, 49.1%). The next highest frequencies

related to field experience and practicum (*n* = 17, 32.1%) and participating as a volunteer

(*n* = 13, 24.5%). Alumni also reported participating in study abroad (*n* = 8, 15.1%),

internship (*n* = 6, 11.3%), graduate, research, or teaching assistantship (*n* = 2, 3.8%) and

"other" as their education experiences (*n* = 11, 20.8%). The highest frequencies of ACU

respondents did not report an educational experience (*n* = 15 of 34, 44.1%) or selected

"other" (*n* = 9 of 26.5%). In contrast, the highest frequencies of SMU alumni did not

report an educational experience (*n* = 11 of 19, 57.9%) or reported "field

experience/practicum" (*n* = 9 of 19, 47.4%).

Table 4.7

Alumni DRCM Master's Experiences

Educational Experiences	Total	Total Sample	ACU	ACU	SMU	SMU
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Field experience/ practicum	17	32.1%	8	23.5%	9	47.4%
Internship	6	11.3%	1	2.9%	5	26.3%
Study abroad	8	15.1%	2	5.9%	6	31.6%
Volunteer	13	24.5%	7	20.6%	6	31.6%
Graduate, research, or teaching assistantship	2	3.8%	0	0.0%	2	10.5%
Other	11	20.8%	9	26.5%	2	10.5%
Missing	26	49.1%	15	44.1%	11	57.9%
	n = 53	156.7%	*n* = 34	123.5%	*n* = 19	215.8%

Quantitative Research Question

The quantitative question in the first phase was, "What are the career outcomes and differences between the alumni of the two DRCM graduate programs?" The career survey distributed to alumni collected the career outcomes in the form of prior employment experiences, as well as the employment outcomes after graduation. Differences in employment outcomes were examined, in addition to alumni perceptions of their career outcomes as it relates to their master's degree.

Employment experiences and outcomes. The survey collected the employment experiences prior to their respective master's program in dispute resolution and conflict management, as well as primary employment status after completing the program. Prior to enrolling in the master's program in dispute resolution and conflict management, nearly all respondents (*n* = 46, 86.8%) reported being employed either full or part-time across both institutions with little difference in status. Two respondents were volunteers (3.8%), one respondent was engaged in continuing education (1.9%), three were seeking

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employment (5.7%), and one individual was not seeking employment prior to starting the degree (1.9%). Over half of those employed full-time or half-time ($n = 35$, 66.0%) were employed in capacities outside of entrepreneurial, freelance, or contract work, or faculty positions. Table 4.8 summarizes the primary employment status and category of respondents prior to their entry into the master's program.

Table 4.8

Prior Employment Experiences of Participants

Employment Status and Category	Total	Total Sample	ACU	ACU	SMU	SMU
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Employed full-time	43	81.1%	28	82.4%	15	78.9%
Employed part-time	3	5.7%	3	8.8%	0	0.0%
Volunteer	2	3.8%	1	2.9%	1	5.3%
Serving in U.S. military	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Continuing education	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
Seeking employment	3	5.7%	1	2.9%	2	10.5%
Planning to continue education	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Not seeking employment	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%
Full-time and Part-time Employment Category						
Entrepreneur	5	9.4%	4	11.8%	1	5.3%
Temporary/contract work	2	3.8%	2	5.9%	0	0.0%
Freelance	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
Fellowship or residency	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Faculty tenure track	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Faculty non-tenure	2	3.8%	0	0.0%	2	10.5%
Employed in all other capacities	35	66.0%	24	70.6%	11	57.9%
Not reported or no conditional response	8	15.1%	4	11.8%	4	21.1%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%
Employed during degree						
Yes	43	81.1%	28	82.4%	15	78.9%
No	3	5.7%	3	8.8%	0	0.0%
Missing	7	13.2%	3	8.8%	4	21.1%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%

The majority of ACU alumni ($n = 28$ of 34, 82.4%) and SMU alumni ($n = 15$ of 19;

78.9%) indicated that they were employed in the position at the start of their degree. The

highest frequency of ACU alumni reported employment in the public ($n = 8$ of 19,

23.5%) and private sectors ($n = 12$ of 19, 35.3%) across the industries of education and

health services ($n = 6$ of 19, 17.6%), professional and business services ($n = 5$ of 19,

14.7%), or indicated 'Other' ($n = 15$ of 19, 44.1%). In comparison, SMU alumni reported

the highest frequency of employment in the academic ($n = 7$ of 34, 36.8%) and private (n

$= 6$ of 34, 31.6%) sectors across the industries of education and health services ($n = 9$ of

34, 47.4%), professional and business services ($n = 2$ of 34, 10.5%), and 'Other' ($n = 4$ of

34, 21.1%). Table 4.9 summarizes the primary employment sector and industry of

respondents prior to their entry into the master's program. While the overall mean of

salaries prior to the program was $79,104 ($SD = $55,340$), the salaries reported by ACU

alumni ($M = $93,191$, $SD = $62,503$; Table 4.14) were higher than the salaries reported

by SMU alumni ($M = $52,015$, $SD = $20,522$; Table 4.15) prior to entering the program.

After completing their respective master's degrees in dispute resolution and

conflict management, responses were mixed as to the length of time it took to acquire

dispute resolution or conflict management-specific employment. Table 4.10 summarizes

the reported length of time overall and by alumni program institution. The highest

frequency of respondents reported "not applicable" to acquiring a dispute resolution or

conflict management-specific job ($n = 19$, 35.8%) and "not yet acquired" ($n = 14$,

26.4%). Nearly half of respondents from ACU ($n = 16$ of 34, 47.1%) indicated "not

applicable" to acquiring a conflict-specific job, and nearly one third reported "not yet

acquired" ($n = 10$ of 34, 29.4%). In comparison, SMU respondents reported the highest

frequency of responses across "less than 6 months" (*n* = 5 of 19, 26.3%), "more than 1

year" (*n* = 5 of 19, 26.3%), and "not yet acquired" (*n* = 4 of 19, 21.1%).

Table 4.9

Pre-Degree Sector and Industry of Primary Employment Status

Primary Status Sector and Industry	Total	Total Sample	ACU	ACU	SMU	SMU
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Primary Employment Sector						
Public	11	20.8%	8	23.5%	3	15.8%
Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)	3	5.7%	3	8.8%	0	0.0%
Non-Profit	8	15.1%	5	14.7%	3	15.8%
Academic	10	18.9%	3	8.8%	7	36.8%
Private	18	34.0%	12	35.3%	6	31.6%
Other	3	5.7%	3	8.8%	0	0.0%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%
Primary Employment Industry						
Construction	2	3.8%	1	2.9%	1	5.3%
Education and Health Services	15	28.3%	6	17.6%	9	47.4%
Financial Activities	3	5.7%	2	5.9%	1	5.3%
Information	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
Manufacturing	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
Natural Resources and Mining	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
Professional and Business Services	7	13.2%	5	14.7%	2	10.5%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	3	5.7%	2	5.9%	1	5.3%
Other	19	35.8%	15	44.1%	4	21.1%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%

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Table 4.10

Length of Time to Acquire a Conflict-Specific Job

Length of Time	Sample n	Sample %	ACU n	ACU %	SMU n	SMU %
Less than 6 months	11	20.8%	6	17.6%	5	26.3%
6 months to 11 months	2	3.8%	0	0.0%	2	10.5%
1 year	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
More than 1 year	6	11.3%	1	2.9%	5	26.3%
Not yet acquired	14	26.4%	10	29.4%	4	21.1%
Not applicable	19	35.8%	16	47.1%	3	15.8%
	n = 53	100.0%	n = 34	100.0%	n = 19	100.0%

Alumni also reported all available additional experiences related to their careers through professional development experiences, honorary appointments, publications, and accomplishments and challenges (Table 4.11). In reviewing professional development, alumni reported on professional accreditation, professional association membership, and professional development experiences. Overall, the highest frequency of respondents reported that they are not a registered or accredited professional ($n = 35$, 66.0%), they were not a member of a professional association ($n = 2$, 54.7%), but they have attended seminars, workshops, or conferences ($n = 30$, 56.6%). Responses by program institution were similar to the overall results of not being a registered or accredited professional (ACU, $n = 20$ of 34, 58.8%; SMU, $n = 15$ of 19, 78.9%) or a member of a professional association (ACU, $n = 18$ of 34, 52.9%; SMU, $n = 11$ of 19, 57.9%), but also attending seminars, workshops, or conferences (ACU, $n = 19$ of 34, 55.8%; SMU, $n = 11$ of 19, 57.9%).

In addition, alumni reported on honorary appointments, as well as career accomplishments and challenges. The majority of overall alumni reported not holding honorary appointments ($n = 39$, 73.6%) and not publishing after graduating ($n = 43$,

81.1%). Responses by program institution were similar to the overall results of not holding honorary appointments (ACU, $n = 23$ of 34, 67.6%; SMU, $n = 16$ of 19, 84.2%) and not publishing after graduating (ACU, $n = 30$ of 34, 88.2%; SMU, $n = 13$ of 19, 68.4%). After coding the open text responses for accomplishments and challenges and calculating frequencies, nearly half of all alumni reported professional accomplishments as opposed to challenges after graduation ($n = 26$, 49.1%). A majority of ACU alumni reported accomplishments ($n = 20$ of 34, 58.8%) while SMU alumni equally reported accomplishments and challenges ($n = 6$ of 19, 31.6%).

Table 4.11

Post-Degree Professional Development Career Experiences

Professional Development	Total	Total Sample	ACU	ACU	SMU	SMU
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Registered or Accredited Professional						
Yes	17	32.1%	13	38.2%	4	21.1%
In the Process	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
No	35	66.0%	20	58.8%	15	78.9%
	$n = 53$	100.0%	$n = 34$	100.0%	$n = 19$	100.0%
Member of Professional Association						
Yes	24	45.3%	16	47.1%	8	42.1%
No	29	54.7%	18	52.9%	11	57.9%
	$n = 53$	100.0%	$n = 34$	100.0%	$n = 19$	100.0%
Professional Development						
Formal institutional learning	16	30.2%	10	29.4%	6	31.6%
Work based learning	15	28.3%	8	23.5%	7	36.8%

Professional Development	Total	Total Sample	ACU	ACU	SMU	SMU
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Professional Development (continued)						
Seminars, workshops, conferences	30	56.6%	19	55.8%	11	57.9%
Self-directed learning	21	39.6%	10	29.4%	11	57.9%
Volunteer work	16	30.2%	7	20.6%	9	47.4%
Other	7	13.2%	6	17.6%	1	5.3%
None	11	20.8%	8	23.5%	3	15.8%
Missing	29	54.7%	18	52.9%	11	57.9%
	n = 53	273.6%	*n* = 34	241.0%	*n* = 19	310.6%
Honorary Appointments						
Visiting lecturer	5	9.4%	3	8.8%	2	10.5%
Visiting professor	3	5.7%	3	8.8%	0	0.0%
Visiting research fellow	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other	*5*	9.4%	*5*	14.7%	*0*	0.0%
None	*39*	73.6%	*23*	67.6%	*16*	84.2%
Missing	*5*	9.4%	*4*	11.8%	*1*	5.3%
	n = 53	107.5%	*n* = 34	102.9%	*n* = 19	100.0%
Publications						
Yes	8	15.1%	4	11.8%	4	21.1%
Writing up	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
No	43	81.1%	30	88.2%	13	68.4%
Missing	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%
Accomplishment or Challenge						
Accomplishment	26	49.1%	20	58.8%	6	31.6%
Challenge	10	18.9%	4	11.8%	6	31.6%
None	5	9.4%	3	8.8%	2	10.5%
Missing	12	22.6%	7	20.6%	5	26.3%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%

After graduation, the majority of all respondents ($n = 49$, 92.4%) reported post-degree employment, an objective measure of career outcome, as either full or part-time across both institutions with little difference in status. One respondent was a volunteer (1.9%), one respondent was engaged in continuing education (1.9%), one was seeking employment (1.9%), and one was planning to continue education (1.9%). Again, over half of those employed full-time or half-time ($n = 36$, 67.9%) were employed in capacities outside of entrepreneurial, freelance, or contract work, or faculty positions. Table 4.12 includes the primary employment status and category of respondents after the master's program. Half of ACU alumni ($n = 17$ of 34, 50.0%) reported employment in these post-degree positions during the degree, but only nearly one quarter of SMU alumni ($n = 4$ of 19, 21.1%) indicated that they were employed in the reported position during their degree. After graduation, the highest frequency of ACU alumni reported employment in the public ($n = 10$ of 34, 29.4%) and private sectors ($n = 13$ of 34, 38.2%) in primarily the professional and business services industry ($n = 9$ of 34, 26.5%) or indicated 'Other' ($n = 13$ of 34, 38.2%). In comparison, SMU alumni reported the highest frequency of employment in the public ($n = 4$ of 19, 21.1%) and private sectors ($n = 9$ of 19, 47.4%) across the industries of professional and business services ($n = 7$ of 19, 36.8%), education and health services ($n = 4$ of 19, 21.1%), and "other" ($n = 4$ of 19, 21.1%). Table 4.13 includes the employment sector and industry of respondents after the master's program. The employing organizations of respondents after program completion included academic institutions, local or state government agencies, federal government, healthcare organizations, religious institutions, NGOs, and public and private companies.

Table 4.12

Post-Degree Employment Experiences of Participants

Employment Status and Category	Total	Total Sample	ACU	ACU	SMU	SMU
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Employed full-time	45	84.9%	29	85.3%	16	84.2%
Employed part-time	4	7.5%	4	11.8%	0	0.0%
Volunteer	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
Serving in U.S. military	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Continuing education	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
Seeking employment	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
Planning to continue education	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
Not seeking employment	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%
Full-time and Part-time Employment Category						
Entrepreneur	6	9.4%	4	11.8%	2	10.5%
Temporary/contract work	3	3.8%	1	2.9%	2	10.5%
Freelance	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
Fellowship or residency	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Faculty tenure track	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
Faculty non-tenure	1	1.9%	0	0.0%	1	5.3%
Employed in all other capacities	36	67.9%	27	79.4%	9	47.4%
Not reported or no conditional response	5	9.4%	1	2.9%	4	21.1%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%
Employed during degree						
Yes	21	39.6%	17	50.0%	4	21.1%
No	28	52.8%	16	47.1%	12	63.2%
Missing	4	7.5%	1	2.9%	3	15.8%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%

Table 4.13

Post-Degree Sector and Industry of Primary Employment Status

Primary Status Sector and Industry	Total	Total Sample	ACU	ACU	SMU	SMU
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Primary Employment Sector						
Public	14	26.4%	10	29.4%	4	21.1%
Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)	2	3.8%	2	5.9%	0	0.0%
Non-Profit	6	11.3%	4	11.8%	2	10.5%
Academic	4	7.5%	1	2.9%	3	15.8%
Private	22	41.5%	13	38.2%	9	47.4%
Other	5	9.4%	4	11.8%	1	5.3%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%
Primary Employment Industry						
Construction	2	3.8%	1	2.9%	1	5.3%
Education and Health Services	7	13.2%	3	8.8%	4	21.1%
Financial Activities	3	5.7%	2	5.9%	1	5.3%
Information	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
Leisure and Hospitality	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
Manufacturing	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
Natural Resources and Mining	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	4	7.5%	2	5.9%	2	10.5%
Professional and Business Services	16	30.2%	9	26.5%	7	36.8%
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	1	1.9%	1	2.9%	0	0.0%
Other	17	32.1%	13	38.2%	4	21.1%
	n = 53	100.0%	*n* = 34	100.0%	*n* = 19	100.0%

Both ACU (Figure 4.1) and SMU (Figure 4.2) alumni reported diverse job titles with the only repeated titles including "Mediator" within the title for ACU ($n = 2$ of 34; 5.9%), and "HR Manager" ($n = 2$ of 19, 10.5%) and "Consultant" ($n = 2$ of 19, 10.5%) for SMU.

Figure 4.1. ACU post-degree job titles.

Figure 4.2. SMU post-degree job titles.

As an additional objective career outcome, the overall mean salary reported by alumni increased after the program to $99,638 ($SD = $61,397$). I assessed the assumptions of normality to prepare for independent *t*-test. The reported salary variable (continuous) and alumni groups (categorical) met the independence requirements for the test (Field, 2018). In addition, Q-Q plots (Figure A.10; Figure A.11) and box plots (Figure A.12) displayed

no outliers. Given the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality for ACU salary ($S = .933$, $p = .114$; Figure A.1) and SMU salary ($S = .911$, $p = .119$; Figure A.1), I found the data normally distributed (Field, 2018). After meeting the assumptions of independence, examining outliers, and determining normality, independent t-tests were used to examine post-degree salaries. An independent samples t-test found that DRCM graduates from ACU ($M = \$110,458$, $SD = \$69,222$; Table 4.14) reported higher salaries than DRCM graduates from SMU ($M = \$83,406$, $SD = \$44,558$; Table 4.15). The difference between the two groups was not statistically significant, $t(38) = 1.38$, $p = .175$; 95% CI[-12,604, 66,709]. The effect size was small to medium ($d = .45$) indicating that the difference between the two groups, regardless of statistical significance, was small to moderate.

Table 4.14

ACU Pre and Post Degree Salary

Salary	n	M	SD	Mdn	Range	Min	Max
Salary pre-degree	25	$93,191	$62,503	$90,000	$250,000	$0	$250,000
Salary post-degree	24	$110,458	$69,222	$100,000	$250,000	$0	$250,000

Note. Nine participants did not report pre-degree salary. Ten participants did not report post-degree salary.

Table 4.15

SMU Pre and Post Degree Salary

Salary	n	M	SD	Mdn	Range	Min	Max
Salary pre-degree	13	$52,015	$20,522	$47,000	$65,000	$25,000	$90,000
Salary post-degree	16	$83,406	$44,558	$77,500	$140,000	$30,000	$170,000

Note. Six participants did not report pre-degree salary. Three participants did not report post-degree salary.

Education perceptions. In further examining the post-degree perceptions and differences related to the master's degree and careers between ACU and SMU alumni, the survey collected Likert-type items (ordinal variables) related to the impact of the degree, the relevance of the skills, confidence in dispute resolution areas, and relevance of curricular areas. The Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U test examined differences as it was an appropriate test to examine differences between to independent groups with an ordinal outcome variable (Field, 2018). Appendix H contains all median values for all Likert-item questions. Appendix I contains the revised median values for first Likert-type question regarding impact in which "not applicable" responses were removed as they did not conform to an order.

The first Likert-type item explored the impact of the master's degree by examining changes to different career functions, such as implementing conflict interventions, administrative function, job grade, and salary scale (Table 4.16). In examining alumni as a whole, descriptive statistics demonstrated the majority of alumni reported the highest increases in "planning/implementing/evaluating conflict interventions" ($n = 43$; 81.1%) and "conflict analysis" ($n = 44$; 83.0%), followed by increases in "leadership role" ($n = 37$; 69.8%), "administrative/management functions" ($n = 34$; 64.2%), and "training" ($n = 33$; 62.3%).

After descriptive statistics and removing the "not applicable" responses for the impact questions only, inferential statistics in the form of the Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U test examined if statistically significant differences occurred. The impact levels related to planning, implementing, or evaluating conflict interventions (Figure 4.3) reported by ACU alumni ($n = 30$, $Mdn = 1$) did not differ significantly from

SMU alumni ($n = 19$, $Mdn = 1$), $U = 252.50$, $z = -1.17$, $p = .240$, $r = -0.17$, indicating a

small effect.

Table 4.16

Impact of Degree

Changes to Job Skills or Role	(1) Increased	(2) Remained the same	(3) Decreased	(4) Not Applicable
	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)	n (%)
Planning/implementing/ evaluating conflict interventions	43 (81.1)	6 (11.3)	0 (0.0)	4 (7.5)
Administrative/management functions	34 (64.2)	17 (32.1)	1 (1.9)	1 (1.9)
Leadership role	37 (69.8)	14 (26.4)	0 (0.0)	2 (3.8)
Research	20 (37.7)	20 (37.7)	3 (5.7)	10 (18.9)
Training	33 (62.3)	12 (22.6)	2 (3.8)	6 (11.3)
Job grade	28 (52.8)	13 (24.5)	2 (3.8)	10 (18.9)
Salary scale/renumeration	30 (56.6)	12 (22.6)	5 (9.4)	6 (11.3)
Conflict analysis	44 (83.0)	5 (9.4)	0 (0.0)	4 (7.5)

Levels of impact related to administrative or management functions (Figure 4.4) reported

by ACU alumni ($n = 33$, $Mdn = 1$) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni ($n = 19$,

$Mdn = 1$), $U = 330.00$, $z = 0.38$, $p = .705$, $r = 0.05$, indicating no to very small effect.

Levels of impact related to changes in leadership role (Figure 4.5) reported by ACU

alumni ($n = 33$, $Mdn = 1$) did not differ from SMU alumni ($n = 18$, $Mdn = 1$), $U = 222.00$,

$z = -1.91$, $p = .056$, $r = -0.27$, indicating a small to medium effect. Levels of impact

related to research (Figure 4.6) reported by ACU alumni ($n = 27$, $Mdn = 2$) did not differ

significantly from SMU alumni ($n = 16$, $Mdn = 1.5$), $U = 203.50$, $z = -0.35$, $p = .725$, $r = -$

