



Charles Elliott's current research focuses on dark personality traits in organizational settings.



Managing Conflict for All

By Heather Hankins

Charles Elliott is currently a doctoral student in the Kennesaw State University international conflict management program. He has completed his Master of Science degree in Conflict Management also at KSU.

Elliott is conducting several different research studies both in collaboration with faculty and industry as well as personal research concerning dark personality traits in organizational settings. He was recently awarded a merit-based scholarship within the School of Conflict Management, Peacebuilding, and Development.

Elliott grew up in the Atlanta area in a lower-income community. During his childhood, he observed several different forms of conflict ranging from environmental concerns to domestic violence. After completing high school, he moved to Maryland where, during the 2008 recession, he was homeless for a short time.

Elliott joined the U.S. Air Force to better his education. He was active-duty for six years and was deployed overseas for four of those years. Through his service, he was involved in both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars as well as every major humanitarian effort from 2009-2013.

After his time in the military ended in 2013, Elliott and his wife and daughter moved back to the Atlanta area where he pursued a Bachelor of Science in Psychology with minors in applied statistics and sociology at KSU. He began to work on research projects, publishing two papers in peer-reviewed journals before he graduated in 2016.

After graduation and considering his background, Elliott applied to 15 national psychology Ph.D. programs, but with the advice of his mentors, decided to pursue a Master of Science degree in

Conflict Management at KSU before pursuing a Ph.D. He completed the program in 2018 and was recently accepted into KSU's International Conflict Management Ph.D. program.

Elliott has been heavily invested in KSU since his time as an undergraduate, serving in clubs and on committees. He has a large sense of school spirit or pride for KSU and has worked closely with many faculty to find better solutions for university- or academically-related research questions.

In his own research, Elliott examines relationships within dark personality and conflict management inside of organizations. By examining dark personality traits in the workplace, Elliott helps individuals resolve conflict with others in their day-to-day lives. Elliott identifies that dark personality traits, such as narcissism, trait-based psychopathy, and Machiavellianism, are much more common than many people might expect.

He suggests that attempting to resolve conflicts without acknowledging these dark personalities in cooperation can lead to major issues within organizations. Elliott designs social experiments to test whether individuals in organizations manage conflicts differently based on personality.

"If you aren't collaborating with all types of people to better understand everyone at stake, you probably won't be able to chalk up any kind of agreement," Elliott explained. "It takes knowledge of both good and bad to see the spectrum of how people might act in organizations, why they make the decisions they do."

"Conflict management is really a set of tools and a way of thinking that cannot only prevent conflict, but effectively engage it once it arrives," he added.