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Conflicts at Asylum Reception Centers

A study of employee's understanding and management of conflict at Norwegian asylum reception centers

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Summary

Aim: The aim of this study is to look closer into conflicts that occur in asylum reception centers. The title of the study is “Employees understanding and management of conflicts in asylum reception centers.” The theme is how employees working in asylum reception centers understand the conflicts that occur in the centers and how they handle them. I also look at the possible connection between the employees understanding of conflicts and their management of the conflicts. The aim of the research is to gain an increased understanding and insight into why conflicts occur in asylum reception centers and actions to be taken in order to improve the management.

Theory: The theory of the thesis is mainly derived from the field of conflict and conflict management. The chapter is divided in two parts, corresponding with the two issues. The literature I have chosen to illuminate conflict and conflict management is mainly gathered from authors who have their background from the field of psychology. The chapter also touches upon the historical development of the concept of conflict. The theory involving violence prevention strategies was developed by the non-profit organization Alternative to Violence.

Method: I have used a qualitative method for this study. I have interviewed five informants from two different asylum reception centers. I have utilized interviews and document analysis to answer the problem statement. The findings appear reliable and valid. The method chapter also contains critical comments to the method and ethical considerations.

Findings: The chapter starts by rendering five different conflict situations experienced by the five informants in the study. Their answers to the different questions, as they appear in the interview guide, are systematized in different paragraphs corresponding with the order of the questions. As in chapter two, the findings are described in two parts, the informants understanding of the conflicts and the management of the conflicts.

Analyzes: In this chapter, the findings are measured against the different theories as described in chapter two. It shows that not all of the theories are equally relevant, but some of them are.

Conclusion: The thesis concludes that the informants had a good understanding and insight in what the conflicts were about, elements that can trigger and create conflicts, and the

development of conflicts. Several informants experienced that they managed their conflict, even though the cause of the conflict was only solved in one of the cases. It therefore appears that some of the informants did not distinguish between a successful management of the conflict and the solution to the actual problem behind the conflict. If we see the conclusion of the study in this perspective, the management of the conflicts in the asylum reception centers could be considered more as putting out a fire than solving an actual problem.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Topic

During the last couple of years, there have been reports in the media concerning serious violent episodes between asylum seekers in Norwegian asylum reception centers. Some of the episodes have been violent conflicts while others have been minor disagreements. There have been serious incidents between asylum seekers where knives have been used and people seriously hurt, and the residents have been suspected of starting fires in reception centers. The worst case in recent years was when three innocent persons were brutally killed by an asylum seeker in Årdal in 2015 (VG, 19. January 2015). Such episodes lead to insecurity for other residents in the asylum centers, as well as for the employees in the centers, the police and the inhabitants in the local communities. In light of this, I think it is interesting to look closer at the role of the employees in reception centers, since they often will be the first ones to discover when a conflict or a violent episode is developing. They may also be the closest to prevent conflicts or violent behavior from taking place, and to handle the issues as they occur or escalate. The topic for this thesis is how the employees at Norwegian asylum reception centers understand conflicts and how they handle them when they occur. In my thesis, the actual conflicts include both serious disagreements and violent behavior. The incidents happened between two or more residents in the reception centers, or between residents and employees. I will carry out a qualitative study by discussing and analyzing empirical data from semi-structured interviews with five different employees at Norwegian reception centers, combined with document analyzes received from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI).

1.2 Approach

The issue will be examined and discussed in light of the following question:

How do employees at asylum reception centers understand conflicts and how do they manage the conflicts?

The following research questions were asked:

- How did the employees understand the conflicts?
- How did the employees manage the conflicts?
- Is there a connection between how the employees understood conflicts and how they managed them?

The first question concerns how the employees understand the conflicts that occur in the asylum reception centers; the perception, feelings, thoughts and understanding of the different elements of a conflict. Through the second question, I wanted to look at how the employees handled the conflicts. The last question concerns the relationship between the employees understanding of conflicts and how they managed them. In order to answer these questions, I have chosen to interview five employees at different reception centers and I have asked them to tell me about concrete conflict situations they have encountered and if they understood what the conflicts were about. (The interview guide is attached, Attachment 1). I have described the method I used in order to carry out the research, and I have looked at relevant theories and discussed how the findings can be related to the different theories. I have chosen some asylum reception centers around Oslo. Because all the informants have been involved in conflict and conflict management situations at the various centers, I believe they have a sufficient basis to answer the research questions.

1.3 Background

During 2015, almost one million asylum seekers and migrants arrived in Europe. European countries seemed unprepared for the waves of people fleeing their countries of origin and arriving at European shores. Large groups were literally waved through countries from Greece through the Western-Balkans, until they reached their county of destination, mainly Germany and Sweden. Norway also experienced a high number of arrivals this year, 31 145 persons applied for asylum at the Norwegian borders (UDI, annual report 2015). While the governments seemed paralyzed and the reception centers rapidly became overcrowded in several European countries, this flow of persons in need of shelter nevertheless created a lot of engagement among citizens throughout the European continent. My impression is that many people wanted to help, the arrival of families who had left everything behind when fleeing war and inhuman living conditions in Syria and other countries made an impression on many people, including me. Suddenly the consequences of war became very near, and this is why I became interested in questions related to the reception of asylum seekers. The events in 2015 thus forms a backdrop for my thesis. I believe that when many people from different countries, with different languages, different religious and political beliefs, different economic and cultural backgrounds and some probably with physical and mental health problems are put together in crowded reception centers, conflicts will occur. Several studies have been carried out where the asylum seekers themselves have expressed how they experience life in

reception centers (Solheim, 1990; Lauritsen and Berg, 1999; Berg and Sveaass et al., 2005; Valenta and Berg 2012; Andrews et al., 2014.) They all confirm in one way or the other that there are challenges related to staying in a reception center for a longer period. A long time is spent in uncertainty, waiting for an answer to and result of their application. A rather recent study, *Opphold i asylmottak. Konsekvenser for levkår og integrering* (Nerina Weiss, Anne Britt Djuve, Wendy Hamelink og Huafeng Zhang, Fafo-rapport 2017:07) shows that the average time spent in an asylum reception center is 625 days. This number includes the average time waiting to be settled in a community (205 days). This waiting time can create discontent, which again may lead to tension and aggression.

I imagine that language problems, cultural differences, frustrations both among the residents and among the residents and the employees, sometimes can make it difficult for the employees to understand when a small disagreement develops into a conflict and maybe sometimes into violent behavior. In this context, I find it interesting to find out how the employees I interviewed understood the conflicts they experienced and how they managed them. Did they receive any training in order to be able to manage conflicts? Is there a legal framework or are there guidelines that can be of help in the handling of difficult situations?

1.4 The legal framework, facts and figures

In the European Union, the organization of the reception systems is regulated in the Reception Directive. This is for the time being revised and the new rules will be transferred to a Regulation, which will be more binding for the governments. In Norway, the reception facilities are regulated in the Immigration Act from 2008 (Utlendingsloven 2008). According to the Immigration Act § 95, a foreign national who applies for protection shall be offered accommodation. A foreign national whose application for protection has been rejected may be offered accommodation pending his or her exit. The text indicates neither what kind of accommodation the asylum seeker is entitled to, nor who is responsible for the accommodation. The King may by regulations make further provisions in respect of accommodation arrangements, including the allocation and withdrawal of offered accommodation. The King in this context has delegated the competence to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, who has delegated the responsibility further to the Directorate of Immigration (UDI). It is the UDI who has the overall responsibility for the reception centers. The operation of the centers are further regulated by policy guidelines, plans, allocations and

budget, as well as other documents relating to the government's refugee and immigration policy (Berg, 2012: 24). The UDI shall ensure simple, but acceptable housing that will take care of the resident's primary needs, including the need for safety. This is regulated in the so-called *Driftsreglement* (UDI RS 2011-003) In case of extraordinary situations, it may sometimes be necessary with a more basic standard in order to ensure housing for every person seeking protection. (*GI-13/2017 - Instruks til Utlendingsdirektoratet om innkvartering av asylsøkere*) The UDI is in other words responsible for ensuring sufficient number of places at reception centers and that they maintain adequate standards.

The Ministry of Justice and Public Security and the UDI have the formal responsibility for the reception centers. However, the executive responsibility for the daily operation of the centers is delegated to different operators, either the municipality, humanitarian organizations or private commercial actors. Contracts are made between the UDI and the operator, and follow the provisions in the Public Procurement Act. In order to make the employees at the reception centers able to carry out their work, the employees are offered different kinds of training. The operators also have the responsible to give the employees the necessary guidance so they can deal with the daily tasks and challenges, including handling of conflicts that occur. (UDI 2017).

Various factors can contribute to make the stay in reception centers in a foreign country a very demanding experience. Studies carried out concerning the standard of the accommodations show that some of the centers are worn down and lack maintenance. (Andrews, et al., 2014). Crowded and sometimes poor living conditions in combination with the reality that the residents have different backgrounds, different reasons for seeking asylum and spend a lot of time *waiting* (to have the application processed, to be settled in a municipality or to be sent out of the country), contribute to make their stay a real challenge.

As mentioned above, both persons waiting for their application to be processed, persons waiting to be transferred to a municipality and persons waiting for exit from the country can be residents in reception centers at the same time. According to statistics from the UDI (2018), the arrival of asylum seekers has drastically diminished from 2015 until present (1.4.2018). In the beginning of January 2015, there were 14485 persons in reception centers, while in December the same year the number was 30183. In 2016 the corresponding numbers were 30327 and 13704 and in 2017 respectively 13526 and 5170. In the beginning of April

2018 the number was 4249. This means that reception centers are established and closed down in accordance with the number of arrivals, in other words, it is essential that the system is flexible as it is difficult to predict when there will be a high influx of asylum seekers. Experience has shown that the situation can change rapidly, and there is reason to believe that the number can suddenly increase in the future (UDI statistikk og analyse).

In order to make the picture complete, it is worth mentioning that in 2015, 5411 persons were granted asylum, 673 other protection and 168 residence permit on humanitarian grounds. In 2016, 11560 persons were granted asylum, 399 other protection and 492 residence on humanitarian grounds, while in 2017, 3833 were granted asylum, 149 other protection and 404 residence on humanitarian grounds. The largest groups, which received positive decisions, were citizens of Eritrea, Syria and Afghanistan (2015). Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan (2016) and Syria, Eritrea and Iraq (2017). (UDI statistikk og analyse). Thousands of those who have left their country and are headed for Europe, including Norway, are in search of a better life, and do not qualify for asylum or residence permit. They are supposed to leave the country voluntarily when their application is rejected. However, experience shows that many continue to stay in the reception centers until they are returned by force to their countries of origin.

1.5 Relevant research

Studies of residents in reception centers have been carried out in earlier research (Solheim, 1990; Sollund, 1994; Lauritsen and Berg, 1999; Berg and Sveaass., et al, 2005; Valenta og Berg, 2012; Andrews, et al, 2014). However, I did not find any studies that concretely covers understanding of conflict and conflict management by employees in reception centers. Nevertheless, multiple studies and other research touch upon some of the issues as I am describing in this study.

Various forms of conflicts, violence and unwanted events are known phenomenon in reception centers and there are research reports on this subject (Skogøy, 2008; Nøttestad, 2008; Thorbjørnsrud, 2014). In the Amnesty International Norge Report on *violence against women in asylum reception centers in Norway* Skogøy (2008) writes about abuse and violence against women during their stay in asylum reception centers. The report shows that it appears that women who live in asylum reception centers may be considered as members of a

particular vulnerable group. The report shows that many women in Norwegian reception centers feel insecure, both in relation to violence in close relationships, and when using common areas where men have access. Although the report emphasizes women as a vulnerable group, this does not rule out men's fear of violence and / or threats.

A report from the PROBA Society Analysis, *Survey of violence and unwanted events in asylum reception (2014)*, Thorbjørnsrud and others find that there are large variations in the number of violence. Verbal violence, in the form of embezzlement and threats, is far more common than physical violence. The survey points at triggering factors for violence, such as frustration over waiting time in the centers, experience of injustice, traumatic experiences in their previous lives and physical characteristics of the recipients.

Asylum reception centers should, according to the UDI guidelines, have a simple but appropriate standard (UDI RS 2011-003). However, practice has shown that accommodations have different standards and design, and there are both centralized and decentralized reception centers. According to the SINTEF-study "*Bokvalitet i norske asylmottak*", the physical environment of the reception centers can have an impact on the quality of life of the asylum seekers (Hauge, Å.L., Denizou, K. - Støa, E. 2015)

One of the findings in the study (Strumse and Grønseth, 2016) shows that the size of the accommodation and the number of residents in each room, may have an impact of the level of conflict in the reception center. The study also showed that the level of conflicts at reception centers in Norway is generally low, and few of the staff in case studies had experienced critical situations. The architecture of the physical buildings contribute to the visibility of the employees, whether the residents see them and whether the employees see the residents. Employees say that when they allocate rooms for the asylum seekers, they try to put people of the same language group together, and that women, children and families are separated from single men in order to avoid conflicts.