0.05, indicating no to very small effect. Levels of impact related to training (Figure 4.7) reported by ACU alumni ($n = 30$, $Mdn = 1$) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni ($n = 17$, $Mdn = 1$), $U = 188.00$, $z = -1.86$, $p = .063$, $r = -0.27$, indicating a small to medium effect. Levels of impact related to changes in job grade (Figure 4.8) reported by ACU alumni ($n = 27$, $Mdn = 1$) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni ($n = 16$, $Mdn = 1$), $U = 172.50$, $z = -1.31$, $p = .190$, $r = -0.20$, indicating a small to medium effect. Levels of impact related to changes in salary scale or remuneration (Figure 4.9) reported by ACU alumni ($n = 31$, $Mdn = 1$) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni ($n = 16$, $Mdn = 1$), $U = 221.50$, $z = -0.70$, $p = .484$, $r = -0.10$, indicating a small effect. Impact levels related to conflict analysis (Figure 4.10) reported by ACU alumni ($n = 30$, $Mdn = 1$) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni ($n = 19$, $Mdn = 1$), $U = 262.00$, $z = -0.90$, $p = .368$, $r = -0.13$, indicating a small effect. Overall, reported levels of impact of the degree related to changes in areas or functions prior to the master's degree did not differ by program university.
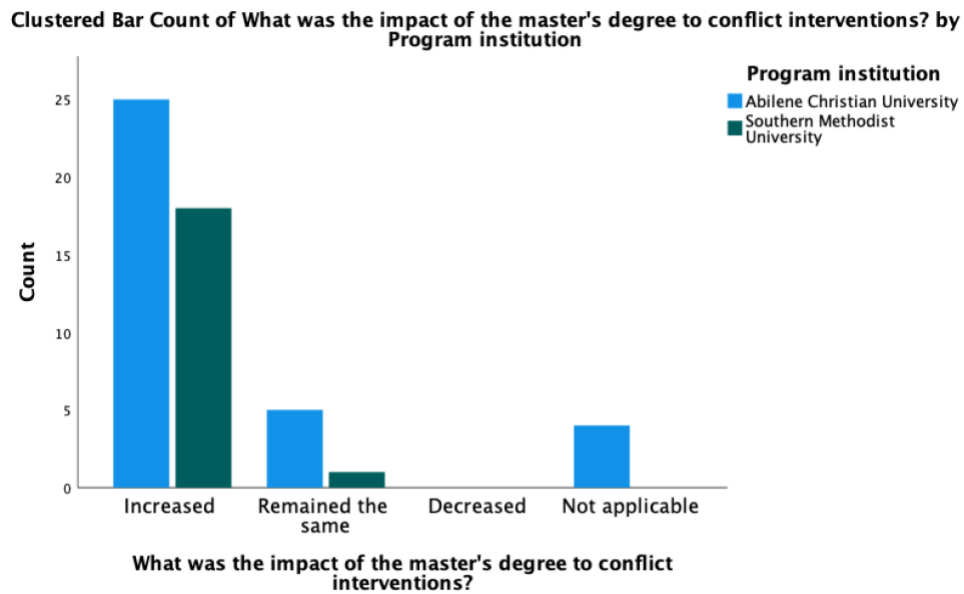
Figure 4.3. Impact of master's degree to conflict interventions.
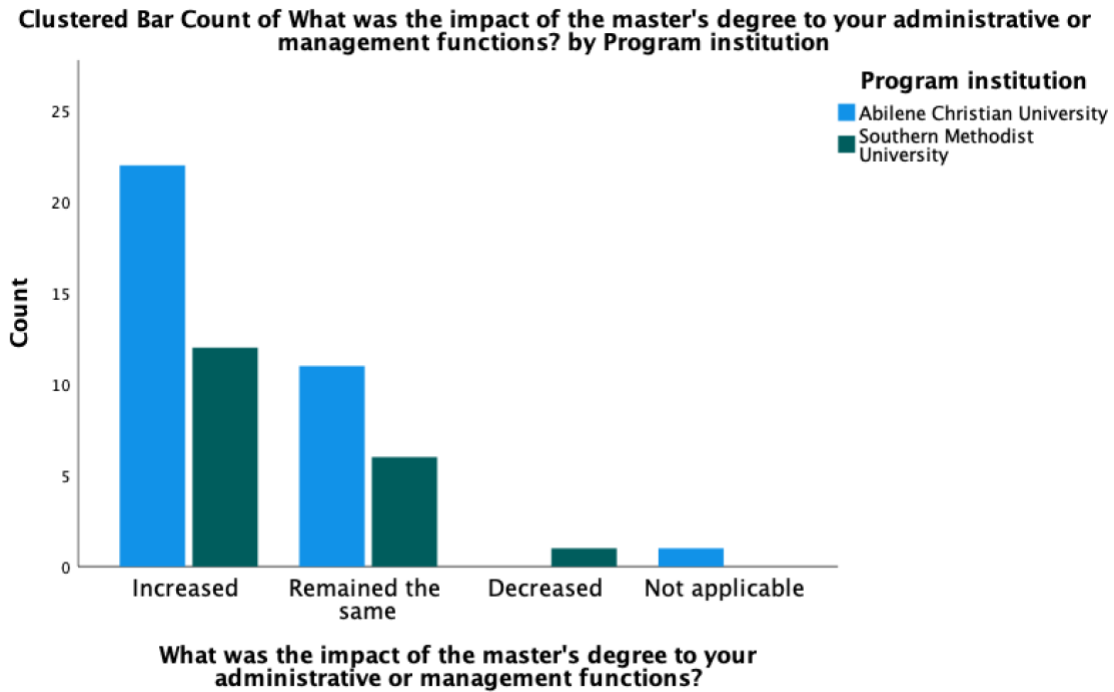
Figure 4.4. Impact of master's degree to administrative or management functions.
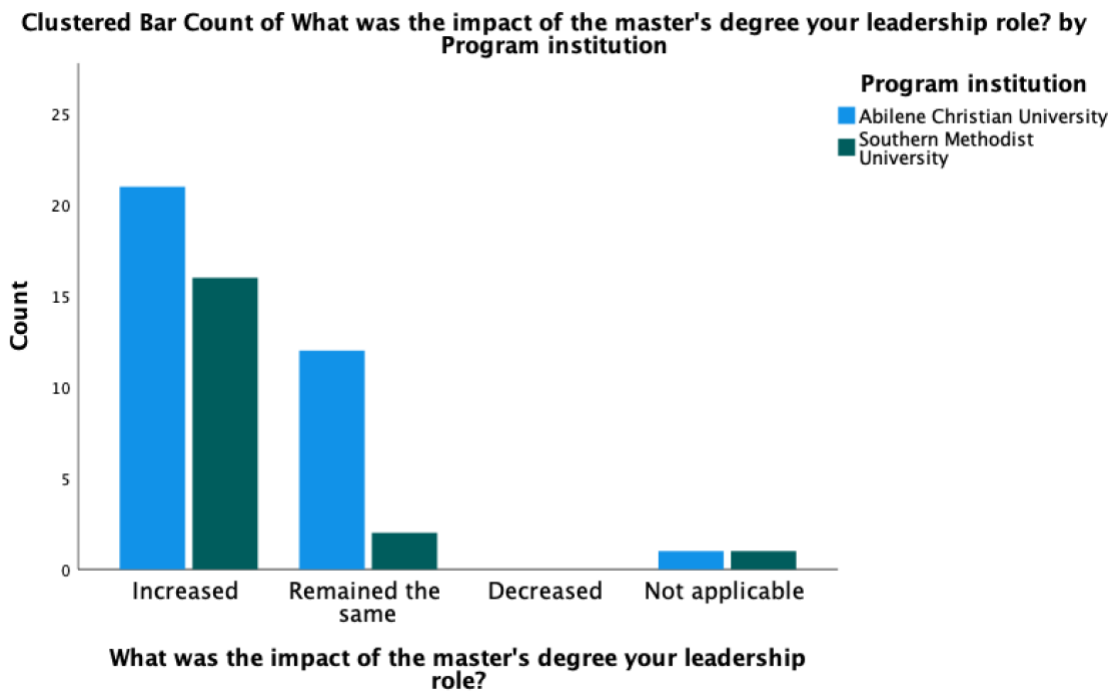
Figure 4.5. Impact of master's degree to leadership role.
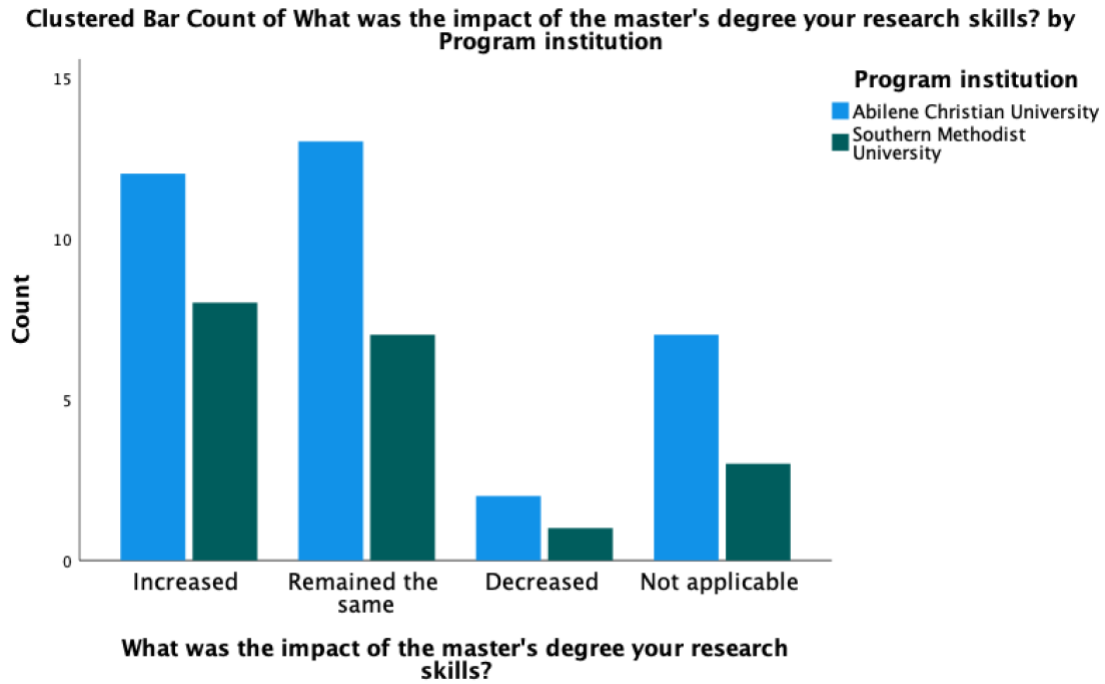
Figure 4.6. Impact of master's degree to research skills.
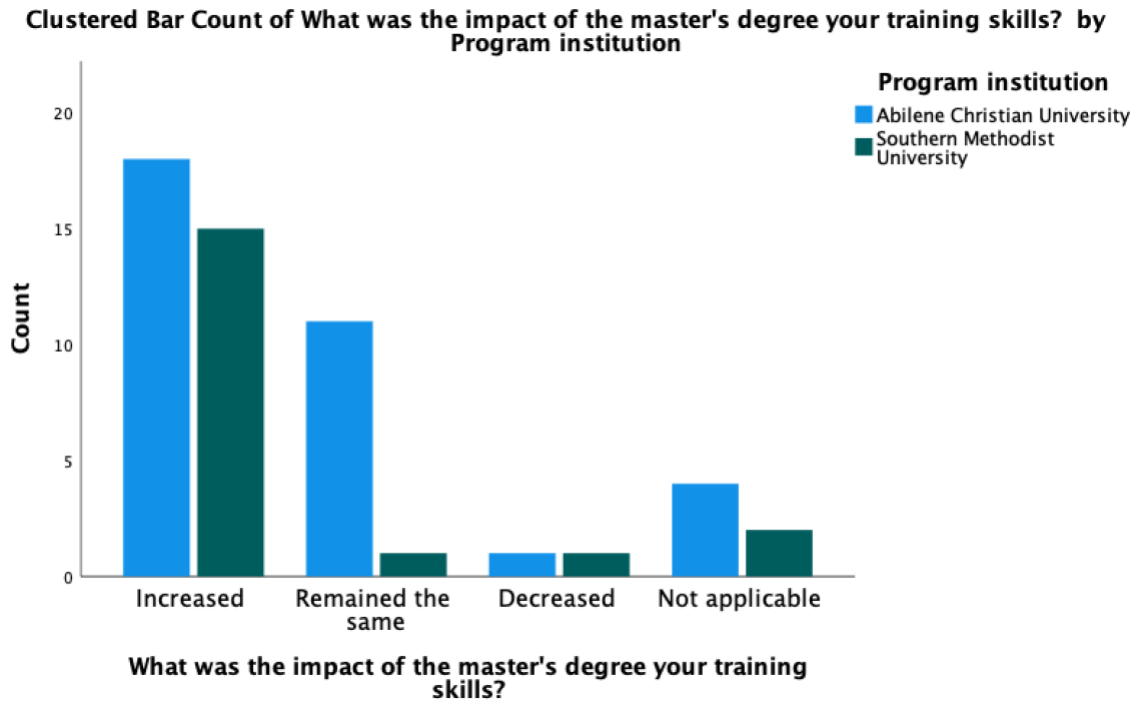
Figure 4.7. Impact of master's degree to training skills.

Figure 4.8. Impact of master's degree to job grade.

Figure 4.9. Impact of master's degree to salary.

Clustered Bar Count of What was the impact of the master's degree your conflict analysis skills? by Program institution

Figure 4.10. Impact of master's degree to conflict analysis skills.

The second Likert-type question set explored perception of relevance to dispute resolution and conflict management skills in alumni current roles (Table 4.17). Descriptive statistics demonstrated the majority of alumni as a whole reported the relevance of Conflict analysis and Approaches to conflict intervention as "very relevant" with both reporting values of $n = 26$ or 49.1%.

After descriptive statistics, inferential statistics in the form of the Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U test examined if statistically significant differences occurred. Relevance of conflict analysis (Figure 4.11) reported by ACU alumni ($Mdn = 4$) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni ($Mdn = 5$), $U = 342.50$, $z = 0.39$, $p = .695$, $r = 0.05$, indicating no to very small effect. Relevance of approaches to conflict intervention or conflict management (Figure 4.12) reported by ACU alumni ($Mdn = 4.5$) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni ($Mdn = 4$), $U = 297.00$, $z = -0.52$, $p = .603$, $r = -0.07$,

indicating a very small effect. Relevance of understanding stages of conflict (Figure 4.13) reported by ACU alumni (*Mdn* = 4) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni (*Mdn* = 4), *U* = 261.50, *z* = -1.21, *p* = .228, *r* = -0.17, indicating a small effect. Relevance of consuming, applying, and using research in practice (Figure 4.14) reported by ACU alumni (*Mdn* = 4) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni (*Mdn* = 3), *U* = 321.00, *z* = -0.04, *p* = .970, *r* = -0.01, indicating no effect. Overall, reported levels of relevance of learned skills did not differ by program university.

Table 4.17

Relevance of Skills to Current Role

Conflict Resolution Skills	(1) Not Applicable	(2) Irrelevant	(3) Somewhat Relevant	(4) Relevant	(5) Very Relevant
	n (%)	n (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)	*n* (%)
Conflict Analysis	4 (7.5)	2 (3.8)	5 (9.4)	16 (30.2)	26 (49.1)
Approaches to Conflict Intervention	4 (7.5)	2 (3.8)	7 (13.2)	14 (26.4)	26 (49.1)
Understanding Stages of Conflict	4 (7.5)	2 (3.8)	8 (15.1)	18 (34.0)	21 (39.6)
Research in Practice	7 (13.2)	5 (9.4)	12 (22.6)	13 (24.5)	16 (30.2)
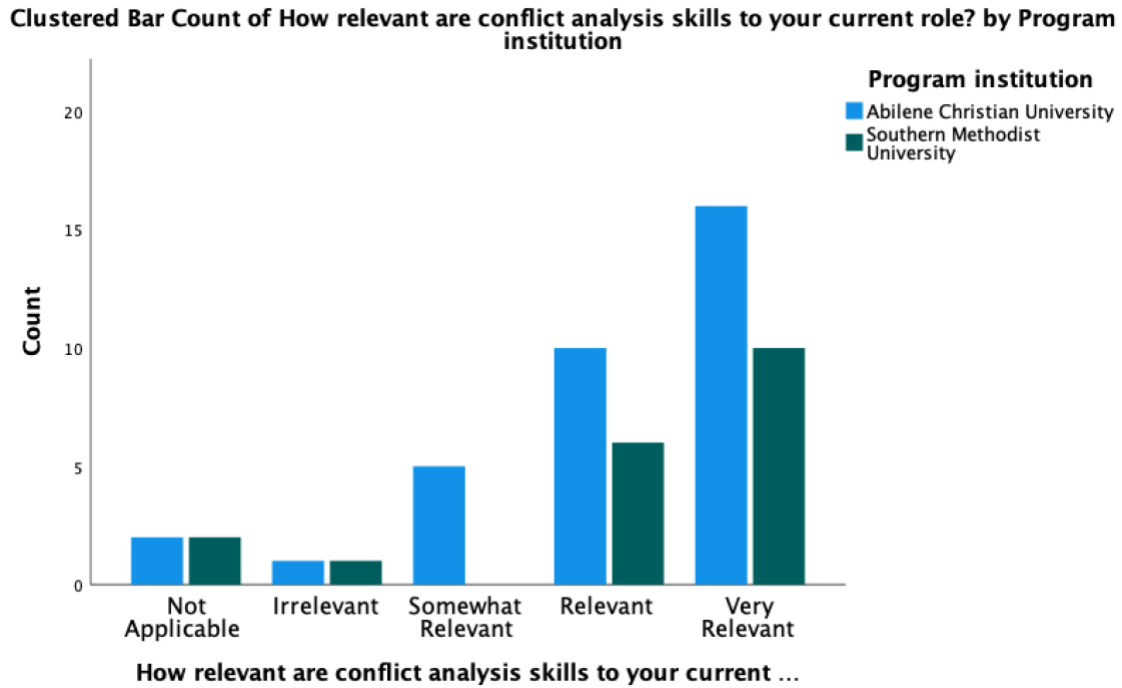
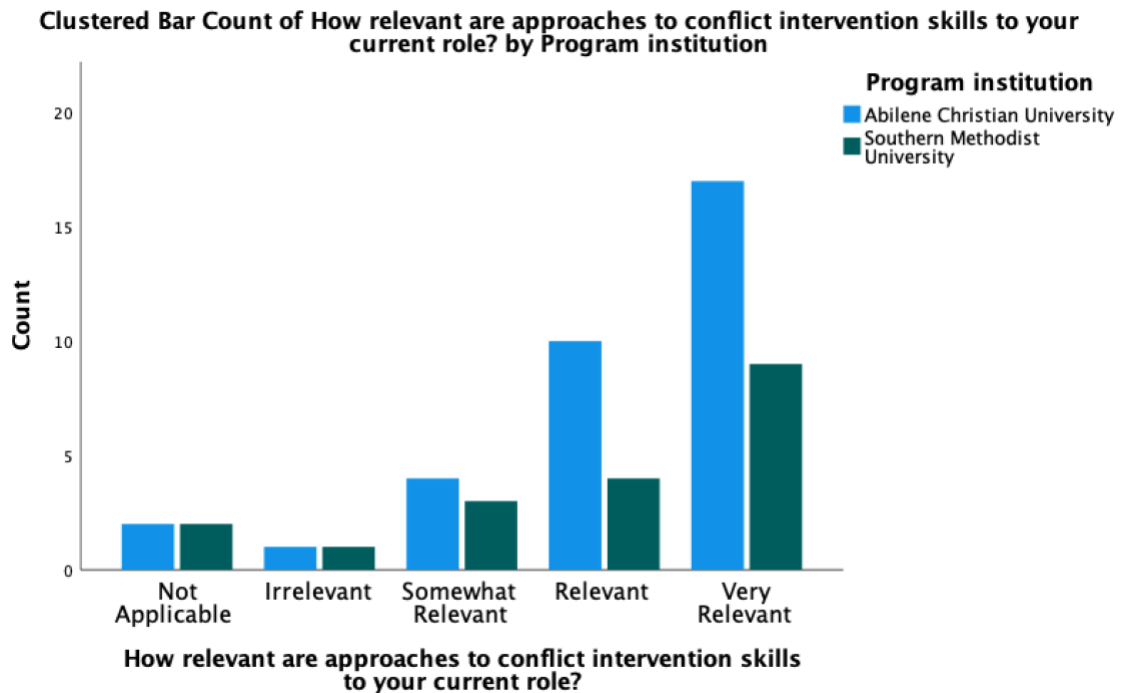*Figure 4.11.* Relevance of conflict analysis to current role.

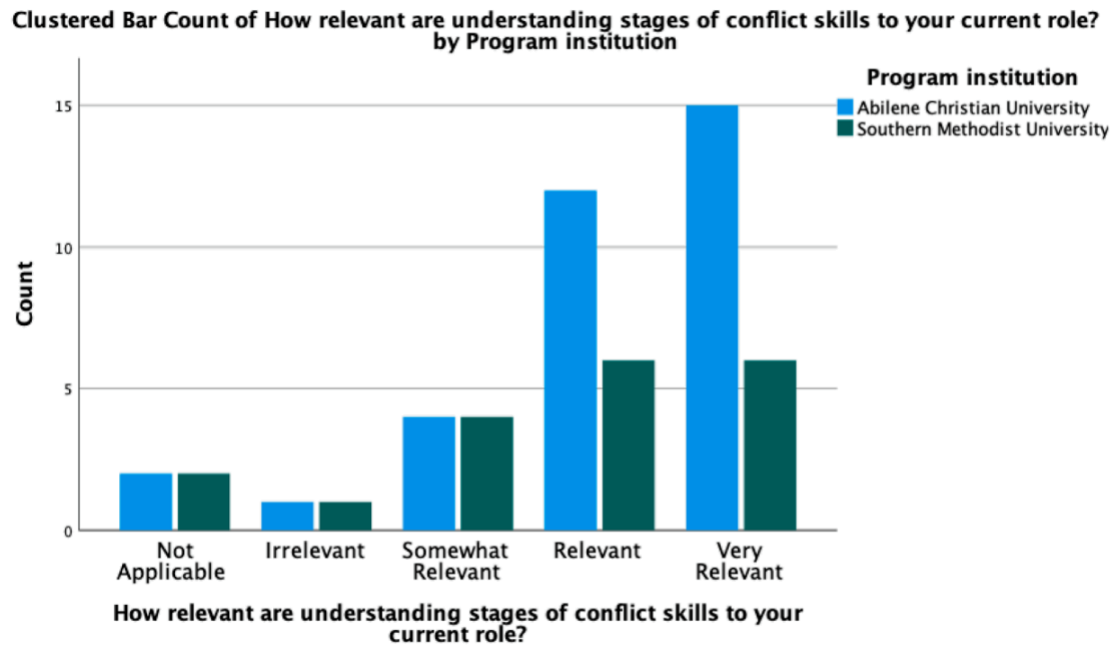*Figure 4.12.* Relevance of approaches to conflict intervention to current role.

Figure 4.13. Relevance of understanding stages of conflict to current role.
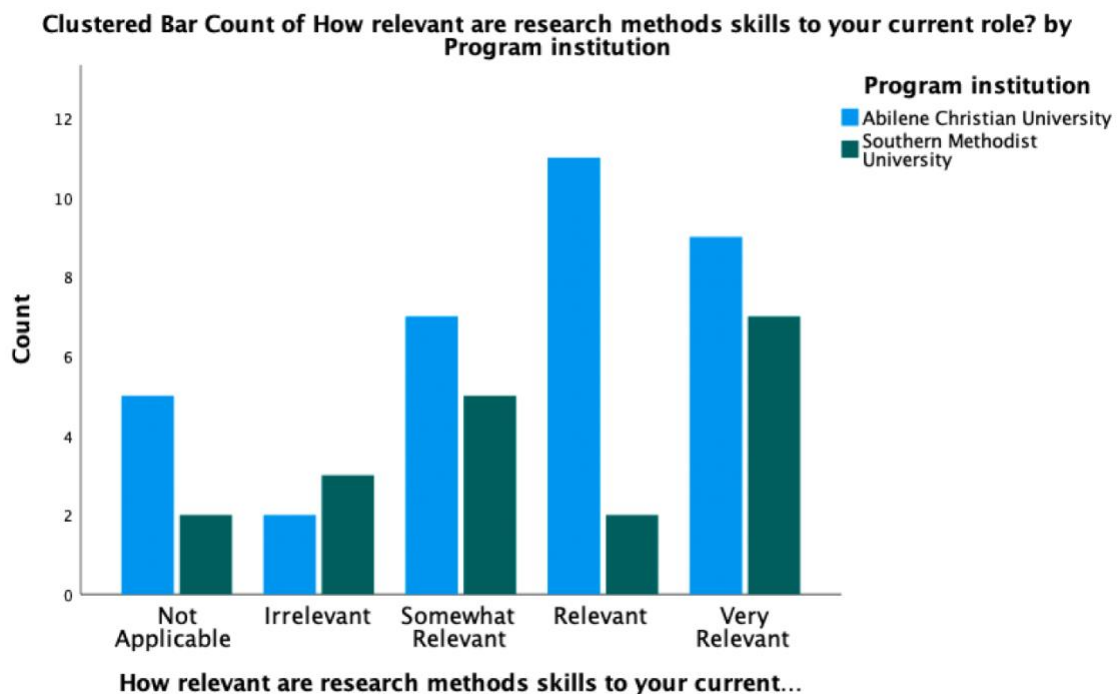

Figure 4.14. Relevance of research methods skills to current role.

The third Likert-type item set reported the level of confidence in applying dispute resolution and conflict management skills since completing the degree including conflict analysis, approaches to conflict intervention, understanding the stages of conflict, and applying research in practice (Table 4.18). Descriptive statistics demonstrated that nearly half of alumni perceive themselves to be "very confident" in their conflict analysis skills ($n = 26$; 49.1%) and nearly half believe they are "confident" in their understanding of the stages of conflict ($n = 26$; 49.1%).

Table 4.18

Confidence in Skills Since Completing the Master's Degree

Conflict Resolution Skills	(1) Not Applicable n (%)	(2) Not Confident n (%)	(3) Somewhat Confident n (%)	(4) Confident n (%)	(5) Very Confident n (%)
Conflict Analysis	1 (1.9)	1 (1.9)	5 (9.4)	20 (37.7)	26 (49.1)
Approaches to Conflict Intervention	1 (1.9)	0 (0.0)	6 (11.3)	22 (41.5)	24 (45.3)
Understanding Stages of Conflict	1 (1.9)	0 (0.0)	3 (5.7)	26 (49.1)	23 (43.4)
Research in Practice	3 (5.7)	3 (5.7)	7 (13.2)	19 (35.8)	21 (39.6)

After descriptive statistics, inferential statistics in the form of the Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U test examined if statistically significant differences occurred. Confidence levels of conflict analysis (Figure 4.15) reported by ACU alumni ($Mdn = 4.5$) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni ($Mdn = 4$), $U = 349.50$, $z = 0.54$, $p = .589$, $r = 0.07$, indicating a very small effect. Confidence in approaches to conflict intervention

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or conflict management (Figure 4.16) reported by ACU alumni (*Mdn* = 4) did not differ from SMU alumni (*Mdn* = 4), U = 331.50, z = 0.17, p = .863, r = 0.02, indicating no effect. Confidence of understanding stages of conflict (Figure 4.17) reported by ACU alumni (*Mdn* = 4) did not differ from SMU alumni (*Mdn* = 4), U = 363.00, z = 0.83, p = .407, r = 0.11, indicating a small effect. Confidence in consuming, applying, and using research in practice (Figure 4.18) reported by ACU alumni (*Mdn* = 4) did not differ from SMU alumni (*Mdn* = 4), U = 355.00, z = 0.63, p = .529, r = 0.09, indicating a very small effect. Overall, reported levels of confidence in skills learned by alumni in their respective master's degree programs did not differ by program university.
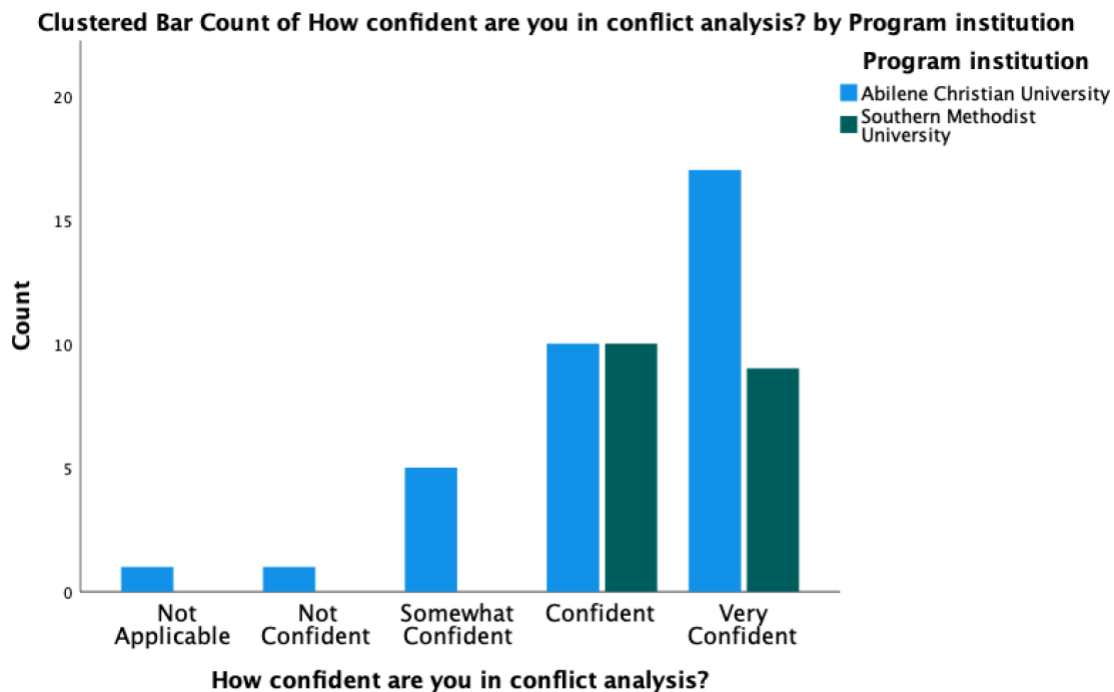
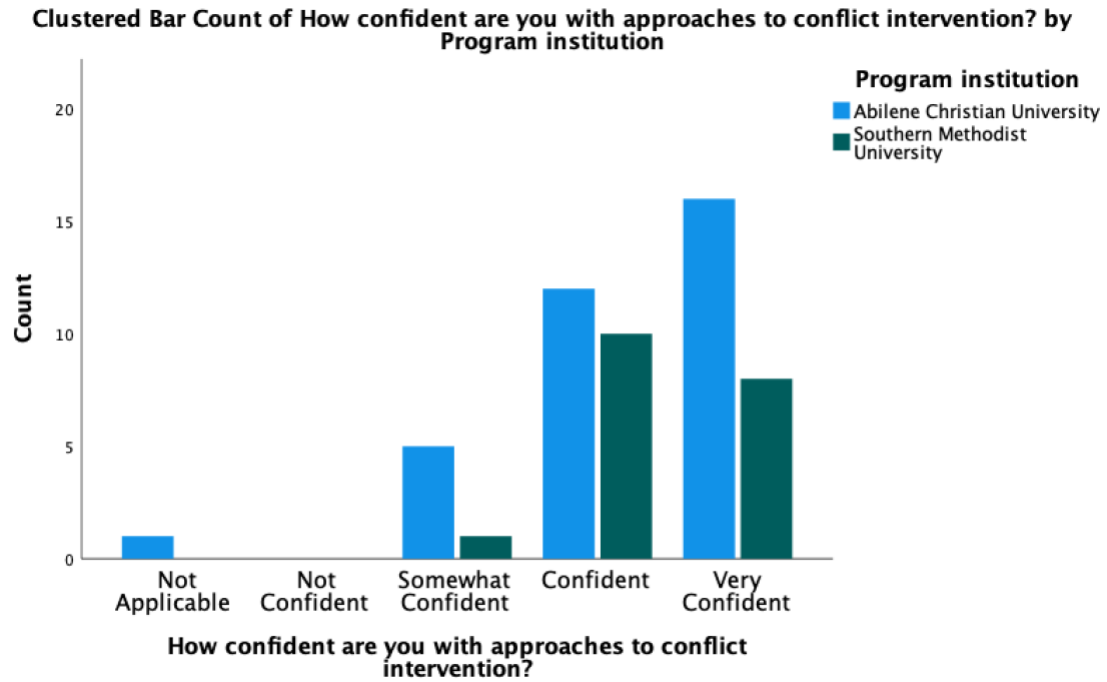*Figure 4.15.* Confidence in conflict analysis skills.

Figure 4.16. Confidence in approaches to conflict intervention.
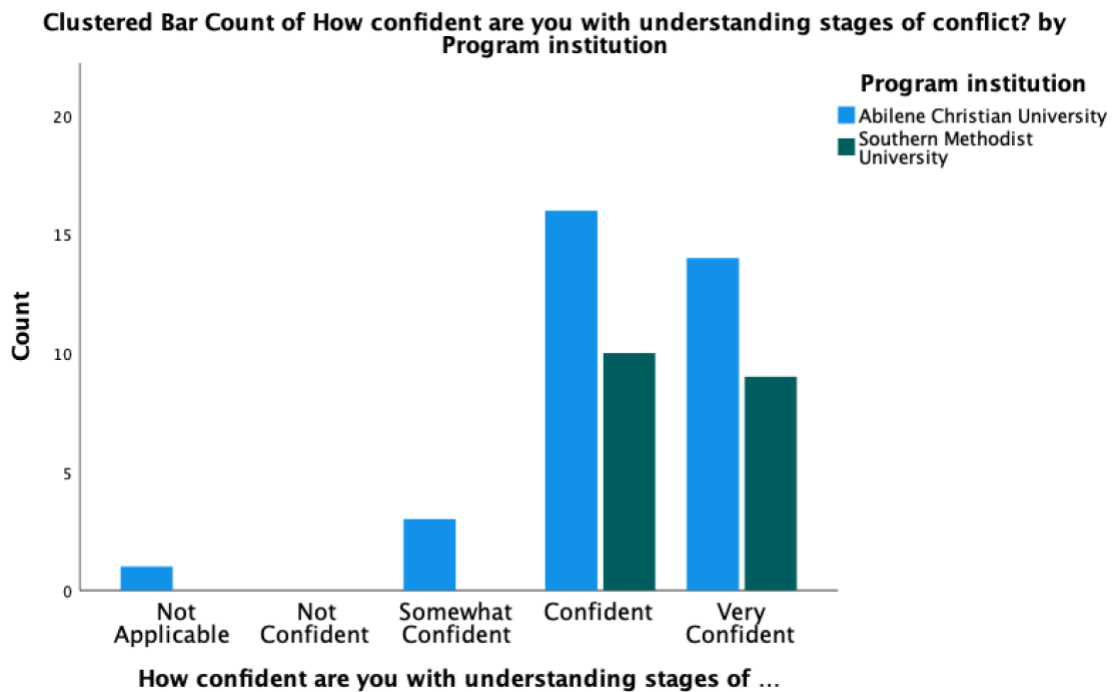

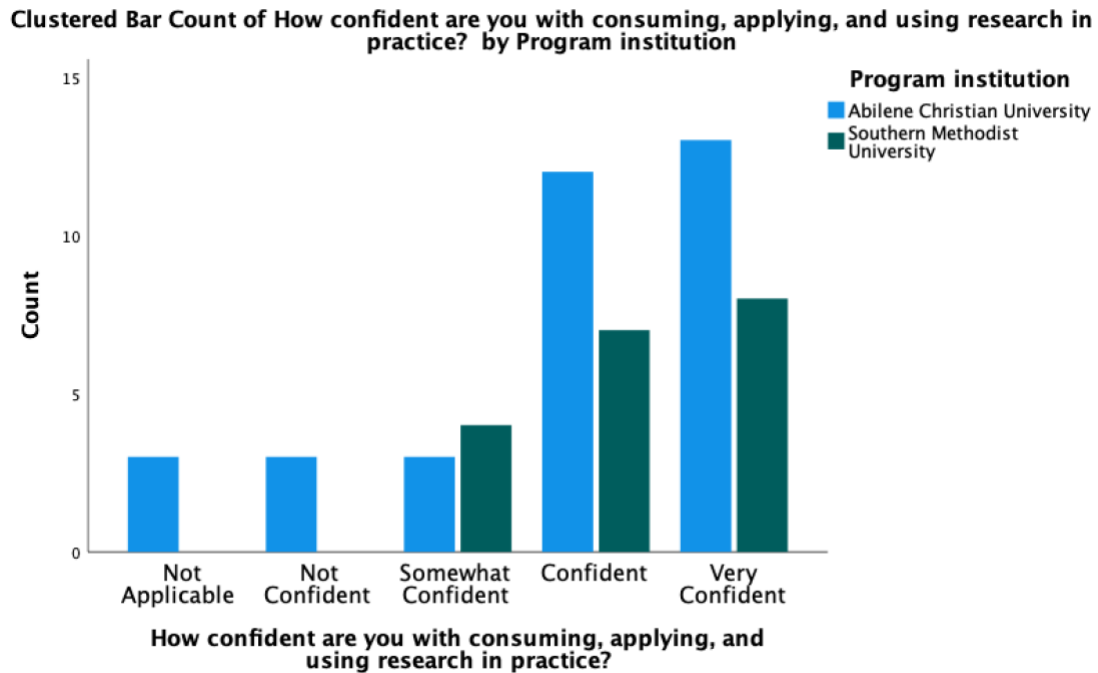*Figure 4.17.* Confidence in understanding stages of conflict.

Figure 4.18. Confidence in consuming, applying, and using research in practice.

The final Likert-type question set measured the perceived relevance of the dispute resolution and conflict management curricula to their current role, such as conflict theory, sector or context-specific course, field experience, and the overall master's program (Table 4.16). Descriptive statistics found that the highest levels of alumni perceptions of relevance of the DRCM coursework where half of alumni reported approaches to intervention were "relevant" (*n* = 23; 43.4%) and nearly half reported the overall master's program to be "very relevant" (*n* = 24; 45.3%).

After descriptive statistics, inferential statistics in the form of the Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney *U* test examined if statistically significant differences occurred. Relevance levels of conflict theory and analysis (Figure 4.19) reported by ACU alumni (*Mdn* = 4) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni (*Mdn* = 4), *U* = 327.50, *z* = 0.87, *p* = .931, *r* = 0.12, indicating a small effect.

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Table 4.19

Relevance of Master's Courses to Current Role

Master's Courses	(1) Not Applicable *n* (%)	(2) Irrelevant *n* (%)	(3) Somewhat Relevant *n* (%)	(4) Relevant *n* (%)	(5) Very Relevant *n* (%)
Conflict theory and analysis	5 (9.4)	3 (5.7)	10 (18.9)	17 (32.1)	18 (34.0)
Approaches to intervention	2 (3.8)	2 (3.8)	8 (15.1)	23 (43.4)	18 (34.0)
Stages of Conflict	3 (5.7)	3 (5.7)	9 (17.0)	19 (35.8)	19 (35.8)
Sector or context-specific courses	8 (15.1)	4 (7.5)	11 (20.8)	15 (28.3)	15 (28.3)
Research methods courses	12 (22.6)	7 (13.2)	16 (30.2)	12 (22.6)	6 (11.3)
Field experience	12 (22.6)	3 (5.7)	10 (18.9)	12 (22.6	16 (30.2)
Overall master's program	2 (3.8)	5 (9.4)	8 (15.1)	14 (26.4)	24 (45.3)

Relevance in approaches to intervention (Figure 4.20) reported by ACU alumni (*Mdn* = 4) did not differ from SMU alumni (*Mdn* = 4), *U* = 327.00, *z* = 0.08, *p* = .937, *r* = 0.01, indicating no effect. Relevance of stages of conflict (Figure 4.21) reported by ACU alumni (*Mdn* = 4) did not differ from SMU alumni (*Mdn* = 4), *U* = 302.00, *z* = -0.41, *p* = .682, *r* = -0.06, indicating a very small effect. Relevance in sector or context-specific courses (Figure 4.22) reported by ACU alumni (*Mdn* = 3.5) did not differ significantly from SMU alumni (*Mdn* = 4.00), *U* = 403.50, *z* = 1.54, *p* = .124, *r* = 0.21, indicating a small to medium effect. Relevance in research methods courses (Figure 4.23) to alumni current roles reported by ACU alumni (*Mdn* = 3) did not differ from SMU alumni (*Mdn* =

3), $U = 383.50$, $z = 1.15$, $p = .249$, $r = 0.16$, indicating a small effect. Relevance in field

experience courses (Figure 4.24) reported by ACU alumni ($Mdn = 4$) did not differ from

SMU alumni ($Mdn = 4$), $U = 332.00$, $z = 0.17$, $p = .863$, $r = 0.02$, indicating no effect.

Relevance levels of the overall master's program to their current role (Figure 4.25)

reported by ACU alumni ($Mdn = 4$) did not differ from SMU alumni ($Mdn = 4$), $U =$

293.00, $z = -0.59$, $p = .554$, $r = -0.08$, indicating a very small effect. Overall, alumni

reported levels of relevance of courses or curricular areas to their current roles did not
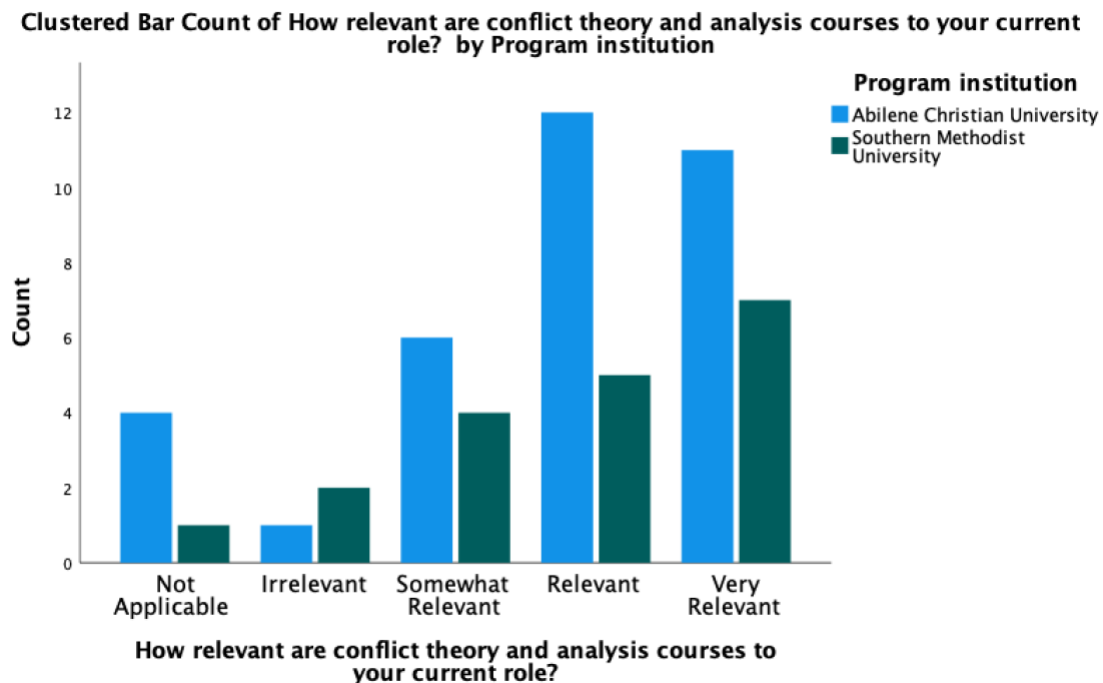
differ by program university.

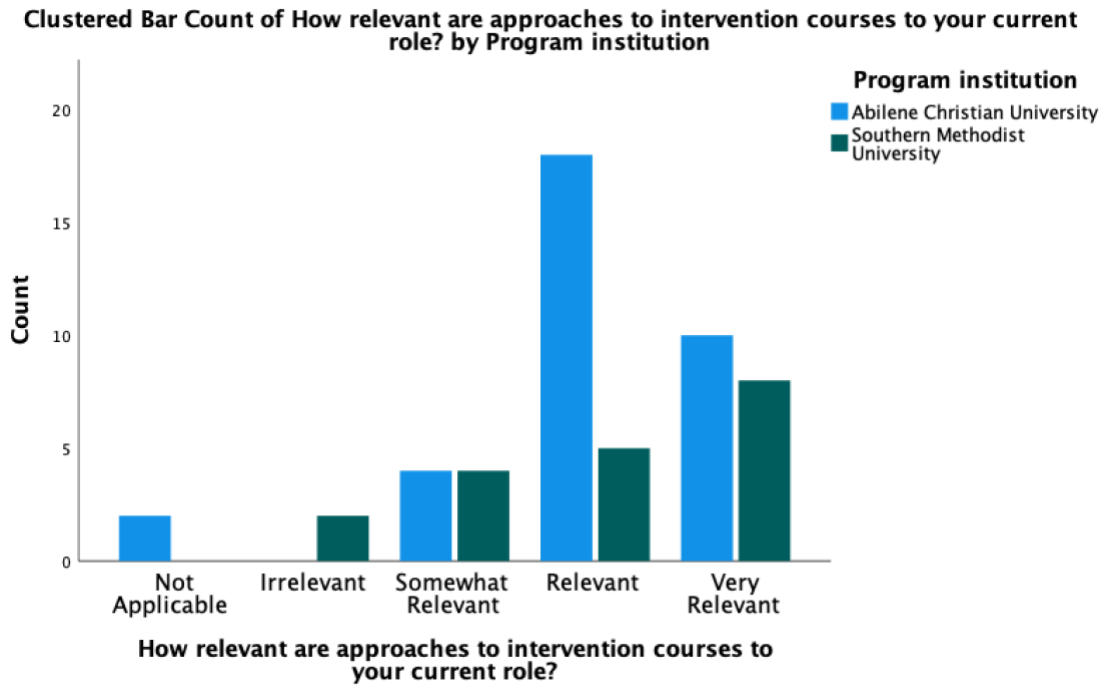*Figure 4.19.* Relevance of conflict theory courses to current role.

Clustered Bar Count of How relevant are approaches to intervention courses to your current role? by Program institution

Figure 4.20. Relevance of approaches to intervention courses to current role.

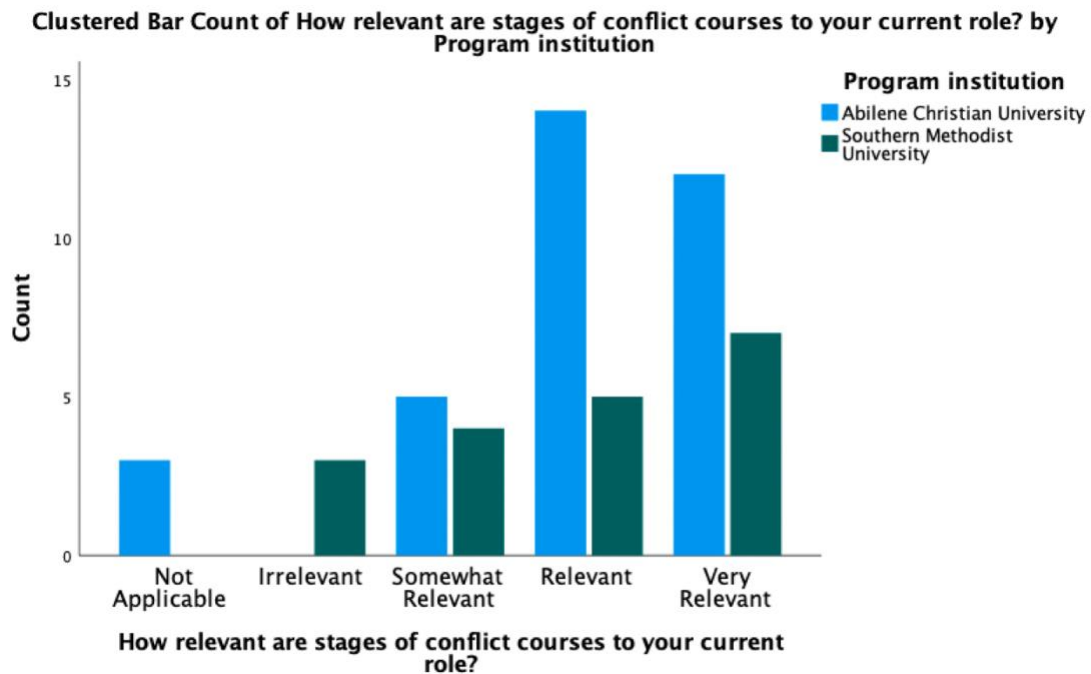**Clustered Bar Count of How relevant are stages of conflict courses to your current role? by Program institution**

Figure 4.21. Relevance of stages of conflict courses to current role.

Clustered Bar Count of How relevant are sector or context-specific courses to your current role? by Program institution
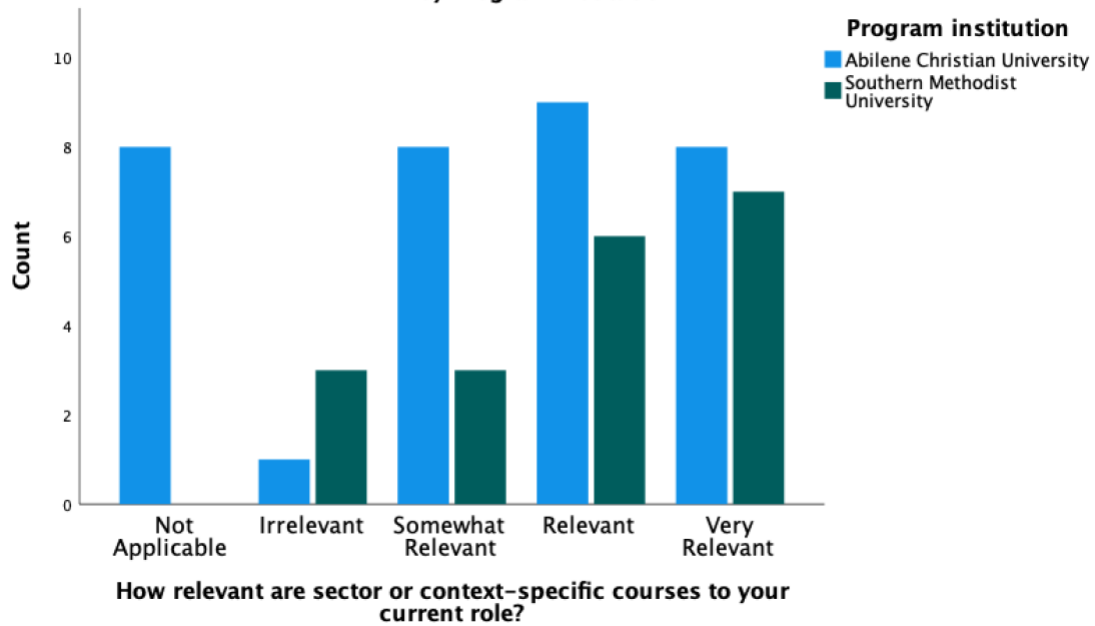
Figure 4.22. Relevance of sector or context-specific courses to current role.

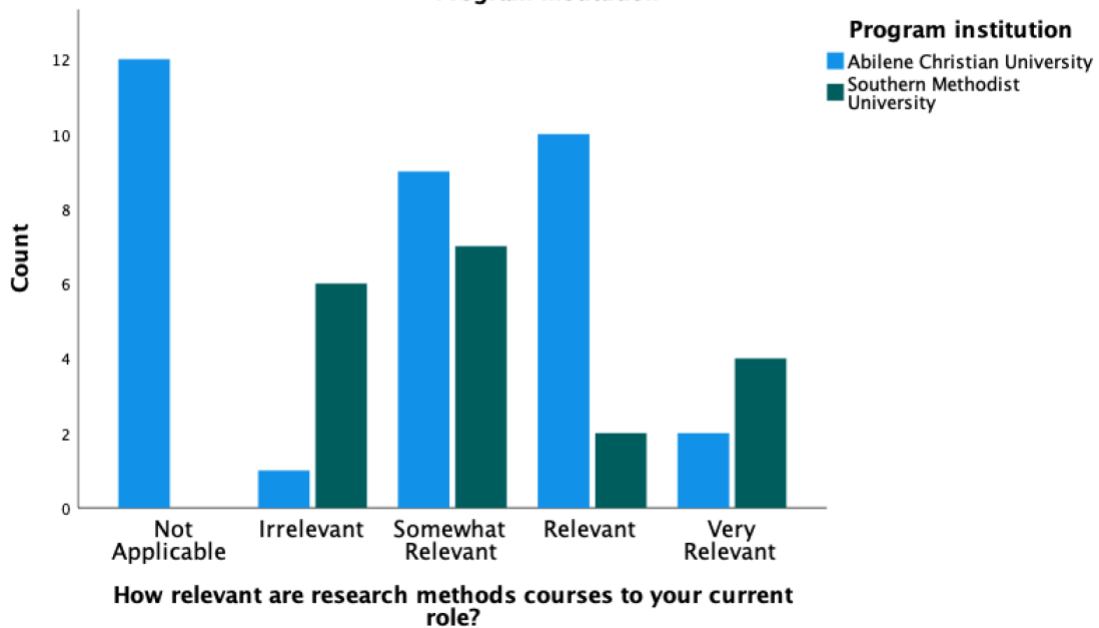**Clustered Bar Count of How relevant are research methods courses to your current role? by Program institution**

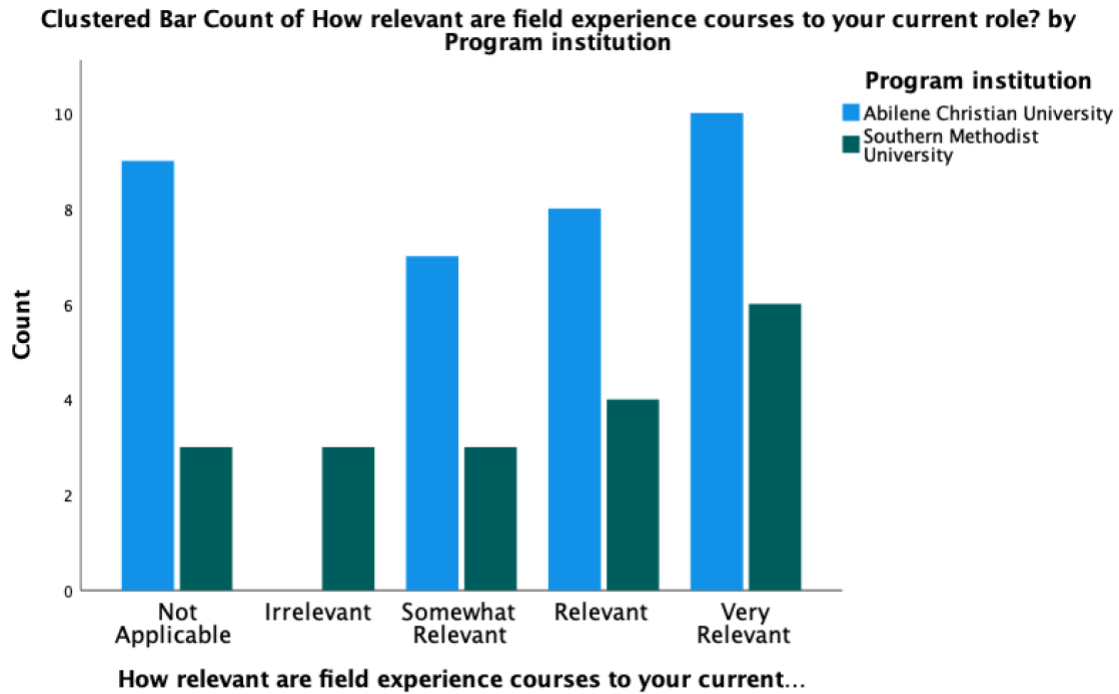*Figure 4.23.* Relevance of research methods courses to current role.

Figure 4.24. Relevance of field experience courses to current role.
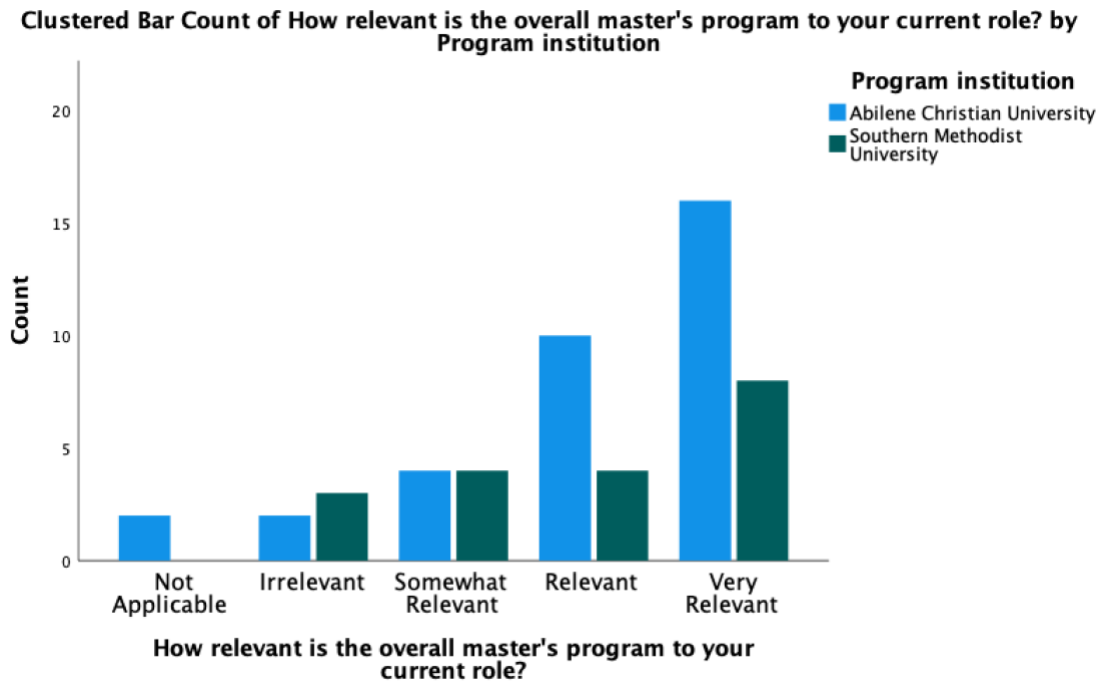

Figure 4.25. Relevance of overall master's program to current role.