Several studies show that the proportion of mental health problems is higher among refugees and asylum seekers than among the rest of the population (Berg and Sveaass et al., 2005; Sollund, 1999). Asylum seekers in Norway is not a heterogeneous group with regard to religion and cultural backgrounds, age, educational level, health and whether they are single or with family. The challenges they face therefore, will also vary. Many refugees and asylum

seekers have either experienced traumatic events themselves, or observed others who have been experiencing it, which can later lead to mental disorders (Varvin, 2003; Andrews et al., 2014). In addition, problems in everyday life can enhance mental disorders (Berg and Sveaass et al., 2005).

In a report from Nordlandsforskning from 2014 the aim was to identify challenges to residents' daily lives in reception centers, with emphasis on conditions that may affect their mental health. Some of the informants reported that they felt insecure in the surroundings where they lived, due to certain social relationships (Andrews, et al., 2014). The report refers to both women and men who feel insecure in the reception centers. A male informant said he felt unsecure and without protection in the center since many of those living in the reception center are mentally unstable (Andrews, et al., 2014: 47-48).

In a recent study, *Opphold i asylmottak. Konsekvenser for levekår og integrering* (Weiss, et al., 2017) concludes that the waiting time is very difficult for the residents in the centers to relate to.

In the study *Opplevelser av trygghet i norske asylmottak (2017)*, Johansen concludes that male residents are more exposed to conflicts and violent behavior, while the women feel more protected and thereby more secure. In general, life in an asylum center consists of a number of uncertainties that can cause insecurity.

In the study *Læring og endring etter alvorlige hendelser i asylmottak (2014)*, Hårr discusses the relation between persons with psychological problems and security issues in asylum reception centers.

1.6 Limitations of my research

I will focus on conflict that arise within the asylum centers in Norway. I focus on conflicts between the employees and asylum seekers, and between asylum seekers. I have presented my research from the standpoint of the employees. It could be a minus that I have only acquired the employees's thoughts and experiences. The findings could have looked differently if I had gained the perspective of the asylum seekers as well. Furthermore, it could have been interesting also to have carried out a quantitative study, where data had been gathered from the UDI and a variety of different reception centers as well as psychologists, the police and

social workers. However, due to the scope of this thesis, I have chosen to concentrate on a qualitative study.

1.7 Overview of the thesis

In **chapter 2** I will elaborate on the relevant theories for my study.

In **chapter 3** I will present the methodic approach I have used in my thesis when approaching the informants.

In **chapter 4** I will present the findings.

In **chapter 5** I will discuss the findings against the relevant theories.

In **chapter 6** will present the conclusions of the studies and propose possible future studies.

Chapter 2. Theory

In this chapter, I will present the theories that are relevant for the research questions in my study, namely how the employees understand conflicts, and their management of the conflicts. The chapter is divided into two parts, corresponding with the two questions. In the first part, I will present the theories that are relevant for the term conflict and the ability to recognize conflicts. In the second part, I will present theories relevant for discussing conflict management. The literature I have chosen to illuminate conflict and conflict management is mainly gathered from authors who have their background from the field of psychology. There is also a cultural aspect that may have an impact for the employees' understanding of conflict since culture can be important when explaining the attitudes and actions of the employees, both in the process of understanding and managing conflict. First, I will present an historical development concerning the understanding of conflict, which I believe will be relevant for my research.

I. Understanding of conflict

2.1 Historical development of the concept of conflict

My thesis is about understanding of conflict and conflict management. I believe it could be appropriate first to place the issue of conflict in a more historic context in order to clarify the development of the theoretic term. Conflict is a widely studied subject, with a long history of research. One can go back to the famous philosophers Darwin, Marx, and Freud, and philosophies like Darwinism and instinctivism to find the first attempts to define the concept. From the end of the 1920's there was a change when conflicts were explained from a psychological perspective. Focus changed to mental processes and individual characteristics, including emphasizing social, economic and political factors. There is not much support for a combination of the two different perspectives (Skjørshammer 2002).

One can find research on conflicts within many different fields, such as administration, economy, leadership, sociology, and psychology. It comprises topics ranging from international war and peace, community mediation, labor-organizational disputes, family therapy, and divorce mediation. Within each field, conflicts are studied and analyzed based on dominant theoretical paradigms, and there are specific challenges within the different fields. For a long time, there was a dominant positivistic view to understand conflict. This has recently been challenged by a more post-structural and constructed approach. The essence of

this criticism is that the conflict could include more than observable behavior. A more constructed approach implies for example that the use of language can construct the reality, and thereby be a source both to conflict solution and to the creation of conflicts. According to Skjørshammer, conflict management, conflict solution and consequent changes are possible through reflection and dialogue and not just through logical analytical reasoning and rational decisions. (Skjørshammer 2002:9-12).

2.2 Previous research of the concept of conflict

There has been much research on conflict and conflict management in Norway. However, I have not found research concerning the employees understanding of conflict in asylum reception centers and their management of the conflicts. A master student (Foss) has conducted a study in 2010 where he examined how leaders at intermediate level understood conflicts, and how they handled the conflicts in their respective departments. The informants said that there should be a certain degree of disagreement present before an issue could be defined as a conflict. Mr. Foss concluded that the informants understood a conflict as a serious situation where it was a legal disagreement that they were obliged to handle.

2.3 The term conflict

2.3.1 The term conflict related to life in reception centers

I believe it is relevant to relate this study to the everyday use of the term conflict because the employees in the reception centers I visited were ordinary people, with no professional background. When they talk about the conflicts they have experienced, they do not refer to any theoretical definition. They explain what they experience as conflicts, based on their personal perception of the term. As mentioned in the paragraph 3.2, the leaders in the study understood conflict as a more legal disagreement. Contrary to those findings, I found that all the employees in the reception centers said that they often experienced more or less serious conflicts. Conflicts are part of their daily life at work. As stated by Lillebø, as long as human beings think and feel differently, conflicts will arise (Lillebø 2009). In the context of an asylum reception center, where a wide variety of people from different nationalities, languages, religions, and cultures live together, it is only natural that conflicts will arise rather frequently. The way in which the employees recognized the conflicts that surround them, is

the core of this study. I therefore find it important to look closer at the term conflict related to the perception of conflicts in reception centers.

Conflicts in reception centers can have both negative and positive effects. The negative side is that conflicts can damage the well-being and the feeling of safety and trust among the asylum seekers, as many of them already suffer from traumatic experiences. This can also make the conflicts escalate and it can create a bad atmosphere for both the residents and the employees in the reception centers. Many dislike conflicts due to the negative consequences (Poole and Garner 2006). As De Dreu (1997) stated, the natural reaction would be to avoid conflict and get out of the conflict situation as fast as possible. This is not possible in the reception centers, as the persons applying for asylum normally have no other place to go.

The positive sides to conflicts can be the introduction of new ideas and procedures. A stronger bonding can appear between the residents when there is a successful navigation of a difficult conflict. (Poole and Garner 2006) (Tjosvold 1997).

2.3.2 Definition of conflict

There are many different definitions of conflict. I have chosen the definitions as expressed by the persons I mention below because I think they are relevant when measuring how the informants in my study recognized and managed the conflicts they experienced.

Putnam (2006) claims that the core of conflicts is about an expressed fight, and a mutual dependency between two or more parts. Among researchers, there is not one singular understanding of how the term conflict should be defined. In 1992 Thomas (in accordance with Einarsen and Pedersen 2009:48-50) presented two ways of defining a conflict. One definition focused on situations where two or more parts have competing intentions or goals, or intentionally attempt to block the other part in his or her own path to success. In the other definition, conflicts are characterized by frustrations in the relationship between two parties. Concerning the first definition, Einarsen and Pedersen (2009) state that conflict is an expressed disagreement between at least two parties who have different perceptions regarding a goal, lack of resources or prevent the other part from reaching the goal. (Einarsen and Pedersen 2009:48-50). Such a narrow definition has some weaknesses. It does not include contradictions that are not yet out in the open or situations where the parties choose to avoid each other rather than fight each other. In addition, it does not include the more cunning way of behavior, where there is not an open disagreement, but where the parties try to harm each

other in more intricate, indirect ways. Einarsen and Pedersen (2009) elaborate on the definition of conflict by quoting from Thomas: “[*The process that is initiated when a party feels that another party has prevented or destroyed, or may prevent or destroy anything that matters to him or her*]. ” Or (according to Einarsen and Pedersen 2009:51) an even more precise definition from Evert van de Vliert: “[*... a conflict is a situation where two individuals, one individual, or a group or groups feel hindered or frustrated by the other*].”

Sørensen and Grimsmo (2001) state that conflicts can also be hidden, where some believe they have conflicting goals, while others do not feel any tensions. Most theorists and researchers underline that conflicts need to be viewed as a process, something that is developing, and that the content, strength, and direction can change underway.

Hotvedt (2003) compares the process of a conflict with the development of a physical disease, in the same way as a disease develops, conflict can develop, be solved, or come and go. There is also an in-between alternative to understand the term conflict, between the two sides explained above. Skjørshammer (2002:19): “[*... a hard disagreement in relation to another employee, group or department, and how common problem solving behavior has not resulted in a solution or acceptable outcome*].” The advantage of this definition is that it limits itself to situations that are difficult, and thereby threaten to give negative consequences for the individual and the relationship between the parties. It does not include situations where persons alone, or together with others have been able to solve the issue.

This shows that conflicts can be defined in a variety of ways; one is not necessarily better or more correct than the other, but they are all relevant in the analyzes of the findings in my study.

2.4 Psychology of conflicts

By psychology of conflicts, I refer to the underlying motive for the conflict. When analyzing the employee’s understanding of a conflict, I believe it is important to take a closer look at how they perceived the motive for the resident’s behavior. Hotvedt (2003) claims that conflicts have a psychological side. According to him, a conflict is a contradiction between individuals that threatens human needs, such as loss of belonging, safety, stability and/or loss of self-respect and authority. These are all examples of underlying motives that can trigger an aggressive behavior, which easily can lead to an open conflict. The employees in my study do not have professional backgrounds in psychology, medicine or conflict management.

However, when analyzing the employees understanding of the conflicts, it will be relevant to examine to what extent they tried to find out if the reason for the conflict could be related to a threat of basic human needs.

2.5 Emotions

Emotions are normally an important part of conflicts. I therefore find it important to include theories related to emotions when measuring the employees understanding of conflict, including in the managing process. A wide variety of emotions can appear in conflict situations. Typical emotions are uncertainty, anxiety, feeling of injustice, aggression and hostility. Emotions can trigger and maintain conflicts. According to Hotvedt (2003), to be in a conflict is to be emotionally charged. A situation may be experienced as unpleasant due to the emotions associated with the situation. (Guerrero and La Valley 2006). We have all felt how hurt feelings can affect our mood and our actions. Ekeland (2011:156) emphasizes that when we are emotionally activated, our perception and interpretation of the situation affect us in certain ways. The perceptions will be more selective and will focus on potential danger. Reality will be simplified so that the threatening and dangerous issues come in focus, becomes strengthened and larger. On this background, the risk of error and distortions increases. It can be describes as seeing everything as “black and white” in conflict situations.

According to Glasø (2010) there are two emotional levels, one conscious and one unconscious. Emotions that move beneath the conscious threshold can have a big impact on how we perceive things and how we react to them, although we are not aware of its existence. Glasl (1999:19) emphasizes that emotions can change underway. Humans can end up in conflicts and situations that make them develop more vulnerability. This can increase uncertainty and distrust and eventually lead to insensitivity. The parties of the conflict will gradually lose sympathy for on another.

Emotions in a conflict is unavoidable, or rather an important part of conflicts. Skjørshammer (2002) sites Dewey who states that it is a close connection between emotions and conflicts. “...without a conflict there is no emotion, with it, there is” (Skjørshammer 2002:12).

Emotions in conflicts can have two positive dimensions. The unfolding of recognition, and motivational powers (Skjørshammer 2002). Hotvedt (2003:43) emphasizes that many experience conflicts and emotions as both challenging and interesting. In such situations one can “*make use of one self*”.

Anxiety and anger are the two emotions that are usually most present in a conflict situation, where anger and the consequent behavior are most frequently recognized. The negative consequences of anger can worsen the relationship between the parties, and usually lead to escalation of the conflict (Skjørshammer 2002:12). “[*Anger in a conflict situation must be understood as an expression for a strained interpersonal relationship that has developed over time, where contextual factors contribute to decrease the threshold for keeping such emotions private*]”. At the same time, Hotvedt (2003:45) states that anger and aggression can be a resource that one can experience as vitalizing, which can lead to the necessary seriousness to complicated situations. Glasø (2010) believes that emotional knowledge is necessary for dealing with conflict. Leaders who deal with conflicts should have insight into personal reaction patterns and ability to be able to discriminate between precise and imprecise, honest and dishonest expression for emotions, which is not always easy to do in practice.

2.6 Glasl’s conflict model of steps and stages of conflicts

Glasl’s conflict model of steps and stages in conflict situations is relevant when analyzing the employee’s ability to measure the level of the conflicts they experienced. Understanding the level of the conflict can make it easier to apply relevant initiatives or actions in the management of the conflict.

According to Glasl, how the dynamic of a conflict reveals itself will depend on the situation. Every conflict is unique, and the seriousness and intensity will be different. Conflict can be regarded as a process that develops over time. Glasl (1999) has developed a model to describe such a process. According to Glasl (1999:82) you can do something about a conflict in time, if you recognize important signs in the various stages of intensity. In Glasl’s model a conflict can typically intensify through nine steps and 3 stages. Initially, one is frustrated towards another part. Such an early sense of frustration can either be rooted in a disagreement, or be based on a general frustration tied to a certain case or situation. Such a frustration is first an issue that complicate the cooperation between the parties. The opponents are not any longer completely open towards one another; they develop internal reservation (step 1). The parties now begin to view each other as opposites in the relevant case (step 2). The opponents stop listening to each other’s arguments. They begin to present their own position in a positive light. They go into a win/lose game where each party believes he/she is right. This win/lose mentality leads to a step where the parties are ready to fight for their own case (step 3). Most of the discussions already carried out ended in deadlock. The parties do not any longer believe

that they can persuade each other by words, or that the existing difference can be solved through exchange of arguments. This may lead to an escalation of the conflict. Words are no longer the decisive factor. Alliances and support will be sought with others (step 4). If the necessary support or help from others are not received, this may lead to an increased frustration. However, support for own attitudes and actions may also lead to increased frustration. From this stage, the psychological distance between the parties can increase, and lead to an even more locked and negative perception of each other (step 5). This is an important step in the conflict process. From the point of view where the parties may have a reasonable and factual discussion, they will begin to mistrust each other and consider the other party as being difficult, inept, or to have hidden motives for his/hers actions. The conflict has become serious, open confrontations and threats occur (step 6). In this step, the conflict has passed on to a stage where both parties attempt to destroy the other “weapon” – step (step 7). Finally, there is war between the parties, and in war everything is allowed (step 8). The focus is on winning, and one is willing to do anything to win. The goal is achieved when victory is won (step 9). Only the counterpart’s unconditional surrender and apology that can be an acceptable solution to the conflict (Einarsen and Pedersen 2009:87-89 and Glasl 1999:81-104).

Such a model illustrates how serious, destructive and dangerous conflicts can become if they develop over time. By viewing this in a positive way, at every step it is possible to “wake up” and take action in order to put a stop to the actions (Glasl 1999:104).

II. Conflict management

2.7 Conflict solution and conflict management

Conflict solution and conflict management are two terms that tend to be used interchangeably, however, in this thesis they are not interchangeable. According to Ekeland (2011:169) conflict management can be the better wording of the two, because solution implies an ambition for a stop, and that opposites and tensions disappear. Conflict management is a more neutral term, which focuses on the entire process of the conflict, and not just the final result. This theory is important for my thesis because, as we shall see below, most of the conflicts in my study did not reach a solution. However, they were all managed in one way or the other.

2.8 System for conflict management

It can be challenging to define a system for conflict management, and it can be difficult to distinguish conflict management from policy, procedure, or practice (Lipsky and Seeber 2006). A principal attitude for handling conflicts however is to take action as early as possible (ibid).

Conflict management can appear in the form of guidelines on how to approach a conflict when it occurs. As we will see in Chapter 4, there are written guidelines and instructions that give a framework for managing security related issues when conflicts appear in the reception centers. Furthermore, there are relevant courses for conflict management, but ultimately the individual employee's ability to act in an appropriate way seems to be decisive in the management process.

2.9 Process Approach and Structural Approach

I have found it useful to base the discussion of the employees management of their conflicts on the *process and structural approaches* as described in the literature. Thomas (according to Hotvedt 2003:149) found two approaches to gain a more realistic starting point and useful tools when working with conflict. In my thesis, I have discussed the findings to see if the employees management of the conflicts can comply with any of these approaches.

With a process approach, conflicts are viewed as an inner dynamic of episodes or occurrences that to some extent stimulates, and to some extent is a result of discrepancies between individuals or groups. According to this approach, the reasons and the management are linked to the understanding of the actual episodes and the mutual affect this has on the parties. In this context, Thomas mentions four moments that triggers the dynamic of an episode. Frustration, conceptualization, behavior, and interaction.

The first stage in the process approach is the frustration that is experienced by the parties in the conflict. This frustration derives from, as mentioned earlier, the parties not being willing to accommodate each other's needs, wishes, values, or interests. The process approach presupposes further insight in, and understanding of the parties' experience of the actual theme, as well as the parties' understanding of themselves, each other, and the actual situation (conceptualization). The important element is to understand the actions that stimulate the parties' emotional reaction, for both thoughts and actions. The next step in this approach is to understand the behavior in the conflict. Behavior as an element in the process can be divided

in three categories; orientation, strategic goals, and tactical behavior. It is the actual aspect of interaction in a conflict that keeps it at bay. It can easily transcend into the next episode between the parties, or could also give it a spreading effect (dispersion effect) in relationship to other individuals (Hotvedt 2003:155). A dynamic dialogue that mirrors the development of the conflict could be part of the process approach.

Within the structural approach for handling of conflicts, the main focus is on the conflict-creating relationships and structures in the individual, between individuals and in the surrounding environment. The aim is to improve the relationships that create or fosters latent conflicts within organizations. This tradition in conflict management represents foremost an administrative approach, although the conflict-creating structure is linked to an individual and the personality is included. Here one relates to the condition that creates the conflict, and not to the actual conflict. Relationships linked to the structural model are regarded in a behavioral context, which concentrates on studying roles and role structure, and how behavior underline or strengthen the different roles. Rules and procedures in a decision making process contribute to shape and limit the parties in a conflict situation (Hotvedt 2003). According to my understanding, guidelines, instructions, regulations and the likes will be important parts of a structural process. In this thesis I will use the term when relating to the employees relationship or dependency of handling conflicts within the administrative framework of the reception center.

2.10 Communication and conflict management

In an asylum reception center, communication is possibly the most important tool for managing conflicts, both in the relation between the employees and the residents, as well as in the relation between residents. In conflicts we tend to be occupied by the conflict, and close the communication (Lystad 2006), as described in step 2 above (paragraph 3.7) and avoid communicating about difficult relations and conflicting conditions. In this step, the parties communicate less, thereafter they communicate differently. One talks and argues to find solutions, or convince the other, and do not primarily seek to damage the other as in later steps. As stressed by Einarsen and Pedersen, it is essential for the parties in a conflict situation to try to reestablish and create good communication, and according to Glasl's theory about the 9 steps, a good time to start is when the conflict still remains in step 2.

2.11 A conversation and a place to meet

In the asylum reception center, the employee can start creating good communication by setting up a meeting plan. It is important to acknowledge that creating good communication in a conflict situation can be difficult. The more persons involved, the more emotions and intensity of the conflict, the more difficult it is. A meeting plan can be a good starting point and create possibilities for good dialogues. A meeting plan should contain elements such as: Who do I talk to first, what order should the discussion be in, what is the goal of the meeting and discussions. The question if there should be individual discussions or discussions in groups, is usually not an issue that can be answered with if and or, but rather with both. (Einarsen and Pedersen 2009:175).

2.12 Dialogue

In my thesis, the employees are assigned to administrative tasks, their main duty is not to avoid or handle conflicts. However, as the asylum reception center is a special place of work, they will nevertheless be obliged to occupy themselves with confidence building, creating safe environment and good arenas to meet with other residents and handle disagreements without creating a feeling of losing face. An important part of their work is therefore the will and ability to create good dialogues, as creating good communication is a good way to prevent and avoid conflicts to develop.

Constructive dialogues might not always be possible, but it should always be something to reach out for as the aim is to live together without damaging conflicts (Ekeland 2011).

Sortland and Einarsen (2011) wrote about findings from a study on communication patterns during conflicts. They confirm that it appears to be difficult for individuals to share information and views with each other in such a way that it leads to a deeper discussion about our respective opinions. Persons have a difficulty to move away from a win/lose orientation in conflictual and difficult situations. In other words, we tend to share conclusions and opinions with each other rather than focusing on how to reach the conclusions or opinions.

A hallmark with conflicts is that the dialogue has broken down. The challenge will therefore be how it can be recreated. Dialogue is a big challenge, and presupposes that everyone that participate view each other as equal contributors and show respect for each others viewpoints (Hannevig and Parker 2012). The dialogue can lead to a deeper understanding between individuals and the purpose is to clarify and strengthen bonds, and create respect (Spurkeland

2009). A dialogue means that one talk with each other in a way where both parties put in an effort to understand the others subjectivity, even if furiously disagreeing with the content. The situation can be challenging.

2.13 The necessary and difficult conversations

The employees at reception centers have to talk with the residents at the reception centers as part of their daily routines. This is especially important in conflict situations. Asylum seekers will sometimes receive unfortunate news concerning their families and friends, or there can be other situations where strong negative emotions are involved, for instance, when their asylum applications are declined. The employees must be very observant and understand when a “necessary” conversations will have to find place. In many cases, it has proven to be sufficient if the employee takes the initiative to a discussion as soon as a problem arises (Einarsen and Pedersen 2009). Bang and Lindholm (according to Einarsen and Pedersen 2009) believe that the conversation in such cases must be well planned. The right time and place for the conversation is essential. It must be done in a place that do not create disturbances, but can contribute to a relaxed atmosphere, where it is possible to have a good conversation. Another element important to bear in mind is the conception of what one wishes to achieve with the conversation. Background and purpose are important elements to have in mind, and why this is the right time to do it. The last element is what conditions one wish to raise. It is important to be prepared on the theme and concrete conditions that should be raised. What are the facts, and what are guesswork, if it is the employee’s experiences or if it comes from others. A good conversation means that there is no overlap between facts and beliefs. It should not be a conversation where all possible problems are put on the table at once, or where there is constantly presented new elements. The other party must also have the opportunity to come with his own views, and the employee must understand what he/she needs to know from the resident in order to be able to help. The structure of the conversation is also an important part for a successful dialogue. The most important is however that the communication is open and direct, where it can move both ways, and that the resident feels that the employee is not acting in a manipulating way. Many employees fear how sensitive relationship should be raised. The main rule is that one presents their opinion open and directly, and that one secures concrete examples to illustrate, and that the other get the possibility to give a comment before the discussion moved on (ibid).

2.14 Alternative to Violence (ATV)'s theory for conflict management

In this chapter, I find it relevant to describe an initiative taken by the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) in dealing with conflict management. Based on the theory that dialogue is the most efficient to prevent and handle conflicts between the residents in asylum reception centers, the UDI established a project already in 2012 with the aim to develop a method for dialogue based groups in Norwegian asylum reception centers. The objective of the groups was to reduce violence both in and outside the centers, and the participants should be men living in the centers. The project reflected national and international violence prevention strategies, and involved developing a new method for training employees from all Norwegian reception centers to lead dialogue groups and supervise the employees as they held groups. The non-profit organization *Alternativ til Vold* (Alternative to Violence) managed the project.

After a pilot was carried out in 2009/10, the measure was implemented in all ordinary reception centers in 2013-14 as a mandatory issue. Due to lack of financial resources, the measure was only carried out on a voluntary basis in 2015. However, from 2016 onwards, all reception centers have to carry out at least two dialogue groups each year.

The aim of the dialogue is to encourage the participants to make their own reflections concerning violence and alternatives to violence. The employees in reception centers attend the courses arranged by the (ATV) after which they will be able to enter into dialogues with the residents of the centers. The philosophy of the course is to teach the employees interview techniques to use when dealing with the residents, how they should promote openness and learn to listen to each other. The idea is that a positive attitude, openness and positive feedback shall make the employees able to reflect on different themes themselves, without directly participating in the discussion.

According to UDI's final report from the pilot, feedback from the employees described that dialogue provides a mutual learning process, as many employees have experienced gaining a better understanding of the residents' background. By gaining better knowledge of for instance the social conditions in the residents' homeland, some employees described that they have become more secure in interaction with the residents in their daily lives. In particular, knowledge of conflict management has been important in order to understand when an issue will occur at a reception center. Many employees have expressed appreciation for being able to better understand what can trigger a conflict.

UDI's study "*Survey of violence and unwanted incidents in asylum reception centers*" describes the value of ATV for the employees. Multiple employees have expressed that they think conflicts have been under-reported, in the sense that physical and mental violence have not been taken seriously and that this could be the result of the lack of a common understanding of the importance of dialogue and openness.

With a common understanding of violence, they thought that all employees could be better at supporting and giving feedback to each other. In particular, there have been discussions about violence registration and how it can provide a realistic picture if employees in reception centers do not have a common understanding of the concept of violence. This is a topic that also appeared in the report "*Violence, threats and unstable behavior in Norwegian asylum reception centers*" (2008): To what extent the survey provides a picture of the actual occurrence of violence and threats in reception, is uncertain. Violence research from other populations point to under-reporting and dark numbers as a known phenomenon. Items of discretion will always take place when an episode is to be defined as aggressive and a subjectively perceived threat. An error source will therefore be the possibility of "lean" reporting through different appraisal of episodes; what one experiences as threatening is not necessarily the same as others experience. "*This was described in course management courses, for example how two reception staff can respond differently to a killing threat. Where one reports a killing threat as violence, another meet the resident with a smile and not report it since he / she thinks it is something the resident just says without reason when he / she is emotionally losing control*".