Career perceptions. Scale instruments examined alumni perceptions of their employability, career success, and professional commitment. I assessed the assumptions of normality to prepare for independent *t*-test. The reported scale variables (continuous) and alumni groups (categorical) met the independence requirements for the test (Field, 2018). In addition, Q-Q plots for self-perceived employability (ACU, Figure A.7; SMU, Figure A.8), subjective career success (ACU, Figure A.4; SMU, Figure A.5), and professional commitment (ACU, Figure A.1; SMU, Figure A.2) displayed normal distributions. Box plots for self-perceived employability (Figure A.9), subjective career success (Figure A.6), and professional commitment (Figure A.3) displayed minimal outliers that I retained as they represented extreme values for the qualitative phase. Given the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality (Figure A.1) for self-perceived employability (ACU, S = .972, p = .506; SMU, S = .922, p = .122), subjective career success (ACU, S = .941, p = .066; SMU, S = .911, p = .078), and professional commitment (ACU, S = .954, p = .165; SMU, S = .910, p = .073), I found the data normally distributed (Field, 2018). After meeting the assumptions of independence, examining outliers, and determining normality, independent *t*-tests were used to examine the scale data.

The first scale analyzed was the self-perceived employability scale. An independent samples *t*-test found that DRCM graduates from Abilene Christian University (M = 4.05, SD = 0.54) scored higher on the self-perceived employability measure than DRCM graduates from Southern Methodist University (M = 3.79, SD = 0.86). The difference between the two groups was not statistically significant, $t(51)$ = 1.34, p = .187; 95% CI[-0.13, 0.64]. The effect size was between small and medium (d = .36).

The second scale recorded the perceptions of alumni career success. Levene's

Test for Equality of the Variances was significant ($p = .004$), so I reported the second line

results for "equal variances not assumed" (Field, 2018). An independent samples t-test

found that DRCM graduates from Abilene Christian University ($M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.72$)

scored higher on the subjective career success measure than DRCM graduates from

Southern Methodist University ($M = 3.66$, $SD = 1.15$). The difference between the two

groups was not statistically significant, $t(27) = 1.26$, $p = .218$; 95% CI[-0.23, 0.97]. The

effect size was between small and medium ($d = .39$).

The third and final scale recorded alumni perceptions of professional

commitment. Levene's Test for Equality of the Variances was significant ($p = .026$), so I

reported the second line results for "equal variances not assumed" (Field, 2018). An

independent samples t-test found that DRCM graduates from Abilene Christian

University ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.55$) scored higher on the professional commitment measure

than DRCM graduates from Southern Methodist University ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 0.86$). The

difference between the two groups was not statistically significant $t(27) = 1.38$, $p = .178$;

95% CI[-0.15, 0.75]. The effect size was very small ($d = .19$).

The preceding section described the quantitative findings in answer to the

quantitative research question, "What are the career outcomes and differences between

the alumni of the two DRCM graduate programs?" After analyzing the data from the

electronic survey, I grouped the findings into four primary areas: demographics,

employment experiences and outcomes, education perceptions, and career perceptions.

Alumni reported diverse employment, various fields and industries, and salary after

graduation. Alumni also perceived relevance and confidence in the skills learned, as well

as impact of the degree on their careers. Additionally, alumni reported on their perceived employability, career success, and professional commitment. Overall, I found no statistically significant differences between the DRCM program alumni outcomes and perceptions. The following section details the process used to purposely sample from the quantitative data analysis and results in preparation for the qualitative interview phase.

Identifying Cases for Qualitative Data Collection

In explanatory sequential mixed methods research designs, the first point of integration occurs after the quantitative data analysis in which the results from the quantitative data analysis inform the sampling of the participants for the qualitative phase (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative phase presented the range of objective backgrounds, careers, and perceptions of DRCM alumni, but to illuminate the extreme aspects of the range of DRCM alumni subjective experiences, I conducted purposeful sampling, first using criterion-based, then extreme case sampling, to identify extreme results from the employability and career success scales. Of the extreme results from the employability and career success scores, I identified nine individuals for the secondary, qualitative phase of data collection. I reached out to each individual by email. Four individuals confirmed and accepted the invitation to interview. The following section described the participants and qualitative data findings.

Qualitative Data Findings

The purpose of this section was to answer the second, qualitative question, specifically, "How do alumni from the two DRCM graduate programs perceive their careers, education, and employability?" Qualitative data collected included narrative data over in-depth interviews with four dispute resolution and conflict management alumni

representing extreme values, both high and low, across the scales of employability and career success. The four cases represented both programs from ACU and SMU (Table 4.20). Analysis of the qualitative interviews generated four case descriptions of the alumni, as well as five themes. In this section, I describe each alumni participant, the major thematic findings and sub-categories, and address the qualitative research question.

Table 4.20

Qualitative Cases

Pseudonym	Age	Institution	Graduation Year
Carol	63	ACU	2012
Nathanael	63	ACU	2015
Olivia	56	SMU	2012
Jasmine	43	SMU	2013

Carol

Carol was 63 years old at the time of the interview and completed the online master's program in conflict resolution and reconciliation at Abilene Christian University in 2012. Carol received her bachelor's degree in sociology and social work before joining the master's program. She served in the role of negotiator for a state agency in Texas and joined the master's program because the degree was online, offering her the ability to work and pursue school, and because the content appeared to blend well with her background in social work. At the time of the interview, Carol had retired from the state agency.

Nathanael

Nathanael was 63 years old and completed the online master's degree in conflict resolution and reconciliation at Abilene Christian University in 2015. His background has

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been in the financial services and business industry since 1989 in increasingly lucrative and niche specialty areas and roles. Nathanael joined the master's program as it offered an alternative career path after retirement and spoke to his interest in legal adjacent studies. He now serves as senior vice president for partnership development in the financial services industry and plans to retire in the next year. At that time, Nathanael may decide to pursue some mediation or church conflict work.

Olivia

Olivia was 56 years old and completed the master's program in dispute resolution from Southern Methodist University in 2012. Olivia had a variety of careers prior to joining the master's program including pattern making in the fashion industry and early childhood education. Her motivation for joining the master's program was to find a new career path and the degree offered, what she perceived to be, a "good fit" given her inherent mediation skills in family disputes. After completing the master's degree, she obtained a conflict-specific internship role conducting negotiation conferences and mini-mediations at a Texas state agency that eventually led to full-time employment before receiving the call to ministry. Olivia completed her seminary program in fall 2019 and has since struggled to find the "really good job." Olivia was laid off from her retail job in March 2020 as a result of COVID-19, and at the time of the interview, was currently unemployed and searching for work in the legal, jewelry, or ministry fields.

Jasmine

Jasmine was 43 years old and completed the master's program in dispute resolution from Southern Methodist University in 2013. She received her bachelor's degree in journalism and had previously attended one year of law school prior to joining

the master's program. Jasmine originally served as a social media coordinator at a private university in Texas but has since transitioned to the role of ombudsman for a university in the South. She joined the master's program out of convenience, but also because it supported her passion for helping others.

Thematic Analysis

The analysis of the qualitative interviews yielded five themes related to how alumni from the two programs perceived their careers and success, DRCM graduate education, and employability: diverse career experiences and outcomes, graduate program management, application and impact of the degree, status of DRCM employment and market, and employability perceptions.

Diverse career experience and outcomes. The first theme encapsulated each of the participants' extraordinary diversity of career experiences and outcomes, both before and after completing their respective master's degrees. All four alumni shared diverse career experiences before beginning the program, followed by equally diverse career outcomes in the years following completion of the master's degree. The four alumni differed in established career and multiple careers in which alumni from ACU came from established careers and incorporated the knowledge and skills into existing roles and alumni from SMU had multiple career experiences leading to new career areas after graduation.

Carol was established in her field and was working her way up through different positions, stating,

> I was with [state agency] for about 25 years, so it was like I moved up from being a secretary type of person and different positions kept coming up for me… So, I've been in social work for all that time, no matter what position you have you

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are a social worker in so many ways, but I've had my license for about that long too.

At the same time that she began the master's program, her state agency coincidentally created a specific dispute resolution job that she moved into called negotiator, where she worked to secure contracts and negotiate cases related to foster care, adoption, and placement. Carol's career began due to a personal journey to learn more about herself and her background. She found a career that allowed her to help people, as well as advance herself, and she retired feeling successful due to the positive impact she had on others in their most difficult moments.

Similarly, Nathanael also had an established career going into the program. He stated,

> I was well-employed before, during, and after my studies. So, I was with [financial company] from 2009 to 2018, and they in fact paid for my graduate studies, and I stayed with them the whole period, so I wasn't looking for a job afterwards. I did need to find one eventually in 2018, three years after I graduated, but that was because my company got bought, and so I had to find another company to work with.

Nathanael viewed his career as mostly "haphazard" with unforeseen opportunities coming along within the financial industry. He found his career to be successful as he had reached elite, positional status in his field, high salary, and independence in his work. By the time he entered the master's program, he was nearing the end of his career and viewed the program as a vehicle to something "helpful and productive even into [his] 60's and beyond." Nearing the end of his career, Nathanael remained professionally committed to his company due to receiving financial incentives in its success.

Adding to the diversity of career field and practice, the following two alumni accumulated multiple career experiences across various fields of practice resulting in

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different career outcomes and levels of success. Olivia found her way to dispute

resolution after a career in the fashion industry and work in early childhood education,

stating,

> I was sort of going through the midlife crisis where you're like, what are you going to do next, you know, and all I knew was that I wanted to do something that would help people. I literally saw the billboard on the freeway for the program, and I'm like, you know, that sounds like me… I've had a very varied career history.

Once in the program and taking a course on the role of an ombudsman, Olivia sought out

an internship at a Texas state agency that led to a full-time negotiator/mediator position,

but that was not the end of her career experiences. Olivia tried to initiate a career as a

full-time, independent mediator, but met difficulties getting the business off the ground.

She then found another calling in ministry, but after completing seminary has since had

difficulty in finding permanent work in ministry. After completing seminary, she found

work in another area of interest, her hobby, jewelry, then retail until she was laid off due

to COVID-19. Olivia's career journey revealed a need to balance family needs and

helping others; however, without a clear direction, it has been difficult for Olivia to find

career success. She shared, "I wouldn't call [my career] successful at all because I

haven't really been able to settle into that one thing that I really want to do until I'm 80 or

whatever." Olivia has been unable to connect the variety of experiences to demonstrate a

clear identity for employers.

The final alumna, Jasmine, discovered dispute resolution and conflict

management when she worked for the SMU graduate program and was attempting to find

her next career path. The idea of working in the field resonated with her as it fulfilled a

continuous desire to "help people when they felt like their back was up against the wall."

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Jasmine began her career in the military, followed by journalism. She then found herself working in human resources where she found interests in "employee relations, labor relations, training and development, onboarding." After reaching a cap in growth and pay, she left and went to work in the legal field, followed by a job in marketing in higher education. Jasmine recognized that she needed a master's degree in order to advance and receive higher compensation and pursuing the degree in DRCM fit her desire to help people. As a student, Jasmine participated in professional associations and volunteered with the International Ombudsman Association. After graduation, she continued to network until a higher education institution accepted her resume and request for an internship, which kicked off her career trajectory as a university ombuds. Jasmine began a Ph.D. program to add to her credibility and expertise in the field. Since that first ombudsman internship, she has worked her way into and up in the field to earn the University Ombudsman position and the beginnings of career success in the form of receiving higher salary and recognition, witnessing the impact in those she has helped, and earning trust from her ombudsman colleagues. Her professional commitment centered on the work of professional ombudsman in the field. What connected all of these alumni was not any specific career or role, but rather how diverse the backgrounds, career experiences, and outcomes across all of the alumni.

Graduate program management. The second theme of graduate program management emerged in discussions about the application and impact of the degree on careers and work, but elements of graduate program management resonated in all areas. All applicants mentioned the importance of specific instructional practices, student support services, and quality faculty.

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All alumni affirmed the importance of role-plays and practice within the master's

program. Role-plays offered alumni the opportunity to practice the skill set in real time,

work through issues, and learn through reflection. Nathanael and Carol remarked on the

importance of the in-person residency even in the online program. For example,

Nathanael noted,

> That's where our training and education kind of came into focus in a powerful way. It only lasted a few days. It'd be fun to have the opportunity to be face-to-face with your instructors and students more, and how ironic is that, considering it's an online program.

Carol reinforced the reflection stating that,

> Particularly I can tell you that when we went to do face-to-face learning, kind of like an internship in a way, was helpful. We got in group settings to, you know, resolve problems, manage things, keep the flow going, learning how to trust each other's feedback.

This important instructional practice went beyond in-class benefits, but went on to real-

world application as well, especially in confidence and competence in doing the work in

the field. Olivia noted, "I never did well in the role-plays, and I was nervous. I was like,

oh my gosh, what if I can't do this, and then I got in the real world, and I was good at it."

Additionally, Olivia commented on experiences within specific classes in which there

appeared to be a mismatch in instructional design, specifically in assignments, with the

needs of the adult learner. Olivia reflected that there appeared to be overlap between

courses, and in others there was a larger focus on academics when she desired practical

application.

Each of the alumni reflected on the need for student support in various ways. One

way in which the online ACU alumni exemplified student support was in recognizing the

difference between traditional and non-traditional students. Carol noted that there should

have been,

> A guidance counselor to help them place people, they should have had something
> that said okay here's a resource of places you can go to get a job in this area, not
> just, you know, because a lot of people don't know what to do with it.

Jasmine supported these sentiments in which she described her role in supporting

students in internship development and job applications.

Every alumni participant reflected on the importance and quality of the faculty to

support students, provide expertise, and assist with advising. Beyond Nathanael

expressing the importance of developing the relationship with faculty during and after the

program, Olivia captured the full effect of faculty in the program stating,

> You just feel like the sky is going to be the limit. And that's kind of a great place
> to be, to have a professor that can have you looking really optimistically and
> thinking outside the box, and just going, wow, this could really be a possibility.
> Those are always the good kind of professors to have, and the DR program was
> full of people like that.

The alumni overall felt the quality of the faculty was high, both in expertise and in

practical application.

Application and impact of the degree. The third theme captured by the alumni

interviews was the application and impact of the degree. Every alumni participant

affirmed the benefits of the degree overall but differed in their application or level of

integration with their career and work, and overall impact.

Nathanael exemplified an important example of integrating the degree,

knowledge, and skills into his current work in the financial services industry by

expressing an improvement in his ability to establish rapport, build relationships, and

understand and work with needs and interests in order to negotiate work with clients. On

the other end of the spectrum, for work in conflict-specific roles, the degree offered

resources and foundation in both behavior and skills-based applications. Jasmine

expressed the importance of the degree indicating,

> I'll tell you I use every one of my intervention methods that I've learned,
> mediation, facilitation, negotiation, dispute systems design, conflict coaching, the
> communication class. I use every one of my classes. Data analysis, research
> methodology, I use every one of them, every single one of them, which is why I
> highly encourage ombuds to go and get this degree and be intentional.

> Carol and Olivia both noted personal and professional development benefits

related to the degree. Carol remarked on the development of empathy, coping skills, self-

awareness, feedback, and leadership skills. Additionally, each also expressed the broader

and societal benefits of the degree. Olivia captured it best in stating,

> I think that dispute resolution education is wonderful, and I think that everybody
> should do it to a certain extent… I think that anybody that can navigate a conflict
> and learn how to choose what role they're going to play or whether or not they're
> going to engage, all those things are vitally important.

Regardless of the level of application or benefit mentioned, the alumni concluded

intentionality and reflection necessary to determine if the education would complement

the work, become an added component, or shift to a full-time work.

Status of DRCM employment and market. The fourth theme that emerged from

the alumni interviews on their career experiences related to the employment and market

status of the DRCM field of practice. While two of the alumni enjoyed established

careers, they shared an awareness of the lack of conflict-specific work, competition with

other professionals in the field, and employer perceptions, which related to the other two

alumni that desired to find a career in the DRCM space.

Alumni described the market for conflict-specific work as tight, limited, niche, and competitive. Olivia, an alumni participant that graduated from SMU, captured the challenges resulting from misaligned employment and market expectations of the field best when she stated,

> For dispute resolution, it's terrible. All I could find if you really sit down and look at it, you put dispute resolution in LinkedIn or Indeed, or whatever you're using to search for jobs, you know, you're going to get stuff like customer service… you might be able to find something that's got a mediation component, but it's usually very small… I don't think that the job prospects for people are there… There's still no ombudsman in companies, you know, it's just not something that's out there that everyone's familiar with.

She reiterated, "I really don't think there's any corporate ombuds out there, unless you are an attorney." The alumni experiences of challenges relating to a limited market and misaligned opportunities also connected to limited opportunities due to competition in the field.

Alumni found a related challenge to the lack of conflict-specific work in competition either from attorneys or those not formally educated in dispute resolution. As the DRCM field overlaps with the legal profession, alumni reported perceptions of competing with attorneys or needing to earn their trust. When trying to understand the competition, Olivia shared one possibility from the societal lens in stating "I think everybody goes to attorneys because for some reason they think that attorneys are good mediators, and they're not because they're trained to win. Only mediators are good mediators." Similarly, Nathanael wanted to know more about the competition from the legal lens. He would have liked to have heard from attorney perspectives during the graduate program to address the perceptions and competition from attorneys. Specifically, he wanted to know,

How do [attorneys] view mediators? Are they a threat? Because you guys sometimes close ranks against lay people who are not attorneys because it's your livelihood. It's a pocketbook issue for you. You want to soak up all the mediation and arbitration cases you can because for you its billable hours.

Outside of the legal field, alumni reported competition from other individuals with no background or training in DRCM that had an effect on their careers and work. For example, Olivia shared difficulties during her experience negotiating for the state agency stating,

I had a master's degree and could bang out and could get agreed orders all day long from people, and I was making the same amount of money as the lady in the next cubicle who didn't care, and she would just end a mediation if anybody looked at each other wrong; she wouldn't even try.

Competition occurred at higher levels as well. Jasmine captured the effects of the work and the working relationships when she said,

I learned real quick that not everyone doing ombuds work is educated in this field, so much so that my boss told me it is very hard to work with you because I'm intimidated because you know this stuff and you have all these trainings.

The alumni perceptions of competition impacted their learning and employment experiences in the field.

Beyond jobs and competition, employer perceptions of the DRCM education and credential also impacted alumni in the employment and market. Two alumni recognized that the DRCM degree had not yet "infiltrated" or been "recognized" by society at-large. From two alumni experiences, employers did not know what to do with it because it was not recognized, as Carol put it, like "where you might be a doctor or lawyer, conflict management or resolution is on there." As such, one alumnus expressed that she may need an employer recognized credential in order to secure stable employment. Olivia stated,

> I might have to do more school, even though I don't want to… I'm going to have to pick a path that pays money… So, I'm probably going to work towards a paralegal certificate or something like that because people don't care that you've got two master's degrees in DR and religious studies. It doesn't get you a job from what I can tell…From my experience, it's not a career field in and of itself because it just hasn't really infiltrated society per se as a job itself.

It is unclear to what extent the programs prepared students for the employment and market realities for DRCM jobs and skills or if they discovered the information on their own after graduation through experience.

Employability perceptions. The final theme, employability perceptions, served as both an interview question and as a theme. All alumni referenced their employability through what they perceived to be increases or positive aspects of employability and constraints to their employability. Overall, each of the alumni believed themselves to be employable due to various forms of capital they had gained over time and through the degree program. Three of the four alumni specifically related their employability to the master's degree they had earned. Jasmine also related her employability to additional certifications and professional development as a means to demonstrate qualifications to do ombudsman work.

Others referenced forms of capital included their network, reputation, or prior experience. For example, Nathanael reflected,

> I was very employable in that I knew a lot of people, had a lot of contacts, and had success… and I had the master's program by that time too. I knew if I needed to kick into another career in that moment, I was prepared to do that.

In addition, alumni highlighted personal skills and behaviors that positively affected their employability. Olivia captured one perspective by stating, "I think I'm incredibly employable because I've proven that I can learn. I've proven that I can stick with things.

I'm goal oriented." Regardless of current employment status or future plans, all of the

alumni viewed their employability positively.

Personal, inherent attributes also emerged as constraints as alumni shared their

perceptions of employability. The alumni reflected on various elements, such as age in

later years and looking at employability, increasing personal and family needs when

having to conform to standard working hours or structure, and previous education and

employment decisions that they may have to explain. Jasmine shared the most moving

experience with employability related to race and employability in the field, sharing,

> I am Black and I have to be twice as good to get half. I have to be perfect. This is
> already a competitive field and add my color, I have to be straight and perfect to
> qualify to do this work… That is the biggest factor, the biggest hurdle sometimes
> is having to be perfect in this space, to show that I know what I'm doing, and to
> get past the stereotype that people have of black people that we are not of good
> moral character.

These experiences exemplify the complexity of alumni searching for work in their

respective fields and how they perceive their employability in order to reach their career

goals.

The previous section detailed the qualitative findings in answer to the qualitative

research question, "How do alumni from the two DRCM graduate programs perceive

their careers, education, and employability?" The qualitative data analysis revealed

themes from the alumni interviews, specifically diverse career experiences and outcomes,

graduate program management, application and impact of the degree, status of DRCM

employment and market, and employability perceptions. Alumni interviews found a

range of application of the skills, courses, and degree in both established careers outside

of the PCS field, and in multiple careers. Alumni also shared experiences and perceptions

of the value of curriculum design and faculty, as well as the acknowledged the challenges

and barriers of working in the PCS field. Overall, alumni interviewed described themselves as employable regardless of the program attended. The following section integrated the two sets of data findings, specifically using the qualitative data findings to further explore and explain the quantitative results, to answer the mixed methods research question.

Mixed Method Data Findings

Mixed methods research designs aim to integrate quantitative and qualitative findings to gain more understanding than any one research design can accomplish alone. In this study, the integration of the quantitative data and qualitative data occurred at the conclusion of the quantitative data analysis in selecting the qualitative research participants as described previously. In addition, integration occurred in the mixed methods analysis in order to answer the mixed methods question, "How do the themes mentioned by graduate alumni from the two DRCM graduate programs in the qualitative phase help to explain the initial career outcome data from the quantitative phase?" The following section explores how the quantitative data and qualitative data together explained and explored the career outcomes of DRCM alumni in more depth. Joint displays integrate the findings by career outcomes (Table 4.21), education perceptions (Table 4.22), and career perceptions (Table 4.23).

Overall, between the quantitative survey data and the qualitative interview data, alumni reported incredibly diverse backgrounds, career experiences, and career outcomes after graduation. Interviews with alumni found that the diversity emerged from undergraduate education, experimentation with passions and purpose, or personal family needs. Each participant entered the master's program to fulfill a different need or

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purpose, such as convenience of the online program, graduate education needed for advancement, or to fulfill a passion to help others. When the diverse career experiences combined with the survey results on the length of time to acquire conflict-specific employment, the results indicated that the alumni overall responded, "not applicable" ($n = 19, 35.8\%$). The irrelevant need to acquire a conflict-specific job echoed the qualitative results where half of the DRCM alumni integrated the knowledge and skills learned from the program into their current work. ACU alumni specifically, as reported in the qualitative phase, came from established careers in which they were committed and found career success. The DRCM program offered personal and professional development, as well as an alternative career or side-hustle, rather than a primary career or new career.

In examining the Likert-type items on impact of the degree, relevance and confidence in the skills, and relevance of the courses, the quantitative analysis demonstrated no statistically significant difference between ACU and SMU, and also found increases in conflict analysis, administrative/management functions, leadership role, and training, found conflict analysis and approaches to conflict very relevant, reported high confidence in conflict analysis, approaches to conflict intervention, understanding of stages of conflict, and applying research, and found the approaches to intervention and the overall master's program as relevant. These findings were further explained by alumni in the interview phase when explaining the impact and value of the degree and courses. Alumni explained the professional and personal development and skills gained that related to their overall career and work. For example, where Nathanael utilized conflict analysis skills to understand the underlying positions, interests, and

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values when heading into a negotiation with an unhappy potential client, Jasmine utilized a high level of conflict analysis and intervention methods in her conflict-specific work in the ombuds arena. Alumni made use of the knowledge and skills in varying applications and levels of integration with their current work.

When analyzing the quantitative responses to the employability, career success, and professional commitment scales and the responses to representative questions in the qualitative interviews, some differences emerged. In the quantitative data analysis phase, independent t-tests revealed differences in mean scores of employability between ACU and SMU (ACU, $M = 4.05$, $SD = 0.54$; SMU, $M = 3.79$, $SD = 0.86$), career success (ACU, $M = 4.03$, $SD = 0.72$; SMU, $M = 3.66$; $SD = 1.15$), and professional commitment (ACU, $M = 3.93$, $SD = 0.55$; SMU, $M = 3.63$; $SD = 0.86$), though not statistically significant. Nathanael specifically reported a perfect high score in both employability and career success, yet during the interview initially reported "grim" feelings until he ultimately reflected that he had indeed felt employable and successful. Overall, alumni interviews found that each individual was employable and had employability. When discussing career success, alumni reported objective and subjective measures of career success, such as salary, advancement, as well as independence and impact on others through their work. Professional commitment was equally diverse in that alumni demonstrated varying commitments, such as Nathanael's high-level commitment to his specific company, Carol's commitment to helping others through her profession, and Jasmine's commitment to the ombuds profession and their standards of practice.