2.17 Summary

In light of the theories presented above, the most important elements in the discussion of the findings when it comes to the employees understanding of a conflict, will be the theories related to emotions, culture, language and psychology. Theories related to dialogue and communication will be the main instruments when discussing the findings concerning conflict management as well as the understanding of the different steps in a conflict situation.

Chapter 3 – Method

In this chapter, I will explain my choice of method. The chapter is about research method, research design, selection, data gathering, implementation, the analysis, and critique of the method.

3.1 Research method

There has been an important issue when learning about method whether quantitative or qualitative is the best. Which method that is best suitable, depends on the purpose of the assignment. It seems to have become increasingly popular to combine the two methods, expressed as method triangulation. In this way, one can use questionnaires, as well as interviews and/or observation (Johannessen et.al. 2010). This can strengthen the data-collection. It could have been possible to do both a quantitative and qualitative analyzes for this study's theme. I believe that through a quantitative study I would have been able to collect data from a wider range of employees, notably several employees from different kinds of reception centers from all over the country. This could have given the thesis added value. A broader basis of information could have been more representative and as such be more valuable when drawing conclusions. In a qualitative study there is also a danger that the informants are more forthcoming than in a quantitative study where the informants have no relation with the interviewer which makes it easier to be more honest. However, due to time and resources, it has not been possible for me to make use of both methods. I have chosen to concentrate on a qualitative method because I believe it is most valuable for my study.

Through a qualitative study, I have been able to go more in depth in my material. When I seek to understand how the employees at reception centers understand and experience dialogue, communication and actions among the residents and between the residents and the employees, it appears that the best option would be to use a qualitative study. A qualitative study with semi-structured interviews has given me the possibility to get closer to the informant, gain a deeper understanding, and catch meanings, nuances and experiences that would otherwise be hard to achieve. A theme that focuses on understanding and deeper meaning will provide different perceptions and experiences. An important issue for the researcher is to have a close interaction with both the informant and the data he/she provides. (Johannessen et.al. 2010). Openness and flexibility for change during the research process is also essential in qualitative studies (Thagaard 2011). This is something I had to consider, since the theme is rather

sensitive and I could profit from minor adjustments in the dialogue during the collection of data.

Hermeneutics is compatible with qualitative methods. The hermeneutic tradition is defined as the methodology of interpretation concerned with problems that arise when dealing with meaningful human actions and the product of such actions (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy). It emphasizes the interpretive approach to humans and environment. The main task is to develop an understanding of concrete human relationships, social structures and activities. In the same way, the hermeneutic circle is central in the study, since each part must be understood in light of the whole research, and the whole research must be understood in terms of the parts. (Johannessen et.al. 2010).

3.2 Research design

Research design is everything which is connected to a survey. This means that one has to consider what and who will be surveyed, and how it should proceed. Design has its origins from Latin *de-* and *signum* which means sign. There are many different research designs to choose between. Researchers do not have a unified perception of what the best qualitative research design is (Johannessen et.al. 2010). In the literature, there are three main types of research design: Explorative, descriptive, or casual. The choice of design depends on the time period, a sample, or population, experiment, and hard or soft data (Selnes 1999). Due to the purpose of my study, I have chosen to use an explorative design. This design is used when the researcher has limited knowledge about what is being surveyed (Selnes 1999). The purpose is to test relationships that are less known or completely unknown (Johannessen et.al.2010). In my case, I could only imagine how the employees at reception centers understood and managed conflicts. From a researcher's point of view, I did not have knowledge on how the employees themselves experienced and understood the conflicts. The actual understanding of how the individual employee understood the reality was unknown to me. I thus started out with an open mind to collect data.

In an explorative study, both cross-sectional studies and time-series studies can be used. While cross-sectional studies only give a brief picture of a phenomenon during a certain time, the time-series studies are series of studies of the same theme during different periods of time, i.e. a series of cross-sectional studies. The advantage of using a time-series study is that one can observe the development over time (Johannessen et.al.2010). However, a cross-sectional

study will be more beneficial for this thesis, considering the time limit, the problem statement, and the aim of my study.

3.3 Understanding

Conflicts can be managed in a satisfactory way, or they can be managed in a way that gives the impression of encouraging the conflict to “keep going”. Personally, I have often been neutral during conflicts and been observing from the outside, and seen what a conflict can do with a group of people. I have also noticed how the involved are affected by the ongoing conflict. Most conflicts in this context have consisted of two people or two groups of people. The helplessness one feels, when it does not seem within reach to contribute to the management or solving the conflict is not comfortable. On this background, and after having gained knowledge from theory on conflict and conflict management, my understanding is that the psychology in a conflict is not always clear to the parties involved. A lack of competence for the part who is supposed to manage a conflict can be detrimental, whether it is due to a personal dislike of conflict or limited understanding or knowledge about conflict and conflict management.

In this perspective, I wish to find out more about how the employees at reception centers actually experienced and understood conflict. From a researcher’s point of view, it would be interesting to study if the employees understanding of the problem could influence on the management of the conflict. I have tried not to let the analyses be affected by my personal understanding of the conflict, as I am aware this can be a weakness. Dallan (2006) states that a qualitative approach is a personal challenge, and we must be aware of how our past always will have an influence on how we interpret today’s experiences. It has been important for me in this thesis not to seek answers that confirms my understanding. I have therefore emphasized seeking the informants understanding and version of the conflicts.

3.4 Role as a researcher

My position during the interview and the processing of the data will alternate between close and distant, participant and observer. As Skjervheim (1971) points out, in the interview situation, the researcher goes back and forth between close and distant. The researcher goes from participant to observer, by following up the answers with further questions. This makes the role of the researcher more distanced. At the same time, the interview situation is a

conversation between the employee and me, a subject-to-subject relationship. As a researcher, I am also a part of the conversation, since I am an active participant in what is happening. When processing the data, is it the same way. The researcher is close to the data gathered, while at the same time it is important for the researcher to lift his eyes, take a step back, and get a certain distance from the data to be interpreted.

3.5. Selection

An important part of social research is to choose whom to include in the research. Important elements for choosing informants in qualitative research are the sample size and the sample strategy.

3.5.1 Sample size

Some unwritten rules have developed concerning the size of the sample. Many researchers seem to believe that the threshold of sufficient interviews is reached when there is no reason to gather more information. This can be described as a saturation point. It is, in theory, not a limit for the right amount of persons (Johannessen et al. 2010). According to Thagaard (2011) the sample size is dependent on how many categories the sample should represent. Due to time and scope of the thesis, I decided that five interviews were sufficient.

2.5.2 Sample strategies

Qualitative studies are based on strategical selection. Informants have to be chosen by qualifications or abilities that are strategical in relation to the research's theoretical perspective. In the literature, this is described as selection (Thagaard 2011). Qualitative studies can often deal with sensitive and personal themes, and on this background, it can be difficult to find individuals that are willing to participate in the research. It is therefore relevant to think of who would be available for participation in the research. This can be described as availability selection (Thagaard 2011). The selection of informants in qualitative studies will therefore be more characterized by expediency than representability (Johannessen et al. 2010).

I have found that the snowball method, to a certain degree, is a well suited method to use in this study. A criterion was to find informants I knew had been experienced conflict. The process in the snowball method is to first contact individuals that have the qualifications

relevant for the problem statement and the study's theoretical perspectives. They can later be asked for names of others who have similar qualifications. The analogy with a snowball is that it starts out small, but gradually expands, like a snowball that grows larger as it rolls (Thagaard 2011). Concerning the snowball method, Andrews & Vassenden (according to Thagaard 2011) point out that the snowball not necessarily rolls from intensions. It is mentioned especially how time consuming it can be to establish contacts in this manner. There are also an ethical problem tied to this method. When the researcher's contact person suggests other individuals, the researcher gain knowledge about them, without their consent. The problem can be handled if the person that is suggested, gives his or her permission to the contact person, and the researcher thereafter establishes contact (Thagaard 2011). Another weaknesses of the availability selection includes the fact that such a selection will represent people who may seem to be familiar with research. Those who are willing to participate in the survey may feel that they master the situation as they have more insight than the researcher (Thagaard 2011).

3.5.3 The process of conducting the interviews

The first step in my research was to gain permission from the research site, NSD (norsk senter for forskningsdata) to conduct research. I took the quiz at their website and it said that I did not need to apply for permission. On the same day, I called the site, which also confirmed that I did not need it because everything about the study is anonymous and I have not recorded anything, only written down on my laptop.

Secondly, I had to receive approval from the Directorate of Immigration (UDI) to conduct interviews at any asylum reception center. The process of receiving approval took much longer than expected, several months. Permission was given 11.3.2017 (attachment 2)

To obtain informants, I contacted multiple asylum reception centers in the area around Oslo. First by an email followed up by phone calls. For one asylum reception center, I was directed to the leader with whom I exchanged emails until we had agreed upon a time for the interviews. About one week after the emails, I was able to carry out the interview with the first informant. After the interview, I asked if there were other employees I could interview. I was able to conduct another interview one week later at the same center. I was also in contact with another reception center in the Oslo area. Since I was in Tromsø at the time, I said I would get in touch when I returned to Oslo. I sent them a description of my thesis and my

interview guide. However, when I contacted the center later on, I received a reply that it was too late and that the train had left and good luck with my research.

I contacted another reception centers outside of Oslo and gained permission to carry out interviews there. I was able to conduct the interviews about two weeks after the first contact. I had only made plans to interview one employee, but I asked for another person to interview since it had been a long drive and I was able to do two interviews that day. The employees at this reception center were very friendly and helpful.

The process of carrying out the interviews and finding people willing to cooperate was much harder than I had expected. The fifth person I interviewed had been working at multiple reception centers.

All the interviews happened at the centers during working hours. All the informants were very friendly and forthcoming. The interviews took much longer time than expected. I informed the first employee that I interviewed that the process would take around 20 minutes. It took about 1 hour and 15 minutes.

The interviews were conducted in Norwegian. I have translated the data from Norwegian to English to resemble the original data from the informants.

3.5.4 Document analyzes

Document analysis is a form of qualitative analysis. In document analysis researchers gather data to be analyzed in order to achieve important correlations and relevant information in the given field. (Grønmo 2004: 119). The term document can be used about all written sources that are relevant for the researcher during his analysis. It includes everything from public documents, such as year reports to private documents such as letters. By utilizing document analysis the literature need to be evaluated in the relevant context for the study (Thagaard 2003). The documents I have used in this study will be discuss below. The use of the documents can differ. The shape of the documents are often a written presentation of a text, but it can also be a recording or oral presentation. This study has only used sources in written form. (Thagaard 2003) The contents of the documents can contain opinions from the authors of the documents, or it can be a factual content for the specific theme. Furthermore, one can divided the sources into primary, secondary, and tertiary. Primary sources are independent themselves as they are not based on other sources. In literature, primary sources is the original publication. Secondary sources are based on primary sources. Document analysis

Document analysis is a form of qualitative analysis where researchers gather data to be analyzed in order to achieve important correlations and relevant information of the given field (Grønmo 2004: 119). The term document can be used about all written sources that are relevant for the researcher during his analysis. It includes everything from public documents, such as annual reports, to private documents such as letters. By utilizing document analysis, the literature needs to be evaluated in the relevant context (Thagaard 2003). The documents I have used in this study will be discussed below.

The shape of documents are often a written presentation, but it can also be a recording or an oral presentation. In this study, the sources are written documents. (Thagaard 2003) The content of the documents can contain arguments from the author, or it can be a factual content for the certain theme. Furthermore, one can divided the sources into primary, secondary, and tertiary sources. Primary sources are independent, as they are not based on other sources. Secondary sources build upon primary sources. When a historian writes about a phenomenon, the story can be categorized as a secondary source (Kjeldstadli 1992:167-168). When using secondary sources to analyze a text, it means that the reader has not read the original source, but refers to the text of the primary author [2002]. Tertiary sources are data interpreted by others, and one should be careful when using it. In this study I have used mainly primary sources.

My primary sources are public documents from the Directorate of Immigration) UDI and from ATV [Alternative to Violence]. Both the documents from the UDI and ATV were available online. I have also used secondary sources such as for example Einarsen and Pedersen, who sometimes refer to other authors in their texts. An example of a tertiary source can be found in my introduction, where I discussed some general knowledge about an incident and cited information from a newspaper.

The document analysis has been important for the study because the written guidelines given by the UDI has given me an overview of how the employees are supposed to act when facing a serious situation in the reception center. The description of the ATV as mentioned in Chapter 3, 4 and 5 has been important because it provides useful information of a certain project the employees can benefit from in their efforts to prevent conflicts.

3.5.5 Presentation of sample

I have interviewed five persons, four men and one woman. To keep their identity anonymous, I will refer to them as informant 1,2, 3 4 and 5. Two of the informants were from the first center, two were from the second and the third had worked at different centers but was currently working outside the center.

3.6 Gathering of data

The researcher has to decide how the data should be gathered. In a qualitative study where the researcher is doing field research, observation and/or interviews can be used. If the researcher wishes to find out how the informant experience and understand himself and his environment, then information gathering through interviews is a satisfactory way (Thagaard 2011). Kvale and Brinkmann (2010) characterize the qualitative research interview as a conversation with a purpose and a structure, where the interview often is more of a dialogue than solely questions and answers. Problem statements can be describing, interpretative and theoretical. Interviews are usually recorded on audios, and the interviewer usually takes additional notes (Johannessen et.al. 2010). A research interview can be carried out in different ways. The most common are unstructured, semi-structured, and structured interviews. An unstructured interview tends to have open-ended questions and is usually informal. The semi-structured interview has an ordinary interview guide where questions, themes, and order can vary, while a structured interview is about questions presented in advance, usually with fixed answer alternatives that the researcher checks (Thagaard 2011).

I have gathered empiric material by using semi-structured interviews. The order varies depending on how the informants touched upon various themes. This gave me the possibility to compare the answers, as well as the opportunity to identify new questions. This was an advantage since I am doing research on a sensitive issue. The interview situation is affected by a phenomenology and a double hermeneutics approach (Kvale and Brinkmann 2010) (Gilje and Grimen 1993). I had an interest of understanding conflict from the informants own perspectives, according to their description, and based on their understanding and experience. The actual reality is how they experienced it. (Kvale and Brinkmann 2010). Anthony Giddens (according to Gilje and Grimen 1993:146) emphasizes that social science builds on a double hermeneutic. It occurs in the way that the researchers often have to interpret and understand something that already is interpreted. In other words, researchers have to relate to a world that is already interpreted of the social actors themselves.

3.7 Execution of interviews

The literature shows that many elements are necessary to take into account when preceding with an interview. An interview is a relation between two participants, and the information from this interview is dependent on this relation. All the informants wanted the interviews to be carried out at their workplace. This can seem logical since interviews were made during working hours. This gave me a good possibility to listen to what they said and to transcribe the information after each interview. The interviews were written down on my laptop while they were conducted, none of the informants thought this was an issue. Everyone except for one wished to carry out the interview at their offices. One of the interviews was therefore done in a different room. We small talked a bit before I started with the interview guide. Three of the informants were calm and relaxed, and did not need much time before they felt comfortable with the situation. The fourth informant seemed a bit more stressed, and the fifth informant was stressed and did not wish to talk much. This person wanted to get started, so we could finish. However, the interview went well, and we talked for a while afterwards about university, work, experience and courses.

I have the impression that all the informants thought it had been positive to participate. Some of them said they became more aware of the theme, and maybe would give it more consideration than before. Two of them experienced this as a form of therapy, where they went through previous conflicts, step by step. One of them had not spoken of this since the conflict ended a while ago, and thought it was good to go through the process this way.

3.8 Critique of method

The research process can easily be influenced by the researcher's personal conduct, for example if the informants state what they believe the researcher wants to hear. This may affect the information. The informants can for example provide information that seem desirable, instead of information about their own subjective attitudes and experiences (Holme and Solvang 1996). In the qualitative research interview, it may have the effect that the respondent will be careful not to appear in a negative way in the relationship with the researcher (Johannessen et al.2010). This is a vulnerable situation, and the researcher should as much as possible contribute to creating a relaxed atmosphere. Since the qualitative research is characterized by flexibility, there is a danger that the research setup will change during the process, or the approach to the various research objects would change. Such flexibility can

make it difficult to compare data from the different informants. (Holme and Solvang 1996). In a qualitative research one uses oneself as an instrument, and the experience and background of the researcher can affect the whole process. Analyzes of findings means a lot of interpretation, and the researcher's perception can affect the findings. It is a prerequisite that it is an open and detailed portrayal of the whole process, as well as a best possible rendering of the data (Johannessen et al. 2010).

3.9. Reliability

Reliability can be connected to the research data. What data are used, how it is gathered, and how it is processed. Within quantitative research, the requirement of reliability is very important. On the other hand, observations are context dependent, which means that a copy of another qualitative research is difficult. It can make it hard for others to understand the observations in the same way (Johannessen et al. 2010). Since my research is based on qualitative interviews, where the interviews give a subjective understanding, the reliability is limited. At the same time, the data can be viewed as reliable if it is tied to the informants experiences and understanding. The data cannot be viewed as reliable to the degree that it can be generalized.

3.10 Validity

Validity can be defined by the question "do we measure what we think we measure" (Johannessen et al. 2010:229). If we follow this definition, qualitative studies are not valid, since they are hardly measurable. Validity in a qualitative study must be understood in a different way. It reflects the researchers conduct. Findings reflect the purpose of the study and the reality. (Johannssen et al. 2010:229). In order to strengthen validity Cuba and Lincoln (according to Johannessen et al. 2010) operate with two techniques: persisting observation and triangulation. I have not been able to use these two techniques, and I am aware that the validity of the research therefore might be reduced.

3.11 Ethics

Kvale and Brinkmann (2010) emphasize that an interview examination is a moral examination. Ethical problems occur through the whole examination, when complex relations in connection with exposing the private lives of individuals occur. Firstly, the aim of the

examination should be viewed in light of both the scientific world, and the human situation that is explored. The informants received information about the research process and the necessity of their consent on beforehand. In this study, it has been important to consider how much information the informant should receive. In order to be able to carry out the interviews as natural as possible, the informants should not be too well prepared. Besides, things can change during the process, which makes it impossible to provide all necessary information beforehand. The interview process should be filed in form of a confidential report, and one must consider possible consequences for the informants.

I have focused on confidentiality throughout the research process, and in this way, the interview guide has helped me to prepare the questions I should ask in the interview. During the transcribing process, it has been essential to make a loyal written transcription. Another ethical consideration in this regard concerns the analyses. It has been important to consider how thorough and critical the interviews should be as it would not be natural to include the informants in the analyses of the data.

Chapter 4. Findings

The presentation of the findings is divided between the understanding of conflict and the management of conflict. Under understanding of conflict, there are subcategories that represent the most important issues talked about during the interviews, in line with the interview guide. The same systematic approach is used when presenting the findings related to the management of conflict. In this part (section 4.II), I will also present documents and projects I find relevant for the analyses of the employees and management of conflicts.

The findings connect to concrete conflicts that the employees in the reception centers have experienced and handled. All the employees interviewed had experienced various conflicts, but the ones mentioned are representative for the type of conflicts they had encountered. The employees interviewed are in this chapter described as informants. I have named them informant 1, 2,3,4,5. It is interesting to note that all the conflicts described had various levels of violence, in other words the conflicts were past the stage of verbal disagreement.

The aim when presenting the findings is to relate them to the questions raised in Chapter 1, and the relevant methods described in Chapter 3. I have chosen to measure the findings against the relevant theories in Chapter 5.

I. Understanding of conflict

4.1. Relevant methods

As mentioned in point 3.1 above, I have chosen to concentrate on *a qualitative method* because through a qualitative study, I have been able to go more in depth in my material. When I seek to understand how the employees at reception centers understand and experience dialogue, communication and behavior, this appeared to be the best option. A qualitative study with semi-structured interviews has given me the possibility to get closer to the informants, gain a deeper understanding, and catch meanings, nuances and experiences that would otherwise be hard to achieve.

As I had a limited knowledge of the appearance of conflicts at the chosen asylum reception centers, the findings must be seen in the context of an explorative design where I have tried to investigate what actually happened in the different situations described by the informants. I have tried to be both close and distant to the informants by showing a certain degree of

curiosity and interest while at the same time letting them tell their stories with their own words. The findings show conflict situations during a rather limited period of time as described by a limited number of informants and must as such be seen as a cross-sectional study. One of the informants was recruited on the basis of recommendation by another informant, and is thus an example of the use of the snowball method.

I found it important to try to understand the informants by interpreting their information and behavior, and as such, the findings will touch upon the hermeneutics tradition as defined in point 2.1 above.

I have also used document analyzes when looking into the documents received from the Directorate of immigration (UDI) and the Alternative to violence (ATV).

4.2 The content of the conflicts

Informant 1 explained a conflict where employees had to confiscate a bottle of alcohol from one of the residents because alcohol is against the rules at the center. The resident got very upset and became aggressive. Eventually he took out a knife, and he used it to threaten the employees at the center. The employees had to hide and call the police.

Informant 2 presented a conflict between two people of the same nationality who were developing an aggressive behavior that became worse every day. One of them had recently received a negative decision on his application for asylum, while the other had still not received an answer to his application. The two residents became more and more aggressive and eventually they had a fight where they used knives. Fortunately, no major injury happened. The conflict continued, but was under control.

Informant 3 works in a section of a center where residents who were a bit more demanding lived. She was a contact person for one of the residents, a rather big, verbal and violent man. This resident had received multiple declines to various requests and he had become more and more aggressive for each time he received a negative answer. Eventually informant 3 had to hire a security person at the section. However, one time the resident asked the security person to wait outside when he went in to the staff's office. Once inside, the resident became very aggressive and placed himself between informant 3 and the door, which was locked from the inside. He started to break the door while screaming very loud. Informant 3 described it that

for a few moments she did not know if he would be attacking her or the door. The resident was moved to another place.

Informant 4 described a conflict between the residents where one resident was rude and made a lot of noise in the common area. He would turn on his music in front of the TV that everyone was watching. Eventually this incident started a fight. When the fight was under control, the informant managed to calm the residents. The conflict did not continue, at least not in the same way.

Informant 5 described a conflict that began between two residents while discussing what to watch on the TV. The two individuals were of different nationalities and as the conflict escalated the groups from each nationality gathered behind their respective individual. The employees attempted to talk to them and calm the situation, but it broke out in a fight and the employees had to call the police.

During the interviews, the majority of the informants showed an interpretive approach when describing the conflicts. In this way they showed that they tried to understand the reason behind the conflict. They believed that most of the conflicts concerned conflicting interests and a disagreement of values and religion that could not be easily solved. It seemed difficult to find a common goal. In the extension of this, two informants said that the disagreement must probably have lasted for a period of time before it passed on to a violent behavior. One said that emotions were important part of the conflict. *"...as soon as there are feelings involved, it means something more. Sometimes you sense that this can develop into an ugly episode."* (informant 3). Some of the informants meant that many conflicts could be related to basic values and conflict of interests. Informant 3 said it like this: *"I think that, in relation to conflict, I believe that one is disagreeing about maybe basic values. And that it is a conflict when it has developed over time"*.

4.3 The informants understanding of the reasons behind the conflict

When describing how they understood the conflicts, all the informants showed that they experienced and interpreted the reasons behind the conflict, but in different ways. Even if most of them said that it could be difficult to understand the actual reason, most of them had thoughts about this. They emphasized factors such as anxiety, stress, and uncertainty over

time, power, control, personal factors and fear. Informant 3 was aware of what had been the concrete reason for the conflict. When the resident received a negative decision to all his requests, it began to “boil in his head”. Receiving continuous declines seemed to be the origin of the conflict. Informant 3 explained it like this: *“I believe it was a lack of understanding from his part, which relates to the types of expectations that are created. That his requests were not accepted created a feeling of being ignored and overlooked, which in turn led to a feeling that he had very little control and power over his own life at the center”*.

Common for two of the conflicts (informant 2 and 5) was that the informants believed that much of the reason for the conflicts concerned a demonstration of power between two individuals who both had a need to state power and control. The informants believed the reason was that two residents wanted the same thing, which only one of them could have, as this was how the conflict appeared, but that the deeper problem was that they both wanted to win. At a later stage, such a struggle between two persons can easily affect many residents since they will feel they have to choose sides. To cite informant 5 from the interview: *“I know that it has been many issues here, but I remember one story that started out as an issue between two persons, but many became part of it later. I know part of the story, but not everything. It has been used a lot of resources at the reception center since it ended up affecting so many people at the center.”*

Concerning the conflict described by informant 2, he believed that the real reason behind the actual conflict was related to stress and the application process. When the application for asylum was refused for one of the residents, the frustration was taken out on the other resident. The resident did not want to acknowledge that he had received a negative decision.