Table 4.21

Joint Display of Integrated Findings for Career Outcomes

Survey Category	Quantitative Data Sample	Qualitative Data Excerpt	Qualitative Theme
Length of time to acquire a conflict-specific job	ACU alumni reported "not applicable" (n = 16 of 34, 47.1%) SMU alumni reported "more than 1 year" (n = 5 of 19, 26.3%)	"I started in the financial services business, which is my career, in 1989. I've been in financial services ever since" (ACU). "I don't think anyone in the ombuds world respected me until I got this job…It's taken 10 years, 10 long years" (SMU).	Diverse career experiences
Professional development	Attending seminars, workshops, or conferences (n = 30, 56.6%).	"Once I discovered what ombudsing was doing, I knew that I needed to get other certifications to be looked at as the best" (SMU).	Employability perceptions
Employment status	Full or part-time employment (n = 49, 92.4%).	"I was well-employed before, during, and after my studies" (ACU).	Diverse career experiences
Employment sector and industry	Private sector employment (ACU, n = 13 of 34, 38.2%; n = 9 of 19, 47.4%). Professional and business services industry (ACU, n = 9 of 34, 26.5%; SMU, n = 7 of 19, 36.8%).	"I started in the financial services business, which is my career, in 1989. I've been in financial services ever since" (ACU).	Diverse career experiences
Job titles	Diverse job titles, except "Mediator" within the title for ACU (n = 2 of 34; 5.9%), and "HR Manager" for SMU (n = 2 of 19, 10.5%) and "Consultant" (n = 2 of 19, 10.5%) for SMU.	"Senior Vice President for Partnership Development" (ACU) "University Ombudsman" (SMU) "Negotiator" (ACU)	Diverse career experiences
ACU Post-degree salary	Post-degree salary reported by ACU alumni (M = $110,458, SD = $69,222).	"I just walked through the doors the Lord has opened over 25 years to increasingly better opportunities financially" (ACU).	Diverse career experiences
SMU Post-degree salary	Post-degree salary reported by SMU alumni (M = $83,406, SD = $44,558). No significant difference between programs (p = .175).	"I'm going to have to pick a path that pays money" (SMU).	Status of DRCM employment and market

Table 4.22

Joint Display of Integrated Findings for Education Perceptions

Survey Category	Quantitative Data Sample	Qualitative Data Excerpt	Qualitative Theme
Accomplishments and challenges	ACU alumni reported professional accomplishments as opposed to challenges after graduation (n = 20 of 34, 58.8%). SMU alumni reported equal accomplishments and challenges (n = 6 of 19, 31.6%).	"I've helped so many places open up an ombuds office" (SMU). "I don't think that the job prospects for people are there" (SMU).	Status of DRCM employment and market
Impact of the degree related to changes to job skills or role	Conflict analysis skills increased (n = 44, 83.0%). No significant difference between programs (p = .368). Planning/implementing/evaluating conflict interventions skills increased (n = 43, 81.1%). No significant difference between programs (p = .240).	"So, I'm not sitting in arbitration or doing mediation or any of the like, but I've tried to integrate the principles of conflict resolution with the work that I do building relationships and resolving conflict in the marketplace" (ACU).	Application and impact of the degree
Relevance of skills to current role	Conflict analysis very relevant to current role (n = 26, 49.1%). No significant difference between programs (p = .695). Approaches to conflict intervention very relevant to current role (n = 26, 49.1%). No significant difference between programs (p = .603).	"I'll tell you I use every one of my intervention methods that I've learned" (SMU).	Application and impact of the degree
Confidence in skills	Alumni very confident in conflict analysis skills (n = 26, 49.1%). No significant difference between programs (p = .589). Alumni confident in understanding stages of conflict (n = 26, 49.1%). No significant difference between programs (p = .407).	"I never did well in the role-plays, and I was nervous. I was like, oh my gosh, what if I can't do this, and then I got in the real world, and I was good at it" (SMU).	Graduate program management
Relevance of master's courses to current role	Overall master's program very relevant (n = 24, 45.3%). No significant difference between programs (p = .554).	"I use every one of them, every single one of them, which is why I highly encourage ombuds to go and get this degree and be intentional" (SMU).	Graduate program management

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Table 4.23

Joint Display of Integrated Findings for Career Perceptions

Survey Category	Quantitative Data Sample	Qualitative Data Excerpt	Qualitative Theme
Self-perceived employability	ACU alumni (M = 4.05, SD = 0.54) scored higher on the self-perceived employability measure than SMU alumni (M = 3.79, SD = 0.86). No significant difference between programs (p = .187). Extreme values (1.36 to 5.00)	"I was very employable in that I knew a lot of people, had a lot of contacts, and had success… and I had the master's program by that time too" (ACU). "I think I'm incredibly employable" (SMU). "I am Black and I have to be twice as good to get half" (SMU).	Employability perceptions
Subjective career success	ACU alumni (M = 4.03, SD = 0.72) scored higher on the subjective career success measure than SMU alumni (M = 3.66, SD = 1.15). No significant difference between groups (p = .218). Extreme values (1.50 to 5.00)	"So, being the best in the industry where I find myself, having already confessed to not having a plan to get here, and then secondly, to be able to financially provide for myself and my family in increasing measure" (ACU). "Right now, I would say it's pretty bad. I wouldn't call it successful at all because I haven't really been able to settle into that one thing that I really want to do until I'm 80 or whatever" (SMU).	Diverse career experiences and outcomes
Professional commitment	ACU alumni (M = 3.93, SD = 0.55) scored higher on the professional commitment measure SMU alumni (M = 3.63, SD = 0.86). No significant difference between groups (p = .178).	"I am very committed to my company and their success because I love them and I have a financial stake in our success and our ability to do well" (ACU). "I feel this work is sacred space" (SMU).	Diverse career experiences and outcomes

Discussion

Higher education institutions and graduate programs receive increasing pressure to account for student outcomes and measures of success. No previous study explored the career experiences and outcomes of DRCM alumni, or any alumni from the PCS field, warranting the need for this study. This Problem of Practice explored the diverse career experiences, outcomes, and perceptions of DRCM alumni. The previously explored literature on the PCS field, curriculum and instruction, professionals, and other graduate programs, along with the theoretical framework of human capital theory, additional forms of human capital, employability and career success provided a way to further understand the career outcomes and experiences of DRCM master's alumni related to their experiences and impact of the knowledge and skills gained through their respective programs. The following discussion addresses the alumni career experience, reflections on the graduate program, application and impact of the degree, employment and market realities, and employability.

Understanding Alumni Career Experiences

As mentioned in the quantitative findings, the majority of alumni who participated in the quantitative survey identified as female, White, Non-Hispanic, and 50–59 years old. In addition, alumni represented diverse educational backgrounds, professional experiences, and current career outcomes. As such, alumni were motivated to enter the program in different ways and for different means. For three out of the four alumni, partial motivation came from wanting to help others, reinforcing findings from Raines (2018) and Zelizer (2015). Alumni also reported additional drivers for acquiring the knowledge and skills, and maneuvering within their careers, such as advancement,

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independence and recognition, some of which overlapped with research from other helping and business graduate programs (Buchanan et al., 2007).

Additionally, alumni reported differences in the desired outcome for the education after graduation, specifically two of the alumni wanted to attain employment in the field, while two others wanted to integrate DRCM into their existing fields. This finding aligns with previous research in which most graduates did not intend to pursue conflict-specific work or careers as a whole, but rather bring the education into their own fields and practice (Windmueller et al., 2009). This finding has implications for graduate programs in how they support students and design curriculum and instruction.

Reflections on the Graduate Program

Throughout the interviews, alumni expressed acknowledgement of career difficulties students may face in launching a career in the field, to experiencing the challenges themselves. Three of the alumni specifically mentioned the need for career support from career counseling and job placement, to assisting with career management skills, such as resume writing. While these reflections were not explicitly reinforced in the review of DRCM educational research, a couple of studies noted the importance of role-plays and simulations for their connection to career training and real-life examples of practices (Germain-Thomas et al., 2019; Zelizer, 2015).

Role-plays and practical examples resonated with alumni, and while at times felt new and uncomfortable, DRCM alumni enjoyed the practice and felt prepared to do the work once out in the field, succeed, and have a positive impact on others. Alumni did not describe a pedagogical understanding for the purpose of experiential learning, simulations, or role-plays, but the demonstrated acceptance and value of the instructional

practice reinforced findings from other studies in which the various experiential practices and reflection benefited students in the classroom (Germain-Thomas et al., 2019; Rothman, 2014; Walsh, 2019; Zelizer, 2015). Alumni found coursework of value and impactful for their work with one participant specifically noting the need for additional coursework to further develop behavioral competencies for work in the conflict space.

Application and Impact of the Degree

Wilson and Irvine (2014) detailed the difficulties in generalizing the application of mediation and common identifiable traits and skills of mediators. A similar issue presented in this study given the differences in coursework between the programs and alumni and the diverse ways in which students applied the knowledge and skills and found impact from the degree. As stated previously, alumni applied the knowledge and skills in various ways. Two of the alumni employed the knowledge and skills within their existing fields and did not plan to acquire roles or work in the field with the exception of a back-up plan or as a potential side hustle, supporting Windmueller et al.'s (2009) findings. Employed alumni from the qualitative interviews connected the education and were intentional in how they designed their practice and made sense of their degree within their career experiences and overall career identity.

The quantitative results indicated high levels of impact and relevance in conflict interventions, conflict analysis, understanding stages of conflict, and management functions, which supported similar competencies found in similar graduate programs and professional work (Haavelsrud & Stenberg, 2012; Polkinghorn et al., 2008; Windmueller et al., 2009; Zelizer & Johnston, 2005). Qualitatively, alumni also reported the impact of other competencies and skills gained through their education, such as listening and

communication, relating to others, patience, understanding emotions, self-awareness, and self-management skills, overlapping with multiple studies on professionals, and work and education in the field (Cochran et al., 2018; Friedman et al., 2018; Georgetown University, 2012; Harmon-Darrow & Xu, 2018; Malizia & Jameson, 2018; Portilla, 2006; Raines, 2018). The application and impact of the degree also related to the discussion of employment and market realities in the PCS field.

Employment and Market Realities

Three of the four alumni discussed the state of employment and market in that conflict-specific jobs in the field were still not prevalent. According to findings from the literature review, some of the lack of visibility of conflict-specific work may be due to the multiple labor markets for the work (Velikonja, 2009; Zelizer, 2015; Zelizer & Johnston, 2005). There is no one location or resource to find work in the field.

Alumni also experienced competition for work from professionals outside the PCS field, for example attorneys and others with no connection to DRCM or related fields. Alumni reflected that competition resulted in lack of visible employment opportunities, challenges in working alongside individuals with no training in the field, or differences in income. Rubinson (2016) and Velikonja (2009) reported similar challenges experienced by practitioners in socioeconomic conditions that reduce or restrict mediation, for example, or in low barriers to enter the work or career field. Reinforcing the challenges, Raines (2018) noted divisions amongst expert practitioners in the field as to the appropriate background to enter the work. Alumni also reported pay differences between those working in the field with the education and those without direct conflict training with pay for DRCM alumni at times lower. Previous research from other fields,

such as the recreation profession, reported similar issues (Hodge et al., 2012). The diversity of career experiences and challenges to entering the PCS field was impacted by how alumni viewed and made use of human capital and employability.

Employability

In contrast to the extreme employability quantitative results, all of the alumni interviewed found themselves to be employable while three discussed employability issues at different points in their career related to age, race, and disjointed career experiences. In support of Baruch's (2009) findings of MBA alumni, alumni interviews found return on investment for the degree related to the degree "fitting" and being able to make sense of the knowledge and skills early.

The theoretical framework of human capital theory, and employability and career success offered a lens in which to examine and discuss the employability findings. Similar to Baruch's (2009) findings, alumni reported connections to the degree and various forms of capital gained that enhanced their work, improved efficiencies in their work, or led to advancements and remuneration in employment, which supports human capital theory and additional forms of capital (Baruch, 2009; Becker, 1960; Holden & Biddle, 2016; Tomlinson, 2017; Way et al., 2016).

Specific forms of capital, both objective and subjective, were reported by alumni in the survey responses and interviews, including scholastic capital and social capital (Useem & Karabel, 1986) and inner-value and market capital (Baruch, 2009). Jasmine reported using the knowledge and skills every day, and Olivia and Carol expressed being able to conduct successful negotiations and mediations every day. Jasmine and Nathanael described social capital in their use of social and professional networks. For example,

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Jasmine reported increases in networks in the PCS field, while Nathanael reported major benefits of a personal and professional network related both to the degree and related to his professional experience in the financial sector. In addition, all alumni interviewed expressed increase and improvement in personal skills (inner-value capital) as it related to the degree (confidence, empathy, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness). The quantitative results also demonstrated examples of market value. There was a reported increase in the mean salary overall and by program indicating an increase in market capital or career success outcomes, but it is unknown whether employers recognized the specific value of the DRCM education or if it related to the status of an advanced degree. Research conducted on MBA graduates reported similar gains in salary and career outcomes (Baruch, 2009).

As noted by Rothwell and Arnold (2007), employability is "the ability to keep the job one has or to get the job one desires" (p. 25). The quantitative survey results indicated alumni employability in the full-time employment reported, and the majority of alumni participants supported this notion with the exception of Olivia. Fugate et al.'s (2004) multidimensional concept of employability, as well as Rothwell and Arnold's (2007) concept of employability, provide a lens in which to understand the differences in alumni career experiences. For example, the ACU alumni described employing a consistent career identity while employing various forms of earned capital (skills, behaviors, and social networks) to enhance their work, "keep the job," and receive compensation. One alumna, Jasmine, in her change to conflict-specific work and advancement in the field, reported forms of employability in skills and behaviors, networks, resilience, and an intentional career identity that found consistency and connections through her

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experiences. Olivia, who was currently unemployed, reported lower scores of employability, but found herself to be employable. While Olivia demonstrated scholastic capital (knowledge and skills) and inner-value capital (psychological capital and behaviors), she lacked career identity and market knowledge and capital of where to find employment. In both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study, most of the alumni reported career success in objective (increases in salary, employment, and advancement) and subjective means (recognition, status, and independence) that aligns with outcome measures of human capital theory, similar to measures of MBA career success (Hay & Hodgkinson, 2006). The reported findings and discussion related to the literature and theoretical framework present implications for graduate programs in the field and the PCS field in general.

Implications

The findings and discussion of this Problem of Practice have implications for two primary stakeholders, specifically the ADR, CR, and PS graduate programs offering graduate education and degrees, as well as the PCS field in general. The implications connect the findings from this study, relevant literature, and calls for further research in the field.

Graduate Programs

Graduate programs must engage in intentional, research-based curriculum development and also create support structures for graduate students. Walsh (2019) expressed the need for faculty and programs to incorporate best practices in pedagogy and learning theory especially as it relates to changing educational environments, specifically online courses and programs, but the need for curriculum and instruction

development is greater than just moving mediation courses online. In the qualitative interviews, alumni reported diverse career and adult learner needs in order to make sense of the content and bring it into their own context. Diversity was reported in employment outcomes, and in relevance and impact of the curriculum in the quantitative and the qualitative phases of this study. As Windmueller et al. (2009) reported and this study found, most alumni did not work in conflict-specific careers in the field, supporting the need for intentional curriculum design and support structures that support learner needs.

Graduate programs should also further develop instructional practices with external partnerships, such as Germain-Thomas et al.'s (2019) role-play design. Instructional practices such as these incorporate elements of career training and genuine examples that support the career development needs of some students, while also incorporating a student-centered design aspect and feedback element that supports adult learning, especially for those that will incorporate the degree into their original fields. An additional benefit to incorporating external partners and employers into the instructional space allows for the degree to gain visibility with diverse employers, and it allows for students to communicate the benefits. Communicating the educational benefits to employers, especially in ways they understand, was a challenge expressed both in the literature (Windmueller et al., 2009; Zelizer, 2015; Zelizer & Johnston, 2005), as well as in the qualitative interviews with alumni.

Overall, curriculum and instruction, as well as program management, should meet the needs of the adult learner. More research is needed to address student needs from recruitment to educational outcomes, to goals for practice, then additional research should address curriculum design for the field as a whole. As noted by Baruch (2009) in

studying MBA graduates, and reinforced in the qualitative interviews, successful graduates were intentional in how they applied the knowledge and skills. Graduate program design, including curriculum and instruction, should reinforce this intentionality through best practices in learning design, student advising, and career support, and reinforce the intentionality by transparently discussing the challenges of breaking into and working in the field. While the interviews with alumni discovered a level of awareness of the challenges, alumni did not connect the challenges to information provided by the graduate programs.

Peace and Conflict Studies Field

In an analysis of the PCS field and graduate programs, Polkinghorn et al. (2008) reported three distinct areas or concentrations, specifically ADR, CR, and PS, in which graduate programs also developed. This study explored the career outcomes of alumni from two graduate programs, a Master of Arts in Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation and a Master of Arts in Dispute Resolution. Both programs pull from concentration areas in ADR and CR, which indicates that the general application of DRCM may cross concentrations. As PCS knowledge and skills attained from a formal degree program reportedly applied in both broad and specific contexts, as in this study, an opportunity exists to create consistencies across programs in terms of courses offered or competencies addressed. More research and collaboration are needed to build on the work of Haavelsrud and Stenberg (2012), Polkinghorn et al. (2008), Windmueller et al. (2009), Zelizer and Johnston (2005), and this study to create consistencies in the courses, skills, and competencies offered in the field.

In addition, there remains a need for a professional association or regulatory body to guide curriculum consistencies and create visibility and value for the graduate credential. An opportunity exists to lead the development in both degreed programs and trainings, as well as the increasing supplemental coursework in ADR, CR, and PS added to other fields and disciplines. The lack of a professional association or regulatory body has continued to present issues with access and competition in the field (Rubinson, 2016; Velikonja, 2009; Wilson & Irvine, 2014). Also, curriculum and instruction in ADR, CR, and PS, has found its way into other fields of practice and industry. If formal opportunities in conflict-specific roles increase (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019) or job opportunities and work in fields and sectors adjacent to PCS proliferate (Zelizer, 2015), visibility of the preparation and benefits of PCS degrees will need to increase in order to meet the challenges and competition that practitioners have already faced, both expressed in this study and in the literature (Raines, 2018; Rubinson, 2016; Velikonja, 2009). A professional association or regulatory body would create visibility and communicate the value to employers, as well as create a baseline for entry into the field.

This study filled a gap in career outcomes and experiences of DRCM alumni, rather than focusing on established practitioners in the field as previous studies have explored (Raines, 2018; Velikonja, 2009). As such, another gap exists in understanding the breadth of employment options available to those students desiring a career in the PCS field. The qualitative interviews demonstrated narrow views of employment in the PCS field, such as mediator, negotiator, or ombudsman. Additional research is needed on the range of positions available, and salaries attributed to those positions. Further research is also needed to continue to explore alumni outcomes and their specific

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employment contexts. While research has explored the employer perceptions of a PCS master's degree related to the field of international conflict management (Zelizer & Johnston, 2005), additional research is needed to explore the cultural capital (employer and market value of the degree) and related market capital (salary) of broader organizational contexts. This would also assist with the visibility of the degree in the broader employment market as most graduates will take their knowledge and skills into their own work context areas.

This study explored career experiences from alumni who attended graduate programs that crossed the ADR and CR concentrations. Further research on alumni outcomes is needed to address the full spectrum of programs across the PCS field and determine if differences exist. This will provide valuable information to benefit curriculum and competency standardization, student needs, as well as additional visibility of the degree and its application across various contexts. The implications in this section built on the findings from this Problem of Practice and recent literature in the PCS field and incorporated timely implications for graduate programs and the PCS field as a whole in order to address the gap of alumni outcomes in the field and move the field into a new wave of development.

Conclusion

This Problem of Practice aimed to address a growing problem in higher education in which institutions and programs need to address student success with the increasing costs of education, while remaining rooted in the PCS field in which no previous research explored outcomes of graduates. Previous studies explored challenges and experiences of professionals in the field (Harmon-Darrow & Xu, 2018; Raines, 2018; Velikonja, 2009),

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competencies and commonalities in graduate PCS education (Haavelsrud & Stenberg, 2012; Polkinghorn et al., 2008; Windmueller et al., 2009; Zelizer & Johnston, 200), and instructional practices (Germain-Thomas et al., 2019; Rothman, 2014; Walsh, 2019; Zelizer, 2015). If employment in mediation, arbitration, and conciliation increases as predicted (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019) or roles in conflict-related fields grow (Zelizer, 2015), graduate programs need to know how alumni utilize the skills in order to design curriculum and instruction for the needs of the student and prepare them for challenges in the PCS field.

This Problem of Practice employed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design, incorporating a quantitative survey and qualitative interviews, to explore in-depth the career experiences, outcomes, and perceptions of DRCM alumni from two master's programs. The study targeted a population of graduates from ACU and SMU from the graduation years of 2011 to 2015 in order to gain understanding of the career outcomes beyond the first outcome after graduation. The purpose of the study aimed to fill a gap in employment and educational outcomes and perceptions of the DRCM alumni, as well understand differences exhibited by the alumni from the two programs. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings addressed the objective and subjective means in which alumni report and describe their career outcomes and perceptions, which aligns with the theoretical framework utilized in the study, specifically the use of human capital theory and related concepts of capital, employability, and career success. The findings presented in the preceding chapter indicate that alumni represent diverse educational and professional backgrounds and equally diverse career outcomes after completion of the program. While the alumni reported positive and increased value, relevance, and impact

of the program, coursework, and DRCM skills, alumni reported a range of experiences in how alumni put the knowledge and skills to use from integrating the education into their current role, to pursuing a conflict-specific role in the field.

The findings of this Problem of Practice present implications for two main stakeholders, the graduate programs offering the coursework and degrees, as well as the larger PCS field, that will ultimately have an impact on graduate students and alumni that choose to study in the field. Given the findings of diverse areas of employment and practice, as well as the level of application and integration of DRCM knowledge and skills, implications exist in the form of improving curriculum and instruction in the programs to better address student needs. Opportunities also exist to create consistencies in the coursework and competencies addressed in the graduate programs. Looking broader at the PCS field as a whole, the literature reviewed and findings from this chapter articulated a need for the PCS field, and possibly a regulatory body, to articulate requirements for entry to the field and consistency in education in order to address the current state of conflict-specific employment, competition, as well as the visibility and value of the degree to employers. This study exemplified the need for future research to address these implications in order to move the PCS field into the next wave development. The final chapter of this Problem of Practice, Chapter 5, presents an executive summary of the problem, methodology, key findings, and informed recommendations, followed by a detailed distribution proposal for key stakeholders.

CHAPTER FIVE

Distribution of Findings

Executive Summary

Higher education institutions face increasing pressure to address escalating costs of education, as well as rapidly changing knowledge and skills needed for the workplace (Rogers, 2013; Senter & Spalter-Roth, 2016). Society, in general, believes in the capital conferred upon graduates after completing a degree program, and many accept graduate-level education as a means to improve job performance, increase wages, and advance professionally (Buchanan et al., 2007). For prospective students in the peace and conflict studies (PCS) field, many also desire to help others or contribute to positive change (Raines, 2018; Zelizer, 2015). These varied benefits and results of graduate education make definitions of program and student success hard to grasp; however, in the PCS field, Zelizer (2015) recognizes that success for both relies on the ability of alumni to obtain employment in the field (p. 599). According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2019), the employment outlook and income for careers in mediation, arbitration, and conciliation will increase over the next 10 years; however, this paints a narrow view of applicability of the knowledge and skills earned in graduate PCS programs, as well as diminishes the challenges and barriers to finding work in the field (U.S. Department of Labor, 2019; Velikonja, 2009). The PCS field has evolved over the past 60 years to include three overarching concentrations (alternative dispute resolution, conflict resolution, and peace studies) resulting in over 200 programs at varying levels and lengths and covering a range of conflict theory and intervention methods (Polkinghorn et

al., 2008). While continued development occurs in investigating instructional practices of dispute resolution and conflict management (DRCM) and practitioners in the field (Harmon-Darrow & Xu, 2018; Raines, 2018; Velikonja, 2009), the lack of examination on career outcomes of DRCM graduate alumni led to the need for this Problem of Practice study. This study examined the career outcomes and perceptions of employability and career success of alumni from two DRCM graduate programs.

Overview of Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

This study implemented an explanatory sequential mixed methods research design due to quantitative data collection and analysis preceding the qualitative data collection and analysis, followed by an integration of the data for a mixed methods analysis. The research design and methodology aligned with the intent of the study, research questions, and theoretical framework. This study sought to fill a gap in PCS field research by addressing the questions of career outcomes and perceptions of DRCM alumni across two programs. The mixed methods methodology proved most appropriate as this study explored in-depth the DRCM alumni career outcomes and perceptions of career success and employability from two graduate programs from 2011 to 2015 through combining quantitative data and qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The first phase of the study utilized a quantitative web-based cross-sectional survey to collect demographic information, career outcomes and perceptions, and test for differences across the two programs, including salary, perception of education and skills, and perceived employability, career success, and professional commitment. After quantitative data collection and analysis completed, purposive sampling (criterion-based and extreme case sampling) from the quantitative results of employability and career

success scores occurred to identify individuals representing extreme cases for the qualitative phase in which the four interviews explored the quantitative survey results in more depth (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

This study used the a priori theoretical framework of human capital theory and the related, overlapping concepts of employability and career success as lens in which to understand the qualitative results in more depth, as well as assist with coding and producing categories and themes. As research on formal education in the United States frequently turns to human capital theory to relate the costs of education with the benefits to the individual, employer, and society, this study included not only objective career outcomes (salary and employment), but also subjective measures as well in the form of self-perceived employability, career success, and professional commitment to determine the value or return on investment for alumni. The theoretical framework also provided support for a broader concept of graduate outcomes than employment and salary alone. The expanding concepts of capital, career success, and employability in relation to human capital theory demonstrated the need for both quantitative (objective) career data, as well as qualitative (subjective) career data.