4.4 The informants understanding of the psychology of the conflict

During the interview, all the informants said they understood the psychology of the conflict as being an issue concerning a threat of basic needs, such as the possibility to be in control of their own lives, and a difference of interests and values. They expressed that they believed values were deeply anchored in each individual. When the basic values are threatened, it is difficult just to let it go. A quote can support this: *“If there are things that do not mean a lot, then it seems not to be such a big deal. Then the individuals tend to “swallow a camel” and in a way say it is ok and life can go on.”* Two informants (informant 2 and 3) said that the need

to be seen and heard is essential and that we all have basic needs to be appreciated, heard, seen, believed, trusted and have the feeling of belonging. It is important for the residents to have their basic needs met, it is necessary for their mental health. *“Conflicts can always relate to these basic needs we all have, that can make life unsafe if they are not fulfilled”* (informant 2). Another informant (informant 5) believed that the need for power and control can be very essential *“ I believe it can be about uncertainty, power, and I believe it can be about that they do not necessarily wish to ruin the life of another, but they have to in a way say: listen, here we are bigger than you are.”*

4.5 The informants understanding of the emotional aspects of the conflicts

All the informants expressed that emotional aspects were important when trying to understand a conflict. Emotions can contribute to a possibility for change, which is positive. The informants especially emphasized that hurt feelings and anger were important emotions in conflict situations, this applied both to the residents and the informants. The findings show that the informants said the emotional aspects are important when trying to understand conflicts, although it may sometimes limit their ability to understand if they themselves get very emotionally involved, for example by feeling insecure, afraid or helpless. This shows that emotions are not always positive when trying to understand a conflict.

The informants described situations where the residents had shown anger and hurt feelings. They furthermore used terms such as “frustration, anger, irritation, uncertainty, pain, insecurity, and sadness” Informant 1 said it like this: *“It was both discontent and lack of understanding. Fear of changes and lack of control. I experienced that the resident was angry because one cannot drink or do whatever one wants inside.”* The informants said that they felt the emotions that occurred among the residents were serious.

Three informants (informant 1, 2 and 3) emphasized what happened with them emotionally when the conflicts were going on. All three described that they were emotionally affected in the shape of hurt feelings and fear: *“My stomach did hurt a bit, and it felt good when I did not have to talk to the resident. Not angry, just uneasy. I was more uneasy than frightened”* (informant 2). Informant 1 said he felt anger. However, it might not necessarily be as part of the process understanding the conflict, rather as a description of lack of control: *“I got really*

angry, but I could not take it out because as employees we have to follow the guidelines and I felt angry for being so helpless and having to hide from the resident.”

When describing their own emotions, two of the informants (informant 1 and 3) said they had felt strong emotions, while the other three did not experience their emotions as serious to the same extent. Informant 3 said it like this *“I began to throw up. It did not feel right. It gave me other emotions; anger and agony. That these residents should not get to me.”* Some employees said that they were highly affected by their own emotions. Informant 3 said it like this: *“...I believe he got depressed due to a massive change of life in a few months, I could in a way see how it was for him to have to go home, I can imagine that it must be a horrible feeling”*.

4.6 Advantages and disadvantages of emotions in conflicts

The informants said that emotions in conflict could be a strength, because it “touches” us, but at the same time, it alerts a sign, a red flag, you sharpen your senses. Emotions can mirror that something is wrong, and it may lead to one being more careful *“...emotions makes one think a bit deeper, or make a more careful approach”* (informant 3). Another informant expressed himself like this: *“A red flag that makes one stop doing something. It can feel like a red lamp blinking. If one understands there and then how to use what one has learned, then take it easy. Listen to the body, the guts. Sometimes this is how one feels at first, in the guts* (informant 1).

The informants also emphasized the negative sides of the emotional aspect. They expressed that emotions may lead to an escalation of the situation. That it could create fear. Informant 3 believed that emotions could characterize an expansion of the conflict when you see *“ghosts in the highlight of the day”*. Another said that emotions can be so strong that it navigates towards *“... a need for revenge”* (informant 2). Informant 4 meant that emotions could contribute to one being unreasonable and irrational: *“... If one is controlled by emotions then it can be difficult. What should I say, a little unrealistic. It is not very smart to be controlled by feelings, I think. Because if one lets emotions be in control then issues can be strengthened. For example, if one is angry then one can say things, or say too much, that it in a way hits you back, that the conflict escalates and becomes unreasonable. It is difficult to concentrate on the core of the conflicts, and can create more emotions”*.

On the question on why they believed emotions occurred in conflicts, most of the informants understood it as being a natural and important part of human nature. Psychological processes touch us when something severe occurs. The informants were using terms as: *“touch upon us, involvement, protection, inadequacy, threatened integrity and pride”*.

4.7 Stages of conflicts

The findings indicate that the informants understood the level of seriousness differently. Most of the informants compared the levels of conflict with the way they managed it. Some of the informants said that they did not feel “their” conflict was unmanageable (conflict 2, 3, and 4), but it was serious. Four said that a conflict could not be considered to have reached an unmanageable level as long as there was a certain level of communication (2, 3, 4 and 5). If they could talk together, there would always be a chance for a conflict to be solved. The clue is to take action at an early stage. *“... At least we could talk together; I could talk to him all the way”* informant 2 explained. He continued: *“I think when I experience it at an early stage, and then it is usually not more than 1, 2 maximum 3 persons involved, it depends on if I am able to take action. If this is not the case, then there is a risk it cannot be stopped, then it will be unmanageable.”*

One of the informants (informant 3) stressed that the conflict had different levels of severity that he described as follows: *“At his stage I believe he was pretty far down, to say it like that. That he at times felt lost. For me it did not feel that way, I felt that he was in conflict with me. I did not get angry; he was much more agitated. I do understand his situation; after all I feel he was not after me really.”*

4.8 Summary

The informants had to a large extent a common understanding of the term conflict; it is about disagreement that cannot be solved, or that it is difficult to find a common solution. One of the five informants defined the conflict as a disagreement of basic values.

The informants described the conflicts as being mainly due to a multicultural environment, where the residents experienced a high level of stress, anxiety, fear, and uncertainty, described the reasons for the conflicts.

All the informants agreed that the conflicts promoted emotions and anger, where anger was a visible emotional reaction. Three of the informants put emphasize on what happened with them when the conflict was ongoing. The emotions experienced by themselves as well as the emotions they had observed among the residents were described as serious. Some put emphasize on how serious the experience was for them, others emphasized how serious it was for the residents. The informants described that emotions in conflict can be a strength, it shows that something is touching us. The negative can be that emotions can lead to escalation of a conflict, create fear, or similar feelings. The findings indicate that the informants emphasize the importance of the emotional aspects in the attempt to understand the reason for the conflicts. For better or for worse, emotions can contribute to something happening, and possibility to change. At the same time, the findings show that emotion can affect us in a way that is not always positive.

Three of the informants emphasized that the psychology of the conflict is about values and basic needs that are threatened. Two informants believed that the need to be seen is central. This shows that the informants put emphasize on different factors when they look back at how the conflict was and how it was experienced for the different parties. Most of the informants, except for one, measured the severity of the conflict with the ability to manage it.

II. Conflict management

4.9 The term management of conflict

In the following, I will describe the findings related to the management of conflicts both in light of the information given by the informants during the interviews and written guidelines, instructions and relevant projects that are relevant in this respect. I will start by describing the written documents and projects relevant for the management of conflicts.

4.10 Written documents and relevant projects

The UDI has issued several instructions and guidelines which intend to give an appropriate formal framework for managing conflict situations in asylum reception centers. These documents are mainly meant for situations where there is a security issue. The most important documents in this regard are mentioned below. The findings in my research indicate that the employees found that the documents mentioned in this chapter are important in relation to

creating good routines in case of unwanted happenings, so that they would know what to do when a serious problem arises. Some of the documents focus on prevention of conflicts, as they deal with sharing of information.

These are the UDI-documents, which the informants found most relevant for their managing of the conflict:

- **RS 2010-084:** *Krav til bemanning og kompetanse i ordinære statlige mottak*
- **RS 2009-041:** *Krav til informasjonsarbeid i ordinære statlige mottak*
- **IM 2008-022:** *Rutiner for håndtering av akutsituasjoner i asylmottak*
- **RS 2017-005:** *Varsling mellom regionkontorene i UDI/asylmottak og Asylavdelingen i UDI ved kriminalitet, uro og alvorlige hendelser.*

RS 2010-084 deals with the competence of the employees working in the reception centers and the employment requirement.

The objective of **RS 2009-041** is to contribute to ensure the importance of information work in regular reception centers in order for the residents to

- know their rights and duties as well as get a realistic picture of Norwegian society and an understanding of the basic values it is based on
- can take care of their own life situation during the stay in the reception center.

IM 2008-022 is essential when it comes to management of emergency situations. The main objective of these internal practices is to ensure proper, efficient and sound handling in the first and crucial phase of an emergency or crisis situation, in order to minimize possible harmful effects and provide a good basis for the further follow-up in the reception center. The guidelines include several concrete instructions to the employees and the management of the reception center.

RS 2017-005 establishes routines for the UDI's handling of alerts between the reception centers and the UDI in case of crime and serious events in the centers. Among the issues to be reported to the UDI is behavior that may endanger the lives, health, safety or property of others, and behavior that can cause turmoil in the asylum reception centers.

In addition to the documents mentioned, the UDI developed a project using a new method to train employees from all Norwegian reception centers to lead dialogue groups and supervise

the employees as they held groups. This is described more thoroughly in chapter 3... The non-profit organization Alternativ til Vold (Alternative to Violence) managed the project. After having attended the course, the employees at the reception centers recruited male residents to participate in the groups, irrespective of their asylum status.

All the informants I interviewed had attended courses as mentioned. Informant 3 stated that they were taught very basic conflict management techniques, such as sitting next to the door when dealing with an aggressive resident or a resident showing signs of aggression. Another informant referred to the possibility of receiving coaching when necessary. *“There is funding to be used for attending courses relevant for conflict management that the employees can use if they think it is necessary. For example, I took a course in self-defense”*. In one reception center, it was mandatory for the employees to receive counseling (informant 2).

Apart from the mentioned guidelines and routines and the courses offered, I have not found other concrete methods or systems relevant for the managing of conflicts. However, as we will see in the discussion chapter below, the informants made use of the guidelines when the handling of the conflicts implied more security related measures.

4.11 The informants approach to the conflicts

All the informants gave the impression that in the daily lives, the handling of conflicts was closely related to the employee’s personal ability to communicate with and relate to the residents. I gained the impression that the employees to a large extent have to handle conflicts as they find appropriate, as long as they act in accordance with the UDI-guidelines and instructions and use the knowledge acquired from relevant courses.

The informants expressed some differences as they described when – the period of time - they approached a concrete conflict. A quote can underline this: *“It took a month before I went into it, to have it mapped. It was as if I thought it would pass or something. I felt I had to do something about it, if not I could not work here.”* (informant 2)

All the informants approached the conflicts by starting a conversation. Informant 2 and 4 were the only ones only using dialogue, a process- related approach throughout the whole conflict. Informant 2 described that he generally felt it was important to talk with the other employees, not only the residents when a conflict was emerging. This could for example be in relation to

a complaint; when a resident complained that the relations at the center were not good. In the concrete case mentioned in paragraph 4.2, he had conversations with the residents involved in the case, one by one (he was contact person for both of them), listened to their stories and gathered both of them together after the initial conversation. He thought it was important that the two residents tried to find a solution and that they took a moment to think of what they were doing... *"I think it worked to some extent with discussion/mediation however, it went back to a conflict eventually"*. Informant 2 used his dialogue skills when approaching the conflict.

Informant 4 had also started discussions with the persons involved. In the discussions, he was open to talk about what the problem was, and give the residents some space. It was important to try to understand and to explain to the residents that changes had to happen in order to solve the problem.

The findings show that the informants approached the conflicts differently, and for some of them the approach changed during the course of the conflict. The informants described that they felt they met the conflicts through cooperation, confrontation, dialogue, communication, power, compromise, and by being focused on solution. As mentioned above, informant 4 met the conflict with dialogue, and he tried to find a solution through cooperation. He believed this way of approaching the conflict worked fine *"yes I saw it worked"* and that it showed results.

Informant 1 approached the conflict by attempting to achieve good communication. *".. We had open talks, communication and cooperation. That is how I experienced it."* He said he attempted to accommodate and understand the resident. However, he seemed to approach the conflict in a confronting way, where the use of authority was a part of it. *"I might not have used these two elements (confrontation and authority), it was powerful and dangerous, but ... it is an example of a situation where it is necessary"*. He experienced that he gave the resident all possibilities to express himself, but at the end he had to call the police. *"If someone behaves like that then we have to do what we must"*. This is an example of the development of a conflict as a dynamic and not static process.

Informant 2 also meant that communication was important. He had to approach the residents in different ways. He tried open communication between the two residents and he tried

compromise, but also had to use his authority as an employee. He said it like this: *"I'm trying to use communication, it's important. Then I cannot say that I am not going to tell any of them to quit, because then I will be using authority. I tell them what I think, and say that because you do not agree with me does not imply that I do not want you here. You must find a way to live together. By saying that I also tell them what I expect them to do. »*

4.12 The informants positive and negative experiences when managing the conflict

All the informants had some positive experiences with their own management of the conflict. They stated that they were satisfied to have *"entered into the issue"*. Informant 3 stated that she had gotten to know everyone better and *"showed who she was"*. Informant 3 thought the basic conflict management techniques she had learned by attending courses were positive. Most of the employees expressed that they – according to the guidelines - had a certain responsibility to do something about conflicts. They had as employees a duty to be alert and be active. It was important that the residents experienced that the employees were at the spot and addressed the problems that occurred. *"What I chose to do, call for conversations was positive. Because it showed that I dared take responsibility then and there and I dared to see and try to solve a problem. There was also a warning for the others that we do see things and that the employee takes responsibility for what is happening"*(informant 3).

Three informants experienced something negative in their own handling. Informant 4 mentioned that he should have spent less time on the process. Informant 3 said she used too much energy. It went beyond her own health and she had to ask for guidance from outside. Informant 1 said that the negative part of his handling was that he had to *"ruin for someone else"*. He expressed *"... you have to involve yourself in people in such a way that it goes beyond work. You have to go all in. That often implies that you have to hurt someone or someone's feelings. I do not know if I could be a bit less direct maybe, maybe it would be better. But it's a bit hard for me to say "*. I believe he referred to the resident who was picked up by the police, which he did not see as the best option, but yet necessary at that particular moment.

4.13 Results

The informants explained the result of their management of the conflicts in the following way:

Informant 1's conflict ended by the arrival of the police. Later the resident was transferred to another center.

Informant 2's conflict was never solved, "*the conflict is there more or less always*". However, he managed to stop the fight.

Informant 3's conflict was ended when the resident was sent to another reception center after having blocked the door at her office.

Informant 4's conflict was solved as the younger resident eventually agreed to and respected that the larger group should have access to the TV. Informant 4's handling of the conflict was the only one that resulted in a solution of the underlying problem.

Informant 5's conflict kept going for a while even after the TV room incident; the residents were divided into two larger groups that mostly used separate rooms.

4.14 Summary

The guidelines and routines from the UDI and the courses represent the framework for the employee's management of conflicts. Apart from that, the employees must operate and handle the situations according to their own qualifications, their sense of correct behavior, and their ability to adapt their behavior to the specific situations in a dynamic way.

All the informants had some positive experiences with their own management of the conflicts. They think it was right to take responsibility by getting involved in the conflict, even if it was not resolved. One of the informants also said he got to know the residents better. Another informant said he had learned negotiation techniques underway, and that his approach involved *give and take*. Three of the informants experienced some negative issues relating to their own management. One informant mentioned he should have spent less time on the process, another person said she had used too much energy, and that it affected her personal health, and that she should have received therapy when offered. The last person said it was a negative experience when he had to single out a person, and felt defeated by having to involve the police.

The informants encountered conflicts in different ways, and they showed that their involvement and management changed during the conflict. The informants described that they felt they handled the conflicts through cooperation, confrontation, dialogue, communication, authority, compromise and being solution focused.

Chapter 5. Discussion

In this chapter, I will analyze the findings as described in chapter 4 in light of the theory in chapter 2 in order to try to find out how the findings can be related to relevant theory and previous research. The discussion will first address the question how the informants understood the conflict, and look closer at the link to relevant theory. Thereafter, the discussion will deal with the question how the employees managed the conflicts and see if there is a connection between the findings and relevant theory. Finally, I will examine the question regarding the connection between how the informants understood the conflicts, and how they managed them and see if there is any theory that can explain or support the findings.

I. Understanding of conflict

Research question: How did the informants understand the conflicts?

I will present how the informants understood the term conflict, the reasons for the conflicts, the psychology and the emotional aspects of the conflicts, and the stages of conflicts and see how these elements correspond with different theories presented in Chapter 2.

5.1. The informants understanding of the term conflict

In line with the literature, the findings show that the informants had different understanding of the term conflict. As described in Chapter 2, we find two directions as well as an in-between variant that can be relevant for this examination. Einarsen and Pedersen (2009) distinguish between two main models of the term conflict. The first model concerns situations where two or more parts have competing intentions or goals, or intentionally attempt to block the other party in his or her own path to success, while the second model deals more with frustrations in a relationship between two parties. Sørensen and Grimsmo (2001) point out that a conflict can also be hidden; some believe they have conflicting goals while others do not notice any difference of interest.

The informants understanding of the term conflict in relation to the situations they had experienced can to a large extent be placed within one or more of these three directions. Informant 2, 4 and 5 said they believed the conflict could be explained as a lack of a common goal, and that it was important “*to win the battle*”, which may correspond with the first

direction. At the same time, the frustration direction also seems to be adequate in these conflicts, as some of them clearly showed that frustration was an important element. In the two other cases, (informant 1 and 3) frustration seemed to be an important issue, especially as frustration easily developed into something more serious when others (the employees) interfered. That it would pass from frustration to a more hostile situation when the residents did not get what they wanted. An interesting question is this regard could be if interference by the employees could make things worse, that they could be creating a conflict instead of solving it for instance by calling the police. I have not gone further into the discussion of this issue.

As Putnam (2006) stated, the term conflict can be explained as an expressed disagreement and mutual dependency between two or more parties. It seems like all the informant's perceptions of the conflicts are in line with this theory, as all the informants expressed that the conflicts were about disagreements between two or more parties that were dependent of each other. The residents had to remain in the reception centers and they had to relate to the other residents as well as the employees. They could not choose to leave the center and thus walk away from the disagreement.

Two of the informants (informant 2 and 3) understood the term conflict as a disagreement that had lasted for some time, and where emotions or fundamental values were important part of it. Such a way to understand and define conflict can coincide with Hotvedt's (2003) characterization of conflict as a process, where he compares the development of a conflict with the development of an illness. It can concern a disagreement, where emotions and values to a certain degree are part of it, and where the disagreement develops over time and becomes a conflict. This understanding coincides with the informant's perception that disagreements must repeat itself or develop over time in order to be characterized as a conflict. This theory, that compares the conflict as the development of an illness, is to a large extent in conformity with how the mentioned two informants understood the term conflict. A definition that also can coincide with Skjørshammers definition as described in Chapter 2. In the same way as Hotvedt (2003) he believed that the development of a conflict could be compared with the development of an illness, it means that conflicts will come and go. All the informants underlined that conflicts come and go continuously. The positive side of this is that it can be a possibility to address the disagreement before it develops to a conflict, to "*clean the air*" and be done with it.

5.2 The informants understanding of the reasons behind the conflicts

Einarsen and Pedersen (2009) claim that it can be different reasons for a conflict, and it can be difficult sometimes to understand exactly what the concrete reasons are. They broaden their theory that it may be difficult to conclude the actual reason for a conflict by saying that there could be a combination of a variety of conditions over time where insight expertise and experience will be important ingredients when trying to give a more accurate explanation of the causes. As mentioned in chapter 4.3, most of the informants said that it could be difficult to understand the actual reason, but they emphasized factors such as anxiety, stress and uncertainty over time, power, control, personal factors and fear.

Three of the informants in my study, informant 1, 2 and 3, said that “their” conflicts could be related to the organizational model of the reception center. The way the administration of the reception center is organized, and the responsibilities of the employees when discovering potential conflicts can be of importance when trying to locate the source of the conflict. If the needs of the residents, for example to have more attention and independence, to drink alcohol or to decide his own residence in the future, are not met because of administrative routines and regulations, this can easily create conflict situations. Similarly, if the residents criticize the employees when they are just doing their job, this can create tension between the residents and the employees that can lead to conflicts. When informant 3 referred to the person who did not want to follow the rules and procedures at the center, but wanted to do things the way it suited him, the real reason for the conflict can be explained both by the structural organization of the center and the lack of respect and understanding by the resident.

5.3 The informants understanding of the psychology of conflicts

The findings show that the informants understood the psychology of conflicts differently. In line with Hotvedt’s (2003) theory, all the informants agreed that the psychological aspect of the conflict could be related to the feeling of human needs being threatened. If basic human needs like the feeling of belonging, confidence and stability are threatened or ignored and the residents feel that they are not seen, appreciated or believed in, this could easily lead to a feeling of insecurity or even a feeling of being threatened. Informant 3 and 4 were concerned that the residents in their cases felt they were not seen or respected. In all the three cases there was reason to believe that the residents felt they did not belong in the group. The psychological reaction of the resident in informant 4’s case was to build a defense mechanism

that was expressed through an unacceptable behavior. The resident in informant 3's case seemed to feel that he was not respected. His reaction was an aggressive behavior. Informant 5 thought the residents in his case felt they had lost authority. He expressed that the conflict "*could be about power*". All the three informants description of the psychological aspects of the conflicts can be linked to what Hotvedt (2003) emphasizes in his theory. He highlights that our basic needs are all about social affiliation, confidence and stability, and the need for individual display, self-respect and authority.

5.4 The informants understanding of the emotional aspects of the conflict

As the findings show, some of the conflict situations contained serious emotional reactions. Emotional reactions in conflicts are in line with the literature that deals with human reactions when basic needs are violated (Hotvedt 2003).

The informant's description of their emotional reactions are also in line with the most common feelings that often appear in conflicts (Skjørshammer 2002). Three informants described how they felt when the conflicts were going on. Informant 3 expressed that she was upset and scared. Informant 1 said his feelings were hurt and that he felt fear. Informant 5 described his fear as related to making another person's life miserable, as he had to call the police. Such reactions may indicate that the informants were taking the matter very seriously, and that they were reflecting on their own emotional behavior in the situation they were going through.

Fear can also be a feeling of uncertainty of the role of the employee, or doubts whether the informant was able to manage a situation. Informant 2 and 4 did not mention that they were emotionally affected by the conflict. It may be that they had emotions but that they protected themselves or found it too sensitive to talk about. Maybe emotional involvement could be interpreted as weakness. It might also be that they had a more remote relation to the conflict.

As Glasl (1999) says, feelings can change along the way. Emotional involvement in a concrete conflict can to a certain extent come and go. As mentioned above, two of the informants seemed to be able to make a distance between themselves and the conflict (informant 2 and 4). This can be interpreted as having a more rational way of relating to the conflict, with less emotional involvement. This does not necessarily mean that they were less

affected by the conflict, rather that they had a more professional approach to the conflict situation.

5.5 Advantages and disadvantages of emotional involvement

Some of the informants (informant 1 and 3) had an understanding of the positive aspects of emotions in conflict. This can be seen in the light of Skjørshammer's theory (2002) that says that emotions in conflict can seem to have two ways of influence; design of realization and motivational powers. Informant 5 seemed to think that emotions could be a strength as it can be an indicator that something is wrong, that we should be more cautious, and show anger. Such statements are also consistent with Hotvedt's (2003) theory that many can experience emotions as challenging but yet motivating, and that it may lead to positive involvement.

In the cases of informant 1 and 3, the findings indicate that the emotional involvement was possibly too strong, that it led to a feeling of losing control. This gives me reason to ask whether emotions are positive only when the conflict is resolved, or when the employee is in control of the situation. As Glasø (2010) highlights, emotional awareness and appropriate application of emotional involvement are important leadership skills. Transferred to this study it may imply that emotional awareness and emotional involvement can be positive when trying to understand a conflict.

Based on what is mentioned above, emotional involvement could to a certain extent be seen as positive when trying to understand a conflict. However, it must be a balance between the emotional involvement and the handling of the conflict. If the emotions become so strong that it calls on "*the need to take revenge*" as one of the informants said, it can prevent the will and ability to understand the conflict.

Informant 2 and 4 believed that showing strong emotions like anger could contribute to the escalation of a conflict. None of the examples in my study showed emotional involvement had directly affected the understanding of the conflict.

5.6 Stages of conflict

According to Glasl's model of conflict escalation (Chapter 2.6), a conflict can develop over time, with increasing intensity. He describes this as a nine step process where the steps are

divided into 3 stages. The conflict that may begin with a feeling of frustration towards another person can intensify through the steps and stages and end up in a war-like situation where all tools are used in order to win.

When the informants described how they experienced the level of the conflict, their main focus seemed to be on whether the parties could talk to each other or not. The most important issue seemed to be a good communication through the process. All the informants believed that the conflicts they experienced were serious. On the background of the informant's stories, especially regarding the emotional part and what they believed were the reasons behind the conflicts, I find it interesting to try to place the different conflicts in the steps according to Glasl's model.

I placed **informant 1's** case in step 7-8. The main reason for this is that the resident got aggressive and threatened the informant with a knife so that he had to hide and call the police. Informant 1 described strong emotional reactions within himself because he had to hide, but obviously the situation got out of control and was perceived as dangerous by the informant.

The case of **informant 2** was also placed in step 7-8. The informant felt it became serious as it involved the use of knives.

The conflict described by **informant 3** started out in a less serious way, I placed it step 1-3. The situation escalated to a higher level when the resident showed aggressive behavior. Then I found it belonged in step 5-6.

The conflict of **informant 4** was placed in step 3-4, because during the conflict the parties were always able to talk to one another. This conflict also escalated to a fight, but there was no use of weapon and the conflict was eventually solved.

Informant 5's conflict was placed in step 6-7; there were threats and violent behavior, but no use of weapon.

II. Management of conflicts

Research question: How did the informants manage the conflicts?

5.7 Focus on personal qualifications

As described in chapter 4, the UDI has issued several guidelines and instructions to be followed by the employees working at the reception centers. All the informants said that security issues were taken seriously and given high priority. They referred to the documents from the UDI and the different courses offered by the management of the centers and the reporting routines when there are unwanted incidents taking place. Apart from the more formal framework, all the informants stressed that a lot depended on the ability of the individual employee to handle a conflict.