Summary of Key Findings

The fundamental findings from this Problem of Practice exemplify the diversity of backgrounds of DRCM alumni and the range of applications in which DRCM alumni employ the knowledge and skills gained in their respective programs to lead to employability and career success. These findings also illuminate the forms of capital alumni perceive to be effective in their work and career success, specifically scholastic capital, social capital, inner-value capital, and market capital demonstrating the

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importance of human capital theory, and additional concepts of capital, employability, and career success in understanding alumni success after graduation. Through the analysis of the quantitative survey and qualitative interviews, followed by the integration of both data sets for the mixed methods data analysis, key findings emerged in three main areas in the study. First, the findings illuminated the diverse objective career outcomes of DRCM alumni. Second, the findings reveal alumni perceptions regarding education and value of the degree and associated skills. Third, the findings expanded the career perceptions of the alumni.

First, this study discovered that DRCM alumni, regardless of institutional program, experienced increases in objective career outcomes through diverse jobs, sectors, and industries with most not in conflict-specific roles. Of the 53 alumni participants in the quantitative survey, overall objective career outcomes increased (86.8% to 92.4%) in part-time or full-time employment in diverse fields and industries after graduation. Reported mean salaries were higher in Abilene Christian University alumni, but overall alumni salaries increased 30% after the degree; however, the salaries are represented from diverse fields and industries, and not specific to the PCS field. Of note, 35.8% of respondents reported "not applicable" to the length of time it took to acquire a conflict-specific job in the field. The qualitative interviews reinforced the irrelevant need to obtain conflict-specific employment as alumni reported two main career types, established careers and multiple careers.

Second, this study also found DRCM alumni expressed relevance, confidence, and increased impact of the degree. Alumni reported highest levels around relevance and confidence in conflict analysis, approaches to conflict, and the overall program. Alumni

survey results and interviews demonstrated a range of application, value, and impact of the degree from enhancing established careers, improving personal skills, to launching a new career in the field. Alumni reported both positive and negative impacts from graduate program management from valuable instructional practices, such as role-plays, and the high quality of faculty, to student support for career management and skills. All alumni interviewed expressed increases and improvement in personal skills (inner-value capital) as it related to the degree (confidence, empathy, emotional intelligence, and self-awareness).

Third, this study illuminated the career perceptions of DRCM alumni including awareness of the PCS field of work, employability, and career success. Despite a range of quantitative employability results, all of the alumni interviewed described themselves as employable related to accrued forms of human capital from the degree that enhanced their work, improved their effectiveness in their work, or led to advancement and remuneration. Alumni measured and defined career success in both objective (salary and advancement) and subjective means (positive effect on others, status, recognition, independence, and stability). While alumni reported diverse career outcomes in and out of the PCS field, all alumni interviewed expressed awareness of the lack of conflict-specific work and challenges in the field, specifically in competition from attorneys or professionals from outside the field and employer perceptions of the degree (lack of cultural capital). Overall, no statistically significant differences existed between the program alumni regarding objective and subjective career outcomes and perceptions of the degree.

The key findings filled a gap in research on the career experiences, outcomes, and perceptions of DRCM alumni after graduation. The findings support research from the PCS field related to the value of instructional practices (Germain-Thomas et al., 2019; Rothman, 2014; Walsh, 2019; Zelizer, 2015), multiple competencies and skills gained in the program (Haavelsrud & Stenberg, 2012; Portilla, 2006; Raines, 2018; Windmueller et al., 2009; Zelizer & Johnston, 2005), and challenges to working in the field (Rubinson, 2016; Velikonja, 2009). Additionally, this study supported the assertion that most graduates did not intend to pursue conflict-specific work or careers in the PCS field, but rather bring the knowledge and skills into their own context and work (Windmueller et al., 2009).

Given the findings and research from the field, graduate programs in DRCM should incorporate research-based practices in instruction (Walsh, 2019) and increase support structures in advising and career development for students. In addition, more effort should be made across the PCS field to connect with employers to raise the visibility of the degree and create consistencies in curriculum and instructional practices. This study calls for additional research in the areas of alumni outcomes to explore specific employment contexts, as well as address the full spectrum of graduate programs from alternative dispute resolution, conflict resolution, and peace studies programs.

Informed Recommendations

The key findings and evidence from this Problem of Practice present the opportunity for changes in DRCM graduate education and program management, as well as actions for the larger PCS field. The recommendations presented address curriculum and instruction development and student supports to bridge the gap between education

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and practice, as well as call for consistencies and standards for practices to increase the visibility and value of the master's degrees from the PCS field.

Graduate programs play a pivotal role in the educational preparation and career success of students enrolled in their programs. This role begins at recruitment and admissions. As this study found, graduate students in DRCM bring diverse educational and professional experiences, as well as career motivations and measures of career success into the program. Understanding that most graduates will not work in the field, the first recommendation for DRCM graduate programs involves increasing onboarding processes, use of assessments, and advising services in order to fully understand the student's background, skills, motivations, and goals that will assist the student in finding their "fit," in or out of the field, and be intentional in building their knowledge and skills. Graduate programs should offer additional services to address learning gaps, advising for course selection, and developing career management skills. This will center the support services around student needs, as well as increase student skills in developing language to communicate the value and benefit of the degree and skills to employers and others.

The second recommendation for graduate programs relates to developments in curriculum and instruction. Graduate programs should leverage institutional support or add departmental expertise to incorporate research-based practices in teaching and learning, such as experiential learning, reflexive practices, and adult learning theory. Diverse backgrounds and career outcomes necessitate the increase of current and diversified case studies and learning examples that resonate with adult learners and their specific context and add the opportunity to address the challenges of entering and working in the field. Through further development in instructional practices,

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opportunities exist for engagement and partnership with employers both internal and external to the PCS field. Adding role-plays and simulations that bring in external partners adds visibility for students and the degree, as well as addresses the needs of the adult learner.

A third recommendation targets further research and reporting around alumni outcomes. Due to the diversity of career experiences, changing nature of work and employment, and the projected increase of jobs both in the field and in areas in support of the PCS field, graduate programs need to conduct additional and consistent research on alumni outcomes. Institutional mechanisms for reporting outcomes typically address job placement and salary, as such graduate programs should collect objective and subjective measures of career success and alumni development over a period of five to 10 years after graduation. This study recommends that programs create mechanisms to collect and report alumni outcomes that address alumni success and return on investment that the field can use at large.

The peace and conflict studies field also contributes to the development and success of students and alumni. The recommendation for the PCS field involves a two-stage process to move toward consistency in education across the three concentration areas of alternative dispute resolution, conflict resolution, and peace studies. At the first stage, the multiple professional associations supporting the PCS field should collaborate to determine minimum competencies for PCS education to benefit the lowest level of integration with the career to the career professional working in the field. The professional associations may also explore the knowledge and skills incorporated into other disciplines and degrees. The second stage relates to the creation of a regulatory or

accreditation body for ADR, CR, and PS graduate programs. Accreditation increases the visibility and value of the degree credential with employers and may help with addressing the challenges and competition to entering and working in the field. Until the degree achieves recognition and value from employers, programs may need to integrate industry-valued credentials within the program of study, such as additional certificates or certifications, to assist in career outcomes and success. With these informed recommendations, we can strengthen the education and practice of DRCM, bridge the gap between education and practice, and increase the visibility and value of the degree to employers.

Findings Distribution Proposal

This mixed methods research study filled a need in the PCS field and explored the career experiences, outcomes, and perceptions of DRCM graduate alumni. It also analyzed alumni perceptions related to the impact, relevance, and application of the degree and associated knowledge and skills. To distribute the study's findings, a clear and detailed proposal is necessary to ensure accurate reporting and purposeful distribution in order to create change in instructional practices, program management, value of the degree to close the education to career gap.

Target Audience

The target audience for this research study and findings distribution includes graduate program administrators and faculty in programs that combine the concentration areas of alternative dispute resolution and conflict resolution, and representatives of the larger PCS field. By targeting program stakeholders and distributing the findings from this study, information most relevant to student and alumni success is delivered to those

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groups with student access to initiate changes. In utilizing the findings, graduate

programs will understand more about alumni career experiences after graduate and will

be able to make shifts in instructional practices and add student supports as needed.

Targeting the PCS field, specifically professional associations that identify with PCS, and

distributing the findings from this study will create needed conversation on the visibility

and value of the master's credential and consistencies needed across competencies and

coursework delivered within graduate programs.

Proposed Distribution Method and Venue

The most appropriate distribution method and venue to share the finding and data

from this study is a professional presentation created for key stakeholders. In reaching

graduate program administrators and faculty, I will create a professional presentation of

the data gathered for this research study to share at informational gatherings, such as,

such as departmental faculty and administrator meetings, yearly trainings for faculty on

teaching and advising in the DRCM programs, and year-end meetings related to reporting

student educational outcomes and alumni success. Further opportunities to share the

professional presentation include informational sessions geared towards creating student

supports and developing career management skills in graduate students.

In addition to professional presentations to graduate programs, I intend to share

the professional presentation in webinar form to different interest groups within the PCS

field professional organizations related to professional development in different context

areas in the field. By sharing the research design, literature, and findings through a

professional presentation to these groups, the understanding of DRCM alumni

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experiences will guide graduate program changes and development, as well as advancements in the PCS field.

Distribution Materials

The distribution materials for the findings of this Problem of Practice consist of the development of presentation slides for the two different stakeholders (faculty and program administrators, and PCS field representatives) during meetings and presentations related to the state of the PCS field, improvements in DRCM graduate education, and career outcomes of alumni from DRCM graduate programs. The presentation slides will include the synopsis of the importance for career outcomes and literature review, key findings from the study, and implications and recommendations for the representative group present. Continued research on alumni outcomes from PCS graduate programs is necessary for program improvement, awareness of employment and market trends, and the state of the PCS field as a whole. The materials distributed from this Problem of Practice ensure that knowledge and understanding gained related to DRCM alumni career experiences and outcomes, professional practice, and perceptions of value and impact of the degree are shared to address the challenges in the PCS field, close the education to career gap, and continue the movement of the PCS field into the fifth wave of development.

Conclusion

This Problem of Practice found diverse career outcomes and perceptions, range of applications of the degree, and no significant differences between the programs. The preceding chapter and proposal illustrated a clear distribution of the findings of this Problem of Practice. As the nature of the study targeted career outcomes and perceptions

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of DRCM graduate alumni, the distribution proposal targeted graduate program administration and faculty, as well as the broader PCS field through professional associations. Formal presentations provide the opportunity to reach individuals in the field in the position to make needed changes to benefit future students and alumni. As stated throughout this Problem of Practice, this mixed methods study filled a gap in the PCS field by exploring the career experiences, outcomes, and perceptions of DRCM graduate alumni in relation to their degree.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

IRB Approvals

Baylor University

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD – PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

NOTICE OF EXEMPTION FROM IRB REVIEW

Principal Investigator:	Jessica Lunce
Study Title:	Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Three Graduate Programs: An Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Study of Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management Alumni
IRB Reference #:	1694904
Date of Determination:	January 14, 2021
Exemption Category:	45 CFR 46.104(d)(2)

The above referenced human subjects research project has been determined to be EXEMPT from review by the Baylor University Institutional Review Board (IRB) according to federal regulation 45 CFR 46.104(d)(2): Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior.

The following documents were reviewed:
- IRB Application, submitted on 01/12/2021
- Protocol, dated 12/10/2020
- Consent Form, dated 01/12/2021
- Recruitment Emails, submitted on 01/12/2021
- Interview Questions, dated 01/11/2021
- Survey Questions, submitted 01/11/2021

This exemption is limited to the activities described in the submitted materials. If the research is modified, you must contact this office to determine whether your research is still eligible for exemption prior to implementing the modifications.

If you have any questions, please contact the office at (254) 710-3708 or IRB@baylor.edu

Sincerely,

Deborah L. Holland, JD, MPH, CHRC, CHPC
Assistant Vice Provost for Research, Research Compliance

OFFICE OF THE VICE PROVOST FOR RESEARCH I RESEARCH COMPLIANCE
One Bear Place #97310 · Waco, TX 76798-7310 · (254) 710-3708

LIPSCOMB UNIVERSITY

Status of Research Review

Date: 3/24/21

Title of Project: Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Three Graduate Programs: An Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Study of Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management Alumni

Principal Investigator(s) and Co-Investigator(s):Jessica Lunce

☒ Research approved.

☐ Conditional approval. (*See comments.*)

☐ Committee requests further information before a decision can be made.

☐ This proposal has been denied.

The IRB has met and reviewed your project proposal, and its decision is marked above. Please review the appropriate text below for further information on the decision that was rendered regarding your proposal:

> **Research approved**: If your protocol has been approved, please note that your project has IRB approval from the date of approval for a period of one year and you are free to proceed with data collection.

> **Conditional approval**: If conditional approval is granted, you are allowed to proceed with data collection provided that the required modifications (see comments) are in place. Within 30 days of your receipt of conditional approval, you will need to submit a revised *Research Proposal Form* (i.e., one that documents the required modifications) with the *Request for Amendment to Approved Research* box checked on the first page.

> **Committee requests further information**: Please see the comments and use them to guide required modifications, then re-submit your request.

> **This proposal has been denied**: See the comments for an explanation of why your proposal has been denied.

If an approved study continues unchanged for longer than one year, you will need to submit another *Research Proposal Form* with the *Project Continuation* box checked on the first page. If an approved study continues for more than one year and there are changes to the research design or data that is collected, you will need to submit another *Research Proposal Form* with the *Request for Amendment to Approved Research* box checked on the first page. The IRB reserves the right to observe, review and evaluate this study and its procedures at any time.

Justin Gregory Briggs, Ph.D., LMFT
Chair, Lipscomb University Institutional Review Board

Comments: Reviewed by Megan Parker Peters, PhD

March 4, 2021

Jessica Lunce
Baylor University

Dear Jessica   .

On behalf of the Institutional Review Board, I am pleased to inform you that your project entitled,
"Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Three Graduate Programs: An Explanatory Sequential Mixed
Methods Study of Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management Alumni",

IRB #21-029 , is approved as "External Entity Conducting Research at ACU." You are authorized to
conduct only this research involving ACU facilities, staff, and/or students, with ACU NOT engaged in the
research, as written in your protocol approved by Baylor University   . IRB protocol #1694904 .

If at any time the details of this project change, please resubmit to the IRB so the committee may
determine whether or not this status is still applicable.

I wish you well with your work.

Sincerely,

███████████

Megan Roth, Ph.D.
Director of Research and Sponsored Programs

Human Subjects Research Submission Approval Letter

Date: 3/29/2021
From: IRB Committee
To: Jessica Lunce

The IRB Committee, or a designee thereof, completed review of your request to conduct research at SMU and granted approval. You are therefore authorized to begin or continue the research immediately.

Study ID:	1694904
Study Title:	Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Three Graduate Programs: An Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Study of Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management Alumni
Level of Review:	Exempt
Date of Submission:	1/17/2021
Type of Submission:	New Protocol
Approval Date:	1/29/2021
Continuing Review Due:	N/A

Thank you,

IRB Committee

Office of Research
ResearchCompliance@smu.edu
214-768-2033 | smu.edu/research

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APPENDIX B

Informed Consent

Baylor University
Curriculum and Instruction: Ed.D. – LOC Program

<u>Consent Form</u>

PROTOCOL TITLE: Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Three
                                              Graduate Programs: An Explanatory Sequential
                                              Mixed Methods Study of Dispute Resolution and
                                              Conflict Management Alumni

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jessica Lunce

Purpose of the research: The purpose of this study is to examine the different careers outcomes, experiences, and perceptions of dispute resolution and conflict management graduate alumni. We are asking you to take part in this study because you completed a master's program in the dispute resolution and conflict management field. The information we gather will be used to inform educational practices and career services with future students.

Phase I - Study Activities: If you choose to be in the study, you will complete a web-based survey about your career experiences including questions on:
- your previous education and employment,
- your current employment,
- your career and employment perceptions,
- your use of conflict management skills, and
- your professional activities.

Phase II – Study Activities: If you choose to further participate in the second phase of the study, you will participate in two one-on-one interviews via Zoom about your career experiences. The interview sessions will be audio and video recorded.

Risks and Benefits:
To the best of our knowledge, there are no risks to you for taking part in this study. You may be uncomfortable with some of the questions we will ask about. You do not have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. You may not benefit from taking part in this study. Others may benefit in the future from the information that is learned in this study.

A risk of taking part in this study is the possibility of a loss of confidentiality. Loss of confidentiality includes having your personal information shared with someone who is not on the study team and was not supposed to see or know about your information. The researcher plans to protect your confidentiality.
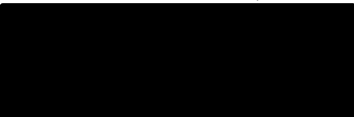
Confidentiality:
Confidentiality will be maintained to the degree permitted by the technology used. Your participation in this online survey involves risks similar to a person's everyday use of the Internet, which could include illegal interception of the data by another party. If you are concerned about your data security, contact Jessica Lunce, and she can send you a printed copy of the survey. You will fill out the answers by hand and mail the completed survey to Jessica Lunce at the address below.
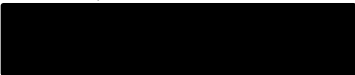
We will keep the records of this study (survey data, audio and video data, transcripts, and notes) confidential by storing data in a password protected electronic format**.** We will make every effort to keep your records confidential. For survey data, no identifying information such as name, email address, or IP address will be collected. In addition, your survey data will be coded with a numerical code. However, there are times when federal or state law requires the disclosure of your records. Authorized staff of Baylor University may review the study records for purposes such as quality control or safety.

At the end of the survey you will be asked if you are interested in participating in additional interviews by Zoom. If you provide contact information for this interview, such as your email address, your survey responses may no longer be anonymous to the researcher. However, your name and identifying information will not be included in any publications or presentations based on these data. Instead, the researcher will assign a pseudonym for reporting.

Questions or concerns about this research study:
You can call or email the researcher with any concerns or questions about the research between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Our telephone numbers are listed below:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Jessica Lunce
                                                        Doctoral Candidate, Ed.D. – LOC

                                                        Jessica_Lunce1@baylor.edu

FACULTY ADVISOR: Dr. Sandra Talbert
                                                        Baylor School of Education
                                                        Department of Curriculum & Instruction
                                                        Marrs McLean Science, second floor
                                                        One Bear Place #97304
                                                        Waco, TX 76798-7304

Sandra_Talbert@baylor.edu

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher, you may contact the Baylor University IRB through the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at ███████████ or irb@baylor.edu.

Taking part in this study is your choice. You are free not to take part or to stop at any time for any reason. No matter what you decide, there will be no penalty or loss of benefit to which you are entitled. If you decide to withdraw from this study, the information that you have already provided will be kept confidential. Information already collected about you cannot be deleted.

By continuing with the research and completing the study activities, you are providing consent.

APPENDIX C

Email Invitations

Baylor University
Curriculum and Instruction – Ed.D. – LOC Program

<u>Sample Email Invitation for Survey Research</u>

STUDY TITLE: Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Three Graduate
Programs: An Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods
Study of Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management
Alumni

RESEARCH SITES: Abilene Christian University
Lipscomb University
Southern Methodist University

EMAIL TEXT:

Dear Master's Alum,

I am conducting a survey and follow-up interviews as part of a two-phase doctoral
research study to increase the understanding of career outcomes and perspectives of
master's graduates in the dispute resolution and conflict management field. As an alum of
the PROGRAM at UNIVERSITY, you are in an ideal position to provide valuable first-
hand information from your own perspective.

In this first phase, the survey takes around 15 minutes. The goal is to capture information,
thoughts, and perspectives on your career after completing your master's program at
UNIVERSITY. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each
participant will be assigned a numerical code to help ensure that personal identifiers are
not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

If you choose to further participate in the second phase of the study, you will participate
in two one-on-one interviews via Zoom about your career experiences. The interview
sessions will be audio and video recorded and will last for 45 minutes to one hour in
length. If you choose to participate in the second interview phase, you will be asked to
enter your contact information at the end of the survey. If you provide contact
information for this interview, such as your email address, your survey responses may no
longer be anonymous. However, your name and identifying information will not be

included in any publications or presentations based on these data. Instead, participants will be assigned a pseudonym for reporting.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to the research and findings could be used to inform educational practices and career services with future students studying dispute resolution and conflict management.

If you are willing to participate please click on the link below to proceed to the consent document and survey. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

INSERT QUALTRICS LINK

Thank you,

Jessica Lunce, MA Dispute Resolution
Doctoral Candidate, Doctor of Education
in Learning and Organizational Change
Baylor University

Baylor University
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

<u>Sample Reminder Email for Survey Research</u>

STUDY TITLE: Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Three Graduate Programs: An Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Study of Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management Alumni

RESEARCH SITES: Abilene Christian University
Lipscomb University
Southern Methodist University

EMAIL TEXT:

Dear Master's Alum,

We recently sent you an invitation to participate in a doctoral research study to understand the career outcomes and perspectives of master's graduates in the dispute resolution and conflict management field.

The survey will take about 15 minutes to complete. There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will be a valuable addition to the research and findings could be used to inform educational practices and career services with future students studying dispute resolution and conflict management.

If you are willing to participate please click on the link below to proceed to the consent document and survey. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

INSERT QUALTRICS LINK

Thank you,

Jessica Lunce, MA Dispute Resolution
Doctoral Candidate, Doctor of Education
in Learning and Organizational Change
Baylor University

BU | **Baylor University**
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Baylor University
Curriculum and Instruction – Ed.D. – LOC Program

<u>Sample Email Invitation for Follow-Up Interview</u>

STUDY TITLE: Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Three Graduate
Programs: An Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods
Study of Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management
Alumni

RESEARCH SITES: Abilene Christian University
Lipscomb University
Southern Methodist University

EMAIL TEXT:

Dear Master's Alum,

Last month, you kindly agreed to continue to be a part of my doctoral research study
examining the career outcomes of dispute resolution and conflict management alumni.
Thank you for your valuable support with this study and your continued interest in
participating in this study.

As you are aware, the study includes two phases. In the first phase, you participated in a
career survey. In the second phase, selected participants will include one-on-one
interviews conducted via Zoom. I am writing to inform you that this second stage of the
study has started and I need to schedule interview sessions with you.

This interview phase of the study comprises of two one-on-one interviews conducted via
Zoom. Each interview will last 45 minutes to one hour and will involve answering in-
depth questions about your career experience. Your responses to the questions will be
kept confidential. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym to help ensure that
personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

There is no compensation for participating in this study. However, your participation will
be a valuable addition to the research and findings could be used to inform educational
practices and career services with future students studying dispute resolution and conflict
management.

If you are willing to participate please complete the consent form [Insert Link] and send
your suggested interview date and time to Jessica_Lunce1@baylor.edu. I will do my best
to be available. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

Thank you,

Jessica Lunce, MA Dispute Resolution
Doctoral Candidate, Doctor of Education
in Learning and Organizational Change
Baylor University

Jessica_Lunce1@baylor.edu

APPENDIX D

Original MSc Public Health Project Online Survey Instrument

MSC PUBLIC HEALTH PROJECT ONLINE SURVEY INSTRUMENT

I have read and understood the purpose of the UWE MSc Public Health project and give my consent to participate in the survey (Please CLICK the forward button at the bottom of each page to move to the next page)
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (3)

 Are you willing for us to update the UWE Alumni database with your records?
❍ Yes (1)
❍ No (2)

If Yes, please provide your convenient contact details.
❍ Name (1) _____
❍ Address/phone (2) _____
❍ email (3) _____

Which of the following was your undergraduate/professional educational qualification before your MSc Public Health admission?
❍ Medicine (1)
❍ Health sciences (e.g. Nursing, public/environmental health, nutrition, physiotherapy) (2)
❍ Biomedical sciences (3)
❍ Social sciences (4)
❍ Other (Please specify) (5) _____

How long did it take, after your undergraduate or last qualification, before you enrolled onto the MSc Public Health programme?
- ○ 0 - 1 year (1)
- ○ 2 - 4 years (2)
- ○ 5 years and more (3)

What was your employment status BEFORE the MSc Public Health programme?
- ○ Employed (full-time) (Please indicate your job title below) (1)

  _____
- ○ Employed (part-time) (Please indicate your job title below) (2)

  _____
- ○ Self employed (3)
- ○ Unemployed (4)
- ○ Intern (5)
- ○ Volunteer (6)
- ○ Student (7)
- ○ Other (Please specify) (8) _____

Condition: Unemployed Is Selected. Skip To: What is your current (main) employmen....

Display This Question:
   If What was your employment status BEFORE the MSc Public Health program? Unemployed Is Not Selected
   And What was your employment status BEFORE the MSc Public Health program? Student Is Not Selected

Which of the following was your employer/organization/sponsor BEFORE the MSc Public Health programme?
- ○ International body (e.g. WHO) (1)
- ○ National ministry of health/public health department (2)
- ○ Local or regional government/public health agency (3)
- ○ Local health service provider (hospital or community health services) (4)
- ○ NGO (5)
- ○ University or other educational institution (6)
- ○ Other (Please specify) (7) _____

Which of the following was/were your field(s) of work BEFORE the MSc Public Health programme? (Please select all that apply)
❑ Clinical care (1)
❑ Project management/implementation (2)
❑ Education/teaching (3)
❑ Disease prevention/health promotion (4)
❑ Research (5)
❑ Programme/project monitoring and evaluation (11)
❑ Emergency and disaster relief (6)
❑ All the above (8)
❑ Other (Please specify) (10) _____

What is your current (main) employment status AFTER the MSc Public Health programme?
○ Employed (full-time) (Please indicate your job title) (1) _____
○ Employed (part-time) (Please indicate your job title) (2) _____
○ Self employed (3)
○ Unemployed (9)
○ Intern   (4)
○ Volunteer (5)
○ Student (6)
○ Other (Please specify) (8) _____
Condition: Unemployed Is Selected. Skip To: What are your current responsibilitie....

If currently a student, please select the category of studentship you belong.
○ PhD studentship (1)
○ Masters (Please specify) (2) _____
○ Public health specialist training programme (Please specify) (3)
    _____
○ Other (Please specify) (4) _____

Which sector does your current (main) employment/job come under?

○ Public (1)
○ Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) (2)
○ Academic (3)
○ Private (4)
○ Other (Please specify) (5) _____

Which of the following is your employer/organization/sponsor?