Einarsen and Pedersen (2009) stated that one's own personal fitness and wisdom are the most important elements in the management of conflicts, and that experience is the best tool. The informants were focused on their possibility to act as they found appropriate in each concrete situation, as long as they acted within the instructions and guidelines applicable. Based on these findings, the management of conflicts seemed to a large extent to be based on personal suitability, and individual experience and expertise in the area. This is in line with the theory of Einarsen and Pedersen as mentioned above.

5.8 How the informants approached conflicts

As described in Chapter 2.10, we find two approaches for the management of conflicts. One is a more process-related approach, where communication and dialogue are used as main tools. The other is a structural approach where the employees handle conflicts in accordance with written guidelines and instructions.

Einarsen and Pedersen (2009) emphasize the importance of creating and restoring good communication in conflict situations. The findings show that the informants in all the cases started out with dialogue. They all had expectations that dialogue would be the best way to handle the situations. However, two of the informants (informant 1 and 5) had to change to a structural approach when the conflict situation developed to a security situation where the informant needed to act according to the instructions elaborated for such incidents.

Two informants used a process-related approach during the attempt to deal with the conflicts (informant 2 and 4). They made use of conversations and personal meetings. During the talks,

they were committed to listen to, and hear the party's perception of the story. They had a focus on understanding, and tried to give the residents a feeling of space. Furthermore, they focused on the parties' frustration, conceptualization, behavior and interaction. This approach seemed to be beneficial when strong emotions were involved, even if it did not resolve the conflicts except in the case of informant 4.

5.9 How the informants dealt with the conflicts

The findings show that many conflicts are dynamic, as they change over time. The employee's must adapt to the situation as it develops and their behavior will be likely to change during the course of the conflict. Flexibility and the ability to change behavior is therefore important when facing a conflict. Some of the findings indicate that neither the residents nor the informants were not always prepared to adapt to the dynamic developments. Informant 2 said that he did not realize that he used authority to the extent that he did, however he thought the situation made it necessary. This informant had in previous conversations tried to accommodate the resident, as well as show understanding, which did not work. As the conflict developed into a more confrontational stage, the informant changed behavior, but the resident was not receptive to the change.

Informant 4 met the conflict by cooperation. He tried to handle the conflict only by cooperation, in the form of conversations with the person concerned. This informant was also the only one who explicitly described why he chose to do that. It seemed to be a well-prepared strategy that worked, and the informant confirmed that this was his feeling as well. The same informant described that he first felt he did not tackle the conflict, and was reluctant to get involved. His first strategy was to avoid the conflict. He explained this by saying he wanted to get an overview of the situation before he got involved. Avoidance rarely causes conflicts to diminish or disappear. However, the importance of timing seems to be important. His reluctance to get involved can be explained by the need to get a good overview of the situation before he acted. It can also be explained by the fact that he was relatively new in his job and did not want to do anything before he had analyzed the situation and discussed alternatives with his colleagues.

Common for the other 3 informants (1, 3 and 5) is that they seemed to encounter the conflicts by using dialogue initially. Then two of them felt they had to use their authority as they did not get anywhere by only using dialogue.

III. Connection between conflict understanding and conflict management

Research question: Is there a connection between how the employees understood the conflicts and how they managed them?

The findings show that everyone managed the conflicts in one way or another, even if none of the findings give clear indications if the underlying problems were actually solved. As the discussion below will show, there is not necessarily a relation between the management and the solution of the different conflicts. The causes of the conflicts can in other words be understood and managed without coming any closer to the root of the problem.

The findings show that the informants believed that the causes of the conflicts consisted of several elements. Three of the informants described that they felt they had managed the conflict in a way that had led to a solution (2, 3 and 4). I find it a bit surprising that all three informants thought the conflict was resolved as the resident in the case of informant 3 was transferred to a different reception center, while in the case of informant 2 the conflict is more or less ongoing even if there was an end to the actual incident. The only case in which the management led to a solution of the problem, was the case of informant 4. This can illustrate that it is possible to conclude that the management of the conflict corresponded with the understanding of the problem even if the result was that the conflicts were merely out of sight without the real problem being solved.

Below I will discuss how the 5 informants understood and managed their conflicts and discuss whether there was a connection between these two elements.

In the case of **informant 1**, the informant had to confiscate a bottle of alcohol from one of the residents because alcohol is against the rules at the center. The resident got very upset and became aggressive. Eventually he took out a knife, and he used it to threaten the informant. He had to hide and call the police. In the case of informant 1, some of the reason for the conflict could stem from structural conditions in the reception center, that the organization of the center did not permit flexible behavior by the residents since they were not allowed to

drink alcohol on the premises. It seemed as if the informant felt there was nothing he could do with what he understood as the root cause of the conflict, namely the internal rules applicable to the residents in the reception center. This is very understandable. Even if there were no solution of the problem, I would say there was a clear connection between the informants understanding of the issue and the way he handled it.

Informant 2 presented a conflict between two people of the same nationality who were developing an aggressive behavior that became worse every day. One of them had recently received a negative decision on his application for asylum, while the other had still not received an answer to his application. The two residents became more and more aggressive and eventually they had a fight where they used knives. Fortunately, no major injury happened. Informant 2 said that he managed the conflict in the form of conversations. He showed concern and listened to the story of the parties. Afterwards, he gathered the parties, and made them listen to each other and express their opinions. He assumed a form of mediation role, he was trying to find solutions, and he corrected the parties during the process. Even if the concrete incident stopped, informant 2 seemed to be of the opinion that a conflict was more or less ongoing later on. This case is close to a solution of the problem. It shows that the informant felt he could manage the conflict by involvement in the form of conversation and dialogue, a process-related approach all the way.

Informant 3 worked with a resident who was very frustrated because he had received multiple declines to various requests to the administration of the center. He became more and more aggressive for each time he received a negative answer. On one occasion, the resident became very aggressive and placed himself between informant 3 and the door, which was locked from the inside. He started to break the door while screaming very loud. Informant 3 described that for a few moments she did not know if he would be attacking her or the door. The resident was moved to another center. It seems as informant 3 had a clear picture of the visible problem, namely the behavior of a frustrated resident. However, there is no information whether she knew anything about the general mental health of the resident, and the underlying problem was not solved. She seemed to act according to the internal security rules when the aggressive incident happened. This is an indication that there is a connection between how she understood the conflict and how she managed it, but without managing the conflict itself.

Informant 4 described a conflict between the residents where one resident was rude and made a lot of noise in the common area. He would turn on his music in front of the TV that everyone was watching. Eventually this incident started a fight. This conflict was rather common and as such representative for many conflicts at reception centers. The informant said he used conversation and dialogue in order to get a clearer picture of the problem. It seems like the conflict ended, and this might be the only example of a clear connection between the understanding of the real problem and the management of the conflict.

Informant 5 also described that he mostly handled conflicts with conversations, where he was interested to hear how the residents experienced the conflict, and everyone had the opportunity to say something. However, as the conflict escalated, the informant acted according to the internal rules made for events when things get out of control; he called the police. Again, there is no information regarding a possible solution to the problem, but it showed that the informant understood there was a security situation that made it necessary to call the police.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

In this study the following research questions were asked:

- How did the employees understand the conflicts?
- How did the employees manage the conflicts?
- Is there a connection between how the employees understood conflicts and how they managed them?

Concerning the first question, the study describes how the informants understood the different elements of the conflicts they experienced. The informants had different understanding of the term conflict. Some understood the term conflict as a lack of a common goal, while others found frustration as an important element when describing the issue. Some referred to disagreements that had lasted for some time, with the involvement of emotions, when describing the term. This way of looking at it as a process coincides with the comparison of conflict with the development of an illness as described in the theory.

As the literature points out, it can often be difficult to identify the concrete reason behind or the actual cause of a conflict, yet all the informants seemed to have reflected about what the conflicts were really about.

The informant's understanding of the psychology of the actual conflicts were also in line with the literature, emphasizing the importance of satisfying basic human needs, such as the need to feel belonging, confidence and stability.

In relation to the emotional aspects of the conflicts, serious anger was something all the informants had experienced, related to either themselves or the residents. They were aware that emotions in conflicts could be both a strength and a weakness.

All the informants believed their conflicts were serious and they felt communication was the best tool when trying to understand what the problem was. Based on the information the informants gave, the seriousness of the different conflicts were measured against a model of conflict escalation as mentioned in the literature by Glasl.

The findings show that most of the informants had a good understanding of the different elements of conflict, including the issues that triggered and developed the conflict.

Regarding the management of the conflicts, the findings show that all the informants followed guidelines from the UDI. At the same time, they felt free to approach conflict situations in a way they found most appropriate. Most of the informants seemed to have used elements from the conflict management courses when they handled the issues.

The informants used both a process-related and a structural approach when managing the conflicts. All the informants started out with a dialogue; a process related approach. However, two of them changed to a structural approach when the conflict situation developed into a security situation. The informants then needed to act according to the instructions made for such situations.

The informants had to a certain extent focus on the dynamic developments of the conflict. Flexibility and the ability to change behavior were important when managing the issues.

All the informants managed the conflicts they experienced in one way or the other, in the sense that the incidents stopped. However, only one informant described that the conflict reached a final solution. Some of the informants were strongly emotionally involved when dealing with the problems, to an extent that could make the management of the conflict difficult. There is no doubt that all the informants showed they had good intentions in their attempts to manage the conflicts. They showed responsibility and a will to try to find a way to stop the incident, even if the possibility to resolve the conflict felt out of reach in most of the cases.

All the informants felt there was a connection between their understanding of the conflict and the way they managed it. They did what they thought was the best thing to do in order to manage the situation. It is difficult to draw a conclusion that more conflicts could have found a solution if the informants had been better trained in conflict management or in the psychology of conflicts. Probably they would also have needed training in cultural and religious issues. More knowledge in general conflict management could contribute to a higher degree of awareness and understanding of the different elements in a conflict situation and how they are handled.

It is important to underline that the findings in this study only reflect the opinion of a small number of informants. The conclusions can therefore not be representative for generalization. Nor is the study representative for every employee's understanding and management of conflicts. However, it gives an impression of the diversity and complicated nature of conflicts in asylum reception centers, and there are several issues related to this study that would have been interesting to examine more closely. For instance, it could have been interesting to carry out a similar quantitative study, where employees at UDI and a variety of employees at the different reception centers were interviewed as well as representatives from the residents, psychologists and social workers. A relevant topic could also be to study different conflict resolution models to see if any were applicable for the kind of conflicts that generally appear in reception centers.

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Attachment 1

Interview Guide

Qualitative method – Semi structured interview

1. Introduction

- * Presentation of both parts
- * How long have you been working at the reception center?
- * Information about the background and reason for the study
- * Explain why I have asked for the interview
- * Talk a bit about work and interests
- * Ask the informant what he or she thinks about the theme

2. Main part

A. Understanding of conflict

- * Have you experienced conflicts in the asylum reception center?
- * Can you please tell me about a concrete conflict?
- * How did you understand reasons for the conflict?
- * How did you understand the psychology of the conflict?
- * How did you understand the emotional aspects of the conflict?
- * Can you elaborate on the advantages and disadvantages emotions in the conflict?
- * Do you have any opinion of the seriousness of the conflict, for example on a scale from 1 - 9?

B. Conflict management

- * Were written guidelines and instructions relevant when managing the conflict?
- * Did you attend relevant courses, training?
- * Do you have any previous experience /professional background in conflict management?
- * How did you approach the conflict you experienced?

* Could you share the positive and negative experiences in the management of the conflict?

* What was the result of your management of the conflict?

* Was the underlying problem resolved?

C. Follow-up questions to the individual questions (when necessary)

* Talk more about the particular conflict, how you approached, the stage of it, effectiveness of your approach etc...

* Could you talk more about...

* What did you mean by...

* What did you feel when...

* How did you experience...

* What was your reaction on...

* What did you do when...

D. The connection between understanding and management of the conflict

* In your opinion, to what degree was there a connection between your understanding and your management of the conflict?

E. Ending

* Is there anything you would like to add in relation to the topic or the interview?


* Do you have any questions?

Attachment 2

Outlook Mail

New | Reply | Delete | Archive | Junk | Sweep | Move to | Categories | Undo

Intervju med mottaksansatte

 Rachel Elisabeth Eide <ree@udi.no> Reply
Fri 11/3/2017, 2:12 PM
You

Hei
Takk for henvendelsen. Jeg beklager veldig at du ikke har fått svar fra oss tidligere. E-posten fra deg har dessverre blitt liggende i noen svært hektiske uker. Siden du ikke planlegger å intervju beboere i mottak, er vår vurdering at du kan ta direkte kontakt med mottakene hvor du ønsker å gjennomføre intervjuer. De kan vurdere selv om de har mulighet til å stille opp til intervju med deg.

Lykke til med arbeidet!

vennlig hilsen
Rachel Elisabeth Eide
FoU-koordinator
Analyse- og utviklingsavdelingen
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