○ International body (e.g. WHO) (1)
○ National ministry of health/public health department (2)
○ Local or regional government/public health agency (3)
○ Local health service provider (hospital or community health services) (4)
○ NGO (5)
○ University or other educational institution (6)
○ Other (Please specify) (7) _____

Which of the following is/are your field(s) of work AFTER the MSc Public Health programme? (Please select all that apply)

❑ Clinical care (1)
❑ Project management/implmentation (2)
❑ Education/teaching (3)
❑ Disease prevention/health promotion (4)
❑ Research (5)
❑ Programme/project monitoring and evaluation (11)
❑ Emergency and disaster relief (6)
❑ All the above (8)
❑ Other (Please specify) (10) _____

What are your current responsibilities? (Please select all that apply)
- ❑ Project management/implementation (1)
- ❑ Research (2)
- ❑ Programme/project monitoring and evaluation (10)
- ❑ Teaching/training (3)
- ❑ Disease prevention/health promotion (4)
- ❑ Emergency and disaster relief (6)
- ❑ Clinical care (7)
- ❑ Other (Please specify) (8) _____
- ❑ All the above (9)

How long did it take you to get an MSc Public Health related job/position (part-time or full-time) after completion of the MSc programme?
- ○ Less than 6 months (1)
- ○ 6 months (2)
- ○ 1 year (3)
- ○ More than 1 year (4)
- ○ I was on a study leave (5)

Are you currently employed or studying in your home country or abroad?
- ○ Home country (1)
- ○ Abroad (Please specify) (2) _____
- ○ Prefer not to say (3)

We would like to know the impact of the MSc Public Health programme on your career. Please tick the box that best describes changes in the following areas/functions in comparison to before the MSc programme, where applicable.

	Increased (3)	Remained the same (2)	Decreased (1)	Not applicable (0)
Planning/implementing/evaluating public health interventions (1)	○	○	○	○
Administration/management functions (2)	○	○	○	○
Leadership role (3)	○	○	○	○
Research (4)	○	○	○	○
Teaching/training (5)	○	○	○	○
Job grade (6)	○	○	○	○
Salary scale/remuneration (7)	○	○	○	○
Policy analysis/formulation/development (8)	○	○	○	○
Clinical work (9)	○	○	○	○

How relevant are the following skills to your current public health experience?

	Not applicable (0)	Irrelevant (1)	Somewhat relevant (2)	Relevant (3)	Very relevant (4)
Epidemiology/social statistics (1)	○	○	○	○	○
Critical appraisal/evidence based decision making (2)	○	○	○	○	○
Identifying factors that influence public health/multidisciplinary thinking (3)	○	○	○	○	○
Research skills gained during dissertation (4)	○	○	○	○	○
Academic writing (5)	○	○	○	○	○
Public health economics analysis (6)	○	○	○	○	○
Policy analysis/development (7)	○	○	○	○	○
Leadership and systems thinking (8)	○	○	○	○	○
Development of online communication platforms (9)	○	○	○	○	○

How confident are you in the following areas since completing the MSc Public Health programme?

	Not applicable (0)	Not confident (1)	Somewhat confident (2)	Confident (3)	Very confident (4)
Epidemiology/social statistics (1)	O	O	O	O	O
Critical appraisal/evidence based decision making (2)	O	O	O	O	O
Identifying factors that influence public health/multidisciplinary thinking (3)	O	O	O	O	O
Research skills gained during dissertation (4)	O	O	O	O	O
Academic writing (5)	O	O	O	O	O
Public health economics analysis (6)	O	O	O	O	O
Policy analysis/development (7)	O	O	O	O	O
Leadership and systems thinking (8)	O	O	O	O	O
Development of online communication platforms (9)	O	O	O	O	O

How relevant were the following modules to your current role or public health experience? (If you did an earlier version of the program, some modules may have changed. Please select 'Not applicable' if a module does not apply to you).

	Not applicable (0)	Irrelevant (1)	Somewhat relevant (2)	Relevant (3)	Very relevant (4)
Introduction to Public Health (1)	O	O	O	O	O
Health Protection (Communicable Disease Control) (2)	O	O	O	O	O
Epidemiology of Non-Communicable Diseases (Applied Epidemiology) (3)	O	O	O	O	O
Public Health Economics (4)	O	O	O	O	O
Health Promotion (5)	O	O	O	O	O
Leadership for Public Health (6)	O	O	O	O	O
Public Health Policy and Politics (Public Policy) (7)	O	O	O	O	O
Qualitative Health Research (8)	O	O	O	O	O
Quantitative Health Research (9)	O	O	O	O	O
Dissertation (10)	O	O	O	O	O
Overall MSc Public Health Programme (11)	O	O	O	O	O

Are you a registered or accredited professional in your home country and/or abroad?
○ Yes (please state your profession in the box below) (1) _____
○ In the process of registration (please state your profession in the box below) (2)

_____
○ No (3)

If you are registered or in the process of registration, please specify the name of the register/accrediting body.

Are you a member of a professional public health association in your home country and/or abroad?
○ Yes (please state the name of the association below) (1) _____
○ In the process of registration (please state the name of the association below) (2)

_____
○ No (3)

Are you a registered or accredited public health specialist/practitioner in your home country and/or abroad?
○ Yes (please state the name of the register or accrediting body below) (1)

_____
○ In the process of registration (please state the name of the register or accrediting body below) (2) _____
○ No (3)

Are you or have you been involved in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) after obtaining the MSc Public Health degree? (Please select all that apply).
❑ Formal institutional learning (e.g. short/certificate courses) (1)
❑ Work based learning (e.g. in-service training) (2)
❑ Seminars/workshops/conferences (3)
❑ Self-directed learning and e-learning (4)
❑ Voluntary work (5)
❑ Other (Please specify) (6) _____
❑ Not applicable (7)

Which of the following honorary appointments have you been awarded in addition to your main employment? (Please select all that apply).
❑ Visiting lecturer (1)
❑ Visiting research fellow (2)
❑ Visiting professor (3)
❑ Other(Please specify) (4) _____
❑ None (5)

Have you published or had significant input on a publication in the public domain upon completion of the MSc Public Health programme? (Please select all that apply).
❑ Yes (1)
❑ Writing up (2)
❑ Publication submitted (3)
❑ No (4)

If ${q://QID35/ChoiceGroup/SelectedChoices}, please select all that apply.
❑ Research article/conference paper drawn from your dissertation (1)
❑ Research article(s) (2)
❑ Conference paper(s) (3)
❑ Book chapter(s) (4)
❑ Programme technical report(s) (e.g. project evaluation reports) (5)
❑ Policy briefs/policies/ frameworks/strategies (6)
❑ Other (Please specify) (7) _____

Briefly tell us of any notable achievements or challenges in your career since obtaining the MSc Public Health degree.

Do you have any recommendations regarding improvement of the MSc Public Health programme or professional development during the programme?

Are you willing to take part in a short follow up telephone/Skype interview to explore some of your experiences in more depth?
○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)

If Yes, please provide your convenient contact details as below.
❑ Name (1) _____
❑ Address/phone (2) _____
❑ email (3) _____

Are you willing for us to update the UWE Alumni database with your records?
○ Yes (1)
○ No (2)

If Yes, please provide your convenient contact details.
❑ Name (1) _____
❑ Address/phone (2) _____
❑ email (3) _____

Please answer a few questions about yourself.

Age of respondent
○ 20-29 (1)
○ 30-39 (2)
○ 40-49 (3)
○ 50+ (4)

Gender of respondent
○ Male (1)
○ Female (2)
○ Prefer not to say (3)

Nationality of respondent
- ○ American (1)
- ○ Australian (2)
- ○ Bangladesh (3)
- ○ Botswanan (5)
- ○ Bulgarian (6)
- ○ Burmese (7)
- ○ Cameroonian (8)
- ○ Canadian (43)
- ○ Chinese (9)
- ○ Cypriot (10)
- ○ Dutch (11)
- ○ Finnish (12)
- ○ French (13)
- ○ Gambian (14)
- ○ German (15)
- ○ Ghanaian (16)
- ○ Icelander (17)
- ○ Indian (18)
- ○ Iranian (41)
- ○ Iraqi (4)
- ○ Irish (42)
- ○ Italian (40)
- ○ Kenyan (19)
- ○ Luxembourger (20)
- ○ Malawian (21)
- ○ Malaysian (22)
- ○ Mauritian (23)
- ○ Nepalese (24)
- ○ New Zealander (25)
- ○ Nigerian (26)
- ○ Norwegian (27)
- ○ Pakistani (28)
- ○ Polish (29)
- ○ Portuguese (30)
- ○ Senegalese (31)
- ○ Sierra Leonean (32)
- ○ Spanish (33)
- ○ Somalian (34)
- ○ Sudanese (35)
- ○ Swazi (36)
- ○ Swiss (37)
- ○ Ugandan (38)
- ○ Zimbabwe (39)

Please select your year of graduation with a MSc Public Health degree from UWE.
- ◯ 2004 (1)
- ◯ 2005 (11)
- ◯ 2006 (13)
- ◯ 2007 (12)
- ◯ 2008 (2)
- ◯ 2009 (3)
- ◯ 2010 (4)
- ◯ 2011 (5)
- ◯ 2012 (6)
- ◯ 2013 (7)
- ◯ 2014 (8)
- ◯ 2015 (9)
- ◯ 2016 (10)

APPENDIX E

Survey Protocol

Baylor University
Curriculum and Instruction: Ed.D. – LOC Program

<u>Survey Protocol</u>

PROTOCOL TITLE: Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Three
                                                 Graduate Programs: An Explanatory Sequential
                                                 Mixed Methods Study of Dispute Resolution and
                                                 Conflict Management Alumni

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR   Jessica Lunce

Qualtrics Survey Text:

Page One: Consent Form

Display Page Two if Respondent Answered 'Yes' to: "I have read and understood the
purpose of the project and give my consent to participate."

Page Two: Survey

DEMOGRAPHICS

Which institution granted your master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict
management field?
- □ Abilene Christian University
- □ Lipscomb University
- □ Southern Methodist University

Please select your year of graduation your master's degree in dispute resolution and
conflict management.
- □ 2011
- □ 2012
- □ 2013
- □ 2014
- □ 2015

Please answer the following questions about your personal background.

Gender
- □ Male
- □ Female
- □ Prefer not to say

Race and Ethnicity (provide definitions)
- □ American Indian or Alaska Native
- □ Asian
- □ Black or African American
- □ Hispanic or Latino
- □ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- □ White

Are you Hispanic or Latino
- □ Yes
- □ No

Please enter your current age.
Age: _____

EDUCATION

Which of the following was your undergraduate educational degree before your master's admission for the dispute resolution and conflict management field?
- □ Bachelor of Arts
- □ Bachelor of Business Administration
- □ Bachelor of Fine Arts
- □ Bachelor of Science
- □ Other (Please specify) _____

For your undergraduate degree, please provide your major of study.
Undergraduate Major: _____

Did you earn a previous graduate or professional degree prior to enrolling in the master's program for dispute resolution and conflict management?
- □ Yes
- □ No

Degree: _____
Program of Study: _____

How long did it take, after your undergraduate or last degree qualification, before you enrolled into the master's program in the dispute resolution and conflict management field?

□ 0 - 1 year
□ 2 - 4 years
□ 5 years and more

PRIOR EMPLOYMENT

What was your primary employment status BEFORE the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field?
□ Employed full-time (on average 30 hours or more per week)
□ Employed part-time (on average less than 30 hours per week)
□ Participating in a volunteer or service program (e.g. Peace Corps)
□ Serving in the U.S. military
□ Enrolled in a program of continuing education
□ Was seeking employment
□ Was planning to continue education but not yet enrolled
□ Was not seeking employment or continuing education at that time

Next Two Questions (Conditional if primary status was employed full-time or employed part-time, DISPLAY):

Please select the category which best describes your primary full-time or part-time employment BEFORE the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field.
□ Employed as an entrepreneur
□ Employed in a temporary/contract work assignment.
□ Employed freelance
□ Employed in a fellowship, postdoctoral residency or other postdoctoral appointment
□ Employed in a faculty tenure track position
□ Employed in a faculty non-tenure track position
□ Employed in all other capacities

Please provide the following information concerning your employment BEFORE the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field:
Employing organization: _____
Position location (city, state, and country): _____
Job title: _____
If employed full-time, annual base salary amount in U.S. dollars: _____
Were you employed in this position while you were pursuing your degree?
□ Yes
□ No

Next Question (Conditional if primary status was participating in a volunteer or service program, DISPLAY):

For your volunteer or service program BEFORE the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field, please provide the following information:
Organization: _____
Assignment location (city, state, country): _____
Role or title: _____
Were you in this program while you were pursuing your degree?
- □ Yes
- □ No

Next Question (Conditional if primary status was serving with the U.S. military, DISPLAY):

For your military service, please provide the following information about your assignment BEFORE the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field:
Service branch: _____
Rank: _____

Next Question (Conditional if primary status was enrolled in a program of continuing education, DISPLAY):

For your continuing education program, please provide the following information concerning your education BEFORE the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field:
Name of institution: _____
Location of the institution (city, state, and country): _____
Program of study: _____
Degree you are pursuing: _____

Regular Questions Continued

Which sector best describes the sector of your primary status BEFORE the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field?
- □ Public
- □ Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)
- □ Non-Profit
- □ Academic
- □ Private
- □ Other (Please specify) _____

Which industry best describes the industry of your primary status BEFORE the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field?
- □ Construction

- □ Education and Health Services
- □ Financial Activities
- □ Information
- □ Leisure and Hospitality
- □ Manufacturing
- □ Natural Resources and Mining
- □ Other Services (Except Public Administration)
- □ Professional and Business Services
- □ Trade, Transportation, and Utilities
- □ Other (Please specify)

EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCES

Did you participate in any educational experiences outside of the master's program in dispute resolution and conflict management?
- □ Field experience/practicum
- □ Graduate, research, or teaching assistantship
- □ Internship
- □ Study abroad
- □ Volunteer
- □ Other (please specify) _____

POST EMPLOYMENT

What was your primary employment status AFTER the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field?
- □ Employed full-time (on average 30 hours or more per week)
- □ Employed part-time (on average less than 30 hours per week)
- □ Participating in a volunteer or service program (e.g. Peace Corps)
- □ Serving in the U.S. military
- □ Enrolled in a program of continuing education
- □ Seeking employment
- □ Planning to continue education but not yet enrolled
- □ Not seeking employment or continuing education at that time

Next Two Questions (Conditional if primary status was employed full-time or employed part-time, DISPLAY):

Please select the category which best describes your primary full-time or part-time employment AFTER the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field.
- □ Employed as an entrepreneur
- □ Employed in a temporary/contract work assignment.
- □ Employed freelance

- ☐ Employed in a fellowship, postdoctoral residency or other postdoctoral appointment
- ☐ Employed in a faculty tenure track position
- ☐ Employed in a faculty non-tenure track position
- ☐ Employed in all other capacities

Please provide the following information concerning your employment AFTER the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field:
Employing organization: _____
Position location (city, state, and country): _____
Job title: _____
If employed full-time, annual base salary amount in U.S. dollars: _____
Were you employed in this position while you were pursuing your degree?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Next Question (Conditional if primary status was participating in a volunteer or service program, DISPLAY):

For your volunteer or service program AFTER the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field, please provide the following information:
Organization: _____
Assignment location (city, state, country): _____
Role or title: _____
Were you in this program while you were pursuing your degree?
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Next Question (Conditional if primary status was serving with the U.S. military, DISPLAY):

For your military service, please provide the following information about your assignment AFTER the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field:
Service branch: _____
Rank: _____

Next Question (Conditional if primary status was enrolled in a program of continuing education, DISPLAY):

For your continuing education program, please provide the following information concerning your education AFTER the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field:
Name of institution: _____
Location of the institution (city, state, and country): _____
Program of study: _____

Degree you are pursuing: _____

Regular Questions Continued

Which sector best describes the sector of your primary status AFTER the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field?
- □ Public
- □ Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)
- □ Non-Profit
- □ Academic
- □ Private
- □ Other (Please specify) _____

Which industry best describes the industry of your primary status AFTER the master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field?
- □ Construction
- □ Education and Health Services
- □ Financial Activities
- □ Information
- □ Leisure and Hospitality
- □ Manufacturing
- □ Natural Resources and Mining
- □ Other Services (Except Public Administration)
- □ Professional and Business Services
- □ Trade, Transportation, and Utilities
- □ Other (Please specify)

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Are you a registered or accredited professional or practitioner (any field)?
- □ Yes
- □ In the process of registration
- □ No

Profession of accreditation _____

Registration or accrediting body _____

Are you a member of a professional association?
- □ Yes
- □ In the process of registration
- □ No

Name of professional association _____

Are you or have you been involved in professional development after obtaining your master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field? (Please select all that apply).
- □ Formal institutional learning (e.g. short/certificate courses)
- □ Work based learning (e.g. in-service training)
- □ Seminars/workshops/conferences
- □ Self-directed learning and e-learning
- □ Voluntary work
- □ Other (Please specify) _____
- □ None

Which of the following honorary appointments have you been awarded in addition to your main employment? (Please select all that apply).
- □ Visiting lecturer
- □ Visiting research fellow
- □ Visiting professor
- □ Other (Please specify) _____
- □ None

Have you published or had significant input on a publication in the public domain after completion of your master's degree in the dispute resolution and conflict management field? (Please select all that apply).
- □ Yes
- □ Writing up
- □ Publication submitted
- □ No

Next Question (Conditional if yes, writing up, publication submitted, DISPLAY):

For the publication you published or had significant input, select all that apply.
- □ Research article/conference paper drawn from your thesis/dissertation
- □ Research article(s)
- □ Conference paper(s)
- □ Book chapter(s)
- □ Program technical report(s) (e.g. project evaluation reports)
- □ Policy briefs/policies/ frameworks/strategies
- □ Other (Please specify) _____

Briefly describe any notable achievements or challenges in your career since obtaining the master's degree.
Open Response

CAREER PERCEPTIONS

How long did it take you to get a dispute resolution or conflict management-specific job/position (part-time or full-time) after your completion of the master's degree?
- □ Less than 6 months
- □ 6 months to 11 months
- □ 1 year
- □ More than 1 year
- □ I have not yet acquired a dispute resolution or conflict management-specific job/position
- □ Not applicable

Please choose the option that best describes the impact of the degree related to changes in the following areas/functions in comparison to before the master's degree, where applicable.
Increased (3), Remained the same (2), Decreased (1), Not applicable (0)
- □ Planning/implementing/evaluating conflict interventions
- □ Administration/management functions
- □ Leadership role
- □ Research
- □ Training
- □ Job grade
- □ Salary scale/remuneration
- □ Conflict analysis

How relevant are the following skills to your current role?
(Not Applicable, Irrelevant, Somewhat Relevant, Relevant, Very Relevant)
- □ Conflict analysis
- □ Approaches to conflict intervention or conflict management
- □ Understanding stages of conflict
- □ Consuming, applying, and using research in practice

How confident are you in the following areas since completing the master's degree?
(Not Applicable, Not Confident, Somewhat Confident, Confident, Very Confident)
- □ Conflict analysis
- □ Approaches to conflict intervention or conflict management
- □ Understanding stages of conflict
- □ Consuming, applying, and using research in practice

How relevant were the following curricular areas or courses to your current role? (These areas or courses are general as specific titles may change from year to year). Please select 'Not applicable' if a course does not apply to you).
(Not Applicable, Irrelevant, Somewhat Relevant, Relevant, Very Relevant)

- □ Conflict theory and analysis
- □ Approaches to intervention
- □ Stages of conflict
- □ Sector or context-specific courses
- □ Research methods courses
- □ Field experience (internship, practicum, study abroad)
- □ Overall master's program in dispute resolution and conflict management

Please answer the following questions about your employability on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.
(Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, to Strongly Agree)
- □ I have good prospects in this organization because my employer values my personal contribution.
- □ Even if there was downsizing in this organization, I am confident that I would be retained.
- □ My personal networks in this organization help me in my career.
- □ I am aware of the opportunities arising in this organization even if they are different to what I do now.
- □ The skills I have gained in my present job are transferable to other occupations outside this organization.
- □ I could easily retrain to make myself more employable elsewhere.
- □ I can use my professional networks and business contacts to develop my career.
- □ I have a good knowledge of opportunities for me outside of this organization even if they are quite different to what I do now.
- □ Among the people who do the same job as me, I am well respected in this organization.
- □ People who do the same job as me who work in this organization are valued highly.
- □ If I needed to, I could easily get another job like mine in a similar organization.
- □ People who do a job like mine in organizations similar to the one I presently work in are really in demand by other organizations.
- □ I could easily get a similar job to mine in almost any organization.
- □ Anyone with my level of skills and knowledge, and similar job and organizational experience, will be highly sought after by employers.
- □ I could get any job, anywhere, so long as my skills and experience were reasonably relevant.
- □ People with my kind of job-related experience are very highly valued in their organization and outside whatever sort of organization they have previously worked in.

Please answer the following questions about your career success on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.
(Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, to Strongly Agree)
- □ I am in a position to do mostly work which I really like.
- □ My job title is indicative of my progress and my responsibility in the organization.

- ☐ I am pleased with the promotions I have received so far.
- ☐ I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.
- ☐ I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my overall career goals.
- ☐ I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income.
- ☐ I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.
- ☐ I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.

Please answer the following questions about your professional commitment on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree.
(Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Agree, to Strongly Agree)
- ☐ I am willing to put in a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help make my profession successful.
- ☐ I would accept almost any type of job assignment in order to keep working in areas that are associated with this profession.
- ☐ I find that my values and my profession's values are very similar.
- ☐ I am proud to tell others that I am part of this profession.
- ☐ Being a member of this profession really inspires the best in me in the way of job performance.
- ☐ I am extremely glad I chose this profession over others I was considering at the time I joined.
- ☐ Often, I find it difficult to agree with this profession's policies on important matters relating to its members.
- ☐ I really care about the fate of this profession.
- ☐ For me this is the best of all professions to be a member of.

Are you willing to take part in a short follow up Zoom interview to explore some of your experiences in more depth? You will be identified by a pseudonym to protect your anonymity.
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Next Question (Conditional if yes selected to participate in follow up interview, DISPLAY):

Please provide your preferred contact information below.
Name _____
Phone _____
mail _____

APPENDIX F

Follow-Up Interview Protocol

Baylor University
Curriculum and Instruction: Ed.D. – LOC Program

<u>Interview Protocol</u>

PROTOCOL TITLE: Career Outcomes and Perceptions Across Three
                                                       Graduate Programs: An Explanatory Sequential
                                                       Mixed Methods Study of Dispute Resolution and
                                                       Conflict Management Alumni

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR   Jessica Lunce
& INTERVIEWER:

INTERVIEW DETAILS:

Date of Interview:	
Time of Interview:	
Interviewee:	

BACKGROUND INFORMATION & CONSENT:

Describe the project: This study is part of my doctoral research for the Ed.D. Learning and Organizational Change program at Baylor University.

Explain the purpose of the interview: The purpose of this study is to examine the different career outcomes, experiences, and perceptions of dispute resolution and conflict management (DRCM) graduate alumni. I have asked you to take part in the interview portion of this study because you completed a master's degree at X university.

Describe role of interviewee: This study is focused on the real career experiences of DRCM alumni. You are the expert. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be as honest as possible.

Explain recording and reaffirm consent: Before we start, I want to remind you that I will be recording our conversation through the local recording option of Zoom so that it is stored in a secure local drive. I am also recording the audio stream separately as well. Both recording methods will help us remember and transcribe what we discussed. If at any time you are uncomfortable or would like to stop or take a break from the interview, please let me know. Do you agree to take part in the interview stage of this study?

Answer interviewee questions: Do you have any questions before we get started?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

Question	Response
Which institution did you attend for your master's degree and what year did you graduate?	
What was your motivation for entering the master's program in dispute resolution and conflict management?	
Tell me about your career. Begin prior to the program and include your career up to now (after graduation)	
What is your approach to your career?	
Describe your career identity.	
Describe or define your career success.	
In your current position/role, what skills or courses of the master's program in dispute resolution and conflict management have the greatest impact or are the most useful? (Specific skills, courses, theories)	
Are there skills or courses that do not apply or have value in current work?	
Tell me about your experiences with professional development after graduation?	

(Attending conferences, joining professional organizations, learning or certificate programs, etc.)	
How did you view the job market when you graduated?	
What were your employment expectations after graduation?	
What jobs have you applied for, both unsuccessful and successful?	
How do you perceive your employability?	
What do you perceive as factors increasing your employability?	
What do you perceive as constraints influencing your employability? (getting promotions, different jobs, etc.)	
How would you describe the value of your dispute resolution and conflict management education?	
Are there any other aspects of your master's degree or master's experience that are important to you that you have not yet mentioned?	
Do you have any recommendations for improvements to the program?	
What have you identified that would be useful to be included in the master's program?	
Additional questions that relate to the results of the initial career survey. (Pending due to quantitative data analysis)	

At the conclusion of the interview:
- Thank participant for their participation.
- Reminder of confidentiality.
- Discuss next steps for the secondary interview in reviewing the information provided in this interview, as well as reviewing the transcripts once complete.

APPENDIX G

Evidence of Assumptions for Independent *t*-Test

Table A.1

Tests of Normality for Continuous Variables

Continuous Variable	Program institution	Kolmogorov-Smirnov[a]			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	*df*	Sig.	Statistic	*df*	Sig.
Professional Commitment	Abilene Christian University	.108	34	.200[*]	.954	34	.165
	Southern Methodist University	.151	19	.200[*]	.910	19	.073
Subjective Career Success	Abilene Christian University	.129	34	.166	.941	34	.066
	Southern Methodist University	.194	19	.059	.911	19	.078
Self-Perceived Employability	Abilene Christian University	.096	34	.200[*]	.972	34	.506
	Southern Methodist University	.122	19	.200[*]	.922	19	.122
Post degree full-time salary	Abilene Christian University	.174	24	.059	.933	24	.114
	Southern Methodist University	.173	16	.200[*]	.911	16	.119

Note. Not all participants reported post degree full-time salary.
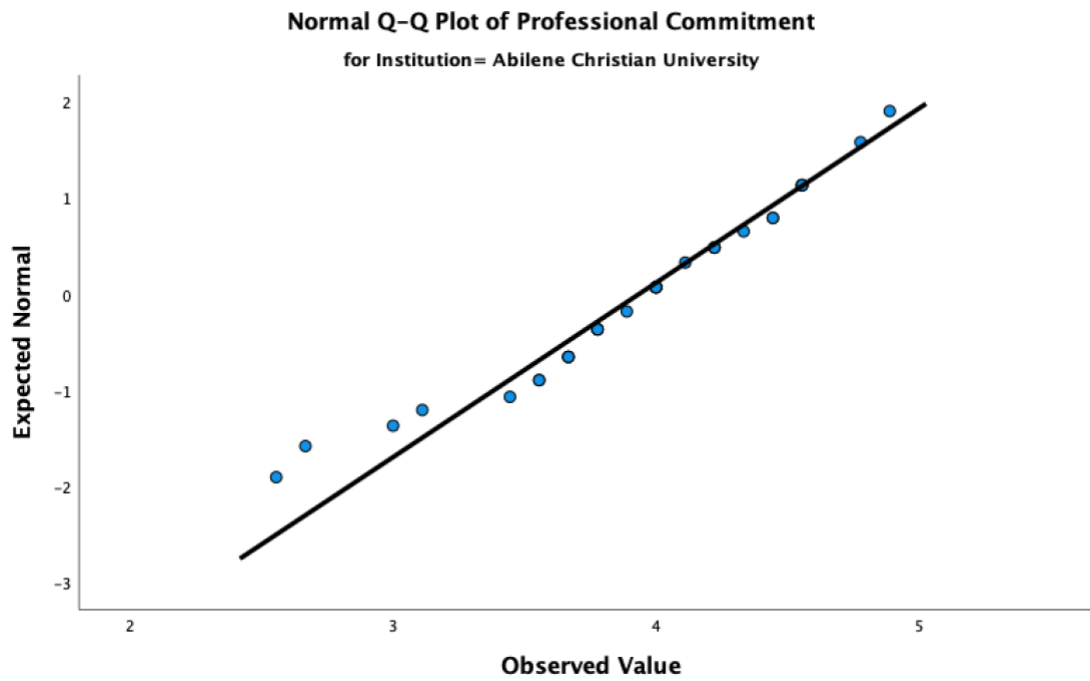[*]. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

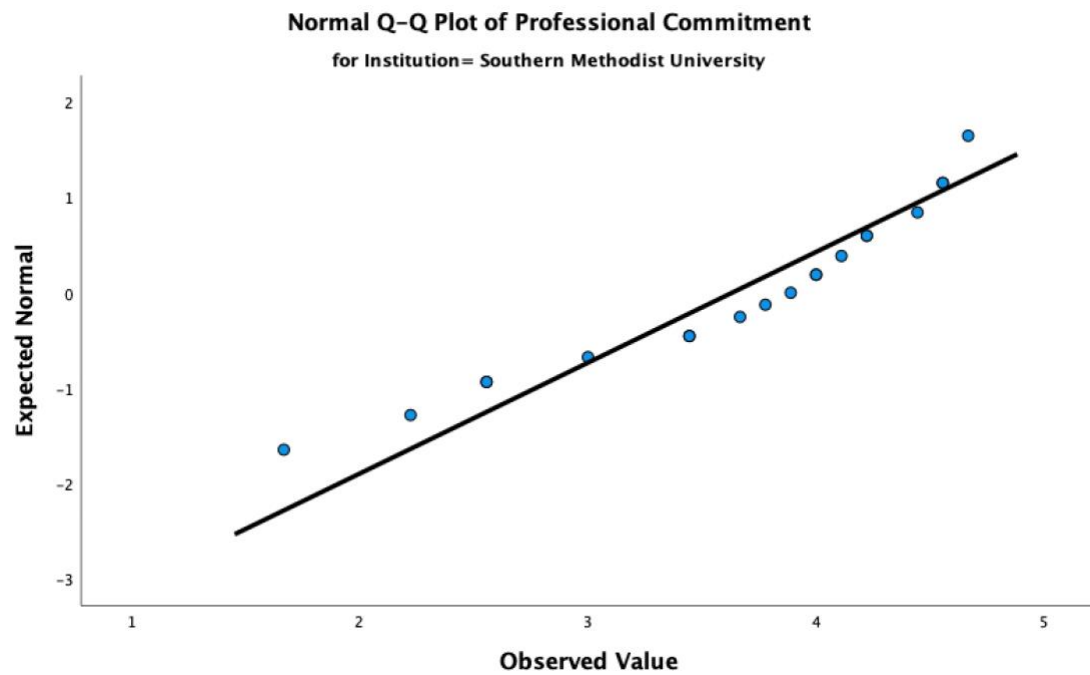*Figure A.1*. Professional commitment Q-Q plot for ACU alumni.

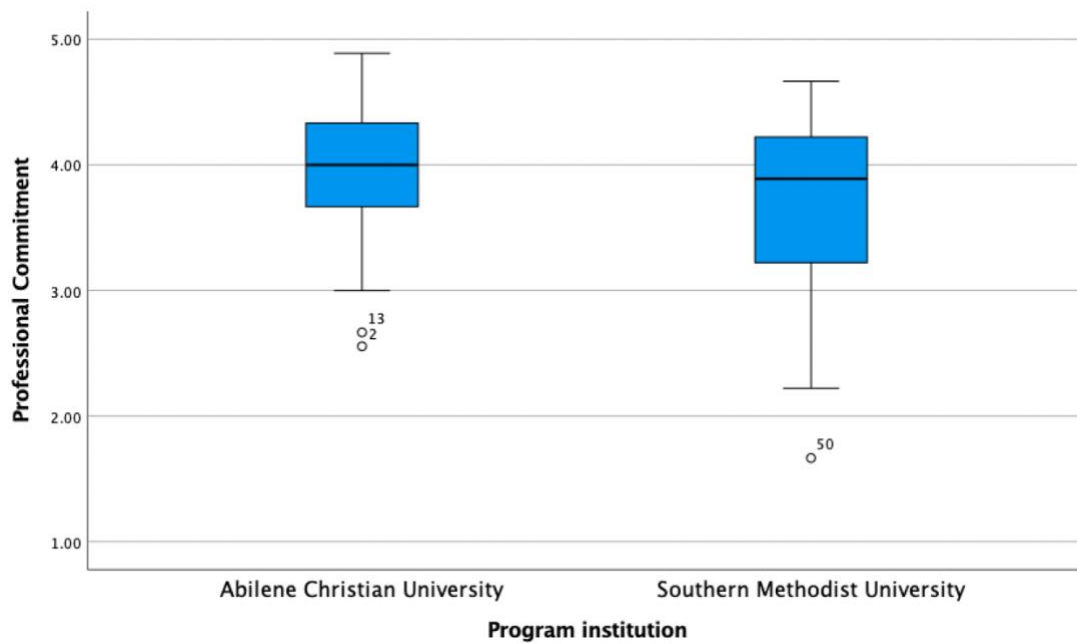*Figure A.2*. Professional commitment Q-Q plot for SMU alumni.

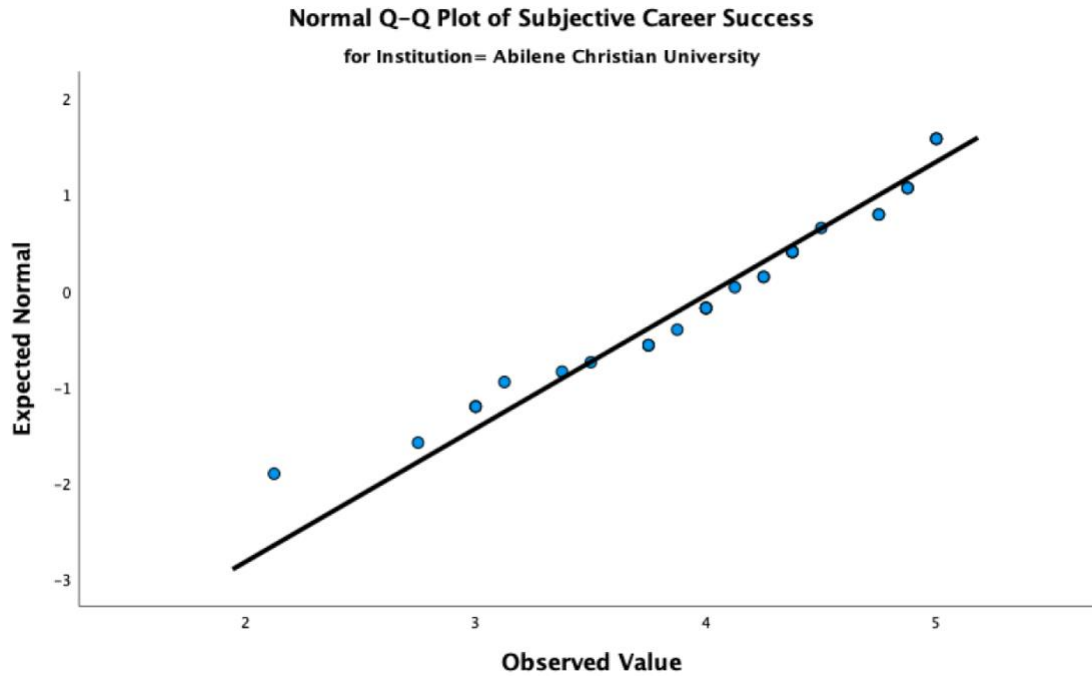*Figure A.3.* Professional commitment box plots.

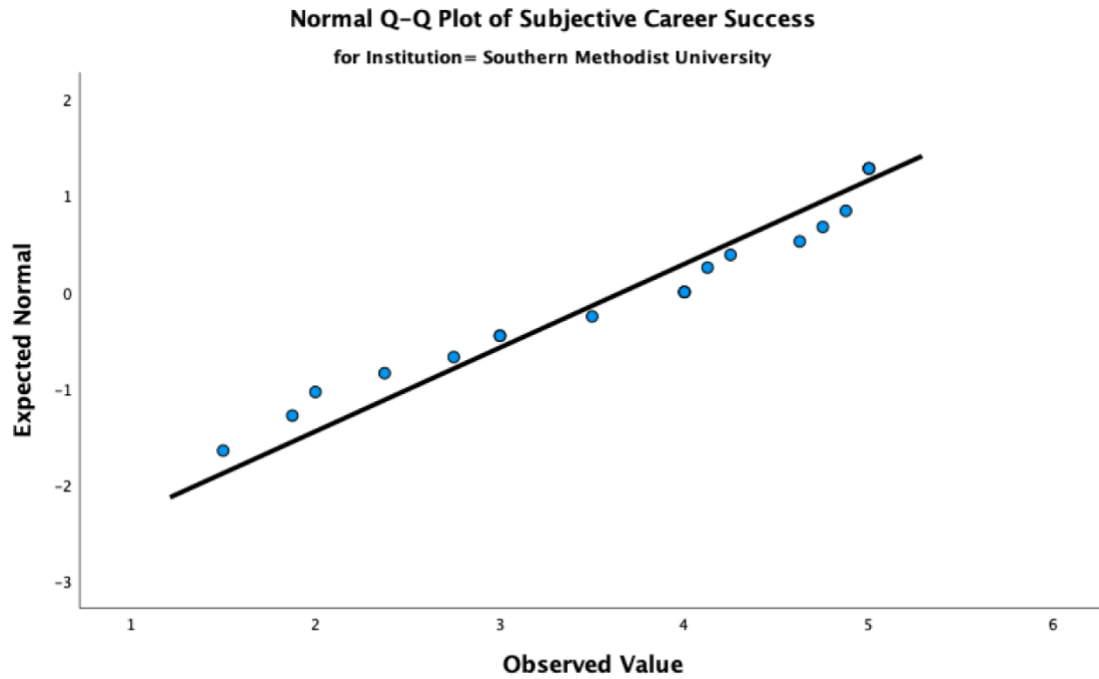*Figure A.4.* Subjective career success Q-Q plot for ACU alumni.

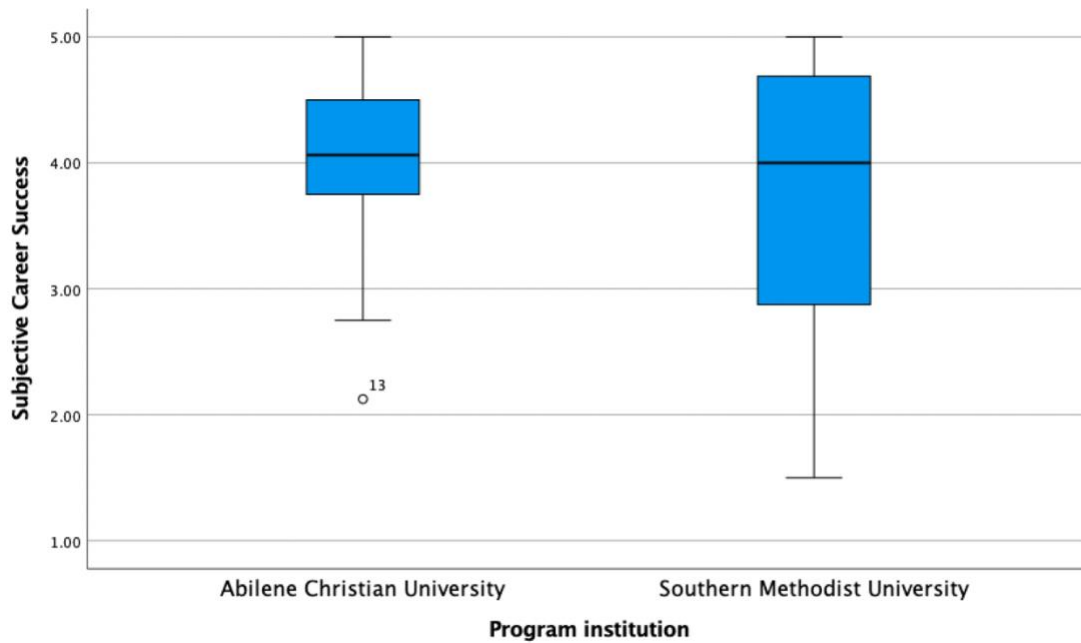*Figure A.5.* Subjective career success Q-Q plot for SMU alumni.

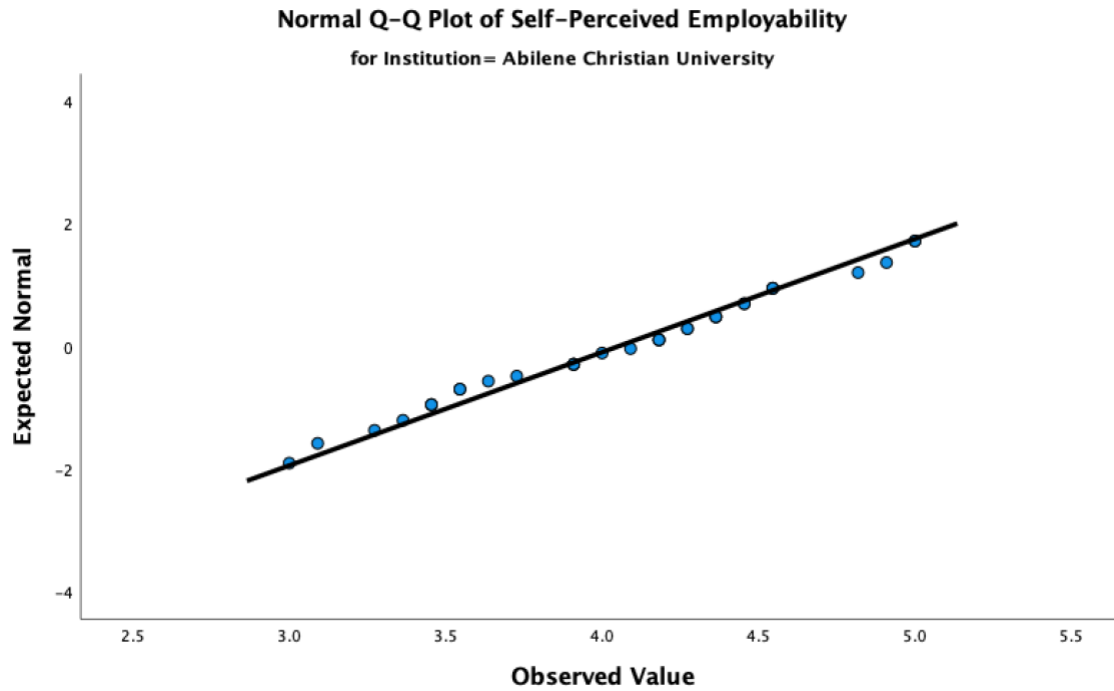*Figure A.6.* Subjective career success box plots.

Figure A.7. Self-perceived employability Q-Q plot for ACU alumni.

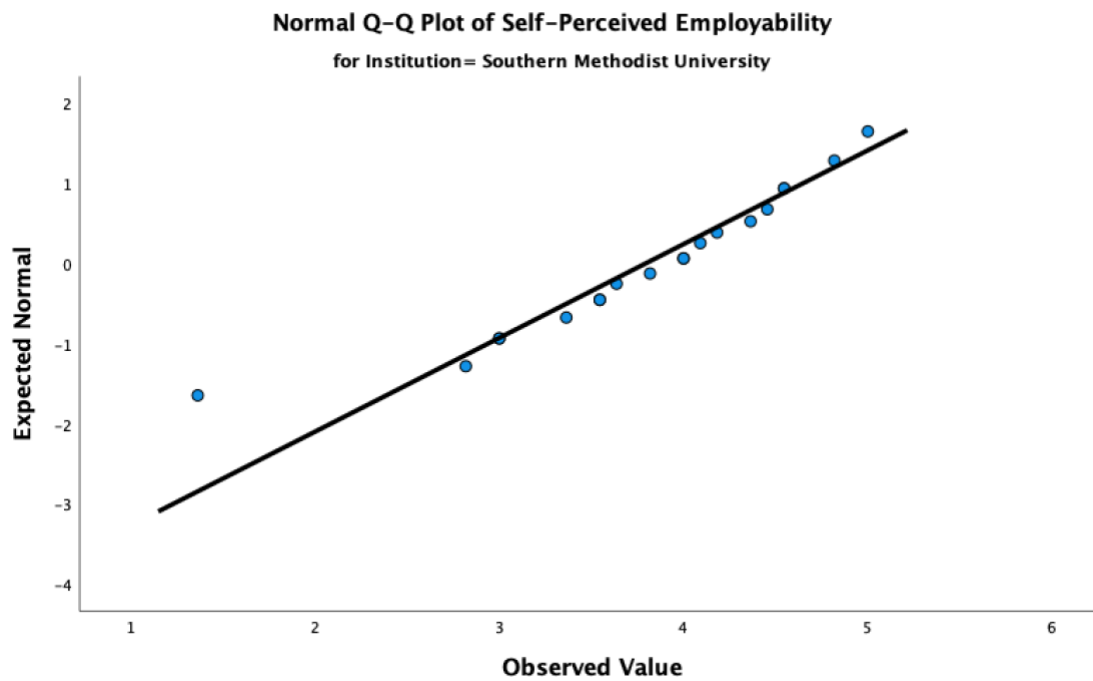*Figure A.8.* Self-perceived employability Q-Q plot for SMU alumni.

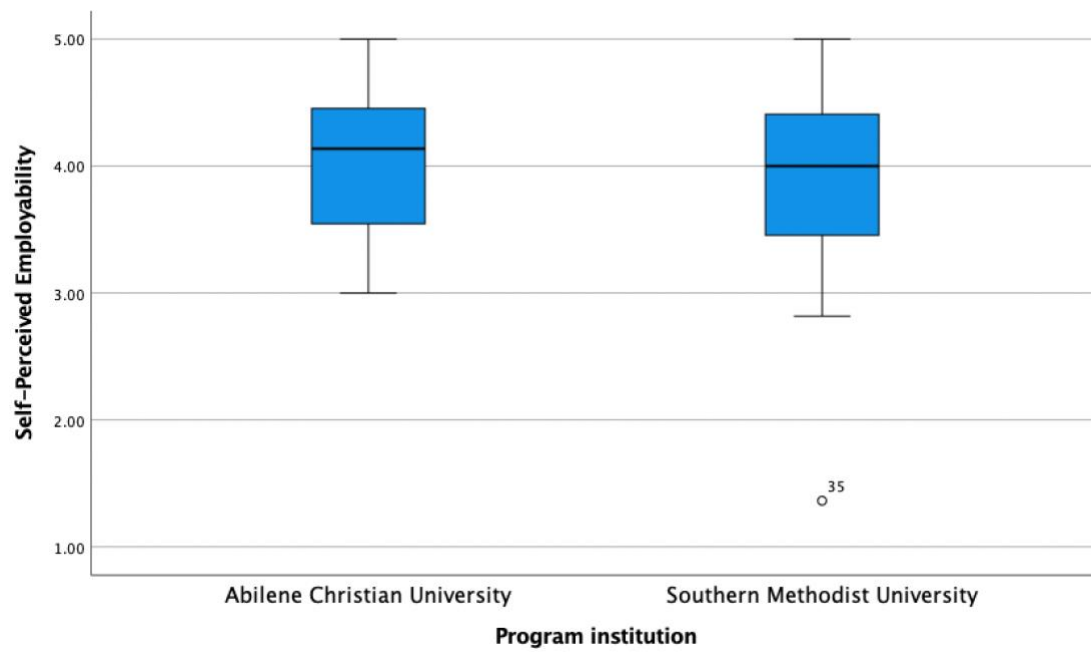*Figure A.9.* Self-perceived employability box plots.

Figure A.10. Post degree salary Q-Q plot for ACU alumni.

Normal Q-Q Plot of Post employment full-time salary

for Institution= Southern Methodist University

Figure A.11. Post degree salary Q-Q plot for SMU alumni.

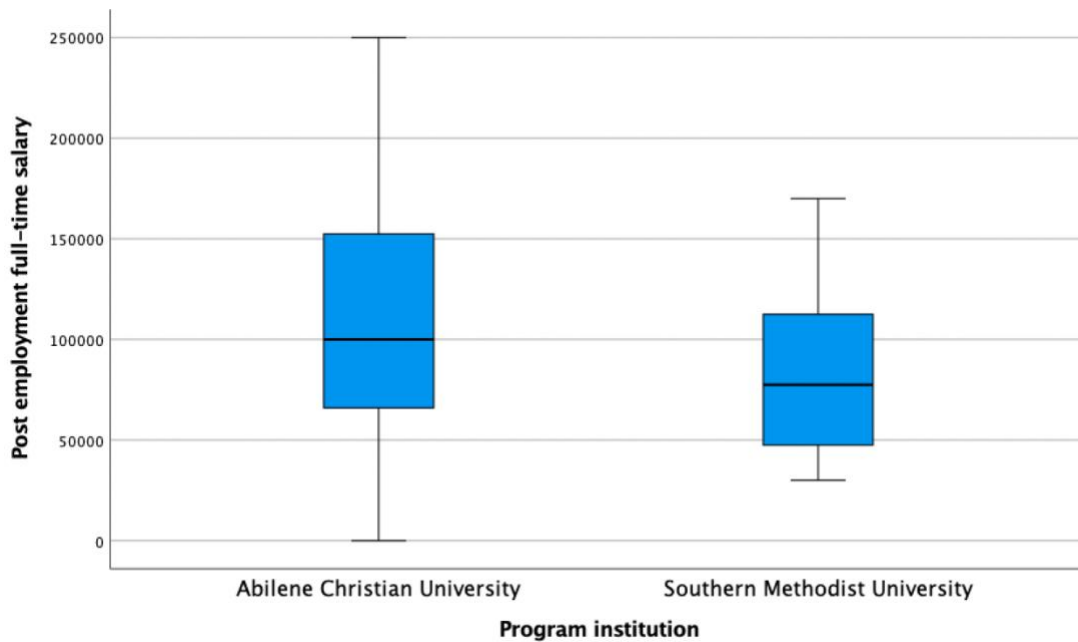*Figure A.12.* Post degree salary box plots.

Reported Medians for All Likert-type Questions

Table A.2

Total Likert-type Question Median Scores

Likert-type Questions	ACU n	ACU Mdn	SMU n	SMU Mdn	Description of Measure
Impact of Degree					Increased (1), Remained the same (2), Decreased (3), Not applicable (4)
Conflict interventions	34	1.0	19	1.0	
Administrative functions	34	1.0	19	1.0	
Leadership role	34	1.0	19	1.0	
Research	34	2.0	19	2.0	
Training	34	1.0	19	1.0	
Job grade	34	2.0	19	1.0	
Salary scale	34	1.0	19	1.0	
Conflict analysis	34	1.0	19	1.0	
Relevance of Skills to the Degree					Not applicable (1), Irrelevant (2), Somewhat relevant (3), Relevant (4), Very relevant (5)
Conflict analysis	34	4.0	19	5.0	
Approaches to conflict interventions	34	4.5	19	4.0	
Understanding stages of conflict	34	4.0	19	4.0	
Research in practice	34	4.0	19	3.0	
Confidence in Skills					Not applicable (1), Not confident (2), Somewhat confident (3), Confident (4), Very confident (5)
Conflict analysis	34	4.5	19	4.0	
Approaches to conflict interventions	34	4.0	19	4.0	
Understanding stages of conflict	34	4.0	19	4.0	

Continued

Likert-item Questions	ACU n	ACU Mdn	SMU n	SMU Mdn	Description of Measure
Research in practice	34	4.0	19	4.0	Not applicable (1), Not confident (2), Somewhat confident (3), Confident (4), Very confident (5)
Relevance of Courses					Not applicable (1), Irrelevant (2), Somewhat relevant (3), Relevant (4), Very relevant (5)
Conflict theory and analysis	34	4.0	19	4.0	
Approaches to intervention	34	4.0	19	4.0	
Stages of conflict	34	4.0	19	4.0	
Sector/context-specific courses	34	3.5	19	4.0	
Research methods course	34	3.0	19	3.0	
Field experience	34	4.0	19	4.0	
Overall master's program	34	4.0	19	4.0	

APPENDIX I

Reported Medians for Impact Likert-type Questions

Table A.3

Revised Median Scores for Impact Likert-type Questions

Likert-type Questions	Total *n*	Total *Mdn*	ACU *n*	ACU *Mdn*	SMU *n*	SMU *Mdn*	Description of Measure
Impact of Degree							Increased (1), Remained the same (2), Decreased (3)
Conflict interventions	49	1	30	1	19	1	
Administrative functions	52	1	33	1	19	1	
Leadership role	51	1	33	1	18	1	
Research	43	2	27	2	16	1.5	
Training	47	1	30	1	17	1	
Job grade	43	1	27	1	16	1	
Salary scale	47	1	31	1	16	1	
Conflict analysis	49	1	30	1	19	1	

Note. Responses of Not Applicable (4) did not conform to the ordinal structure and were removed to test for differences utilizing the Independent Samples Mann-Whitney *U*-test.

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