The Psychology of Conflict and Conflict Management in Organizations

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Conflict in the Workplace: Sources, Functions, and Dynamics Across Multiple Levels of Analysis

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Conflict is a social phenomenon that occurs across species, time periods, and cultures. Conflict has been frequently studied among bees, ants, and other insect communities (Trivers & Hare, 1976), among crayfish (Huber, Panksepp, Yue, Delago, & Moore, 2001), and among chimpanzees (de Waal, 1989), to name but a few. Evidence of conflict among humans dates to the appearance of humankind itself (Keeley, 1996). Perhaps not surprisingly, given its complexity, the study of conflict is a multidisciplinary and multilevel scholarly enterprise. Conflict scholars can be found in most scientific disciplines, including physics, mathematics, biology, anthropology, psychology, sociology, economics, political science, organizational behavior, and communication studies. Although theories and methods across these disciplines are quite varied (De Dreu & Carnevale, 2005), they all focus on the same fundamental question; namely, "How do individuals and groups manage their interdependence with

one another?" Whether examining a brain scan, a Petri dish, a fish tank, a beehive, small groups in the laboratory, or organizational decision-making teams, understanding the antecedents, processes, and outcomes of conflict is of critical theoretical and practical importance in many sciences; indeed, few areas of scholarly inquiry have attracted as much attention across disciplines as the study of conflict.

In the specific area of organizational behavior and industrial/organizational psychology, the study of conflict has a long history. In their seminal work on the social psychology of organizations, Katz and Kahn (1978) observed that "every aspect of organizational life that creates order and coordination of effort must overcome tendencies to action, and in that fact lies the potentiality for conflict" (p. 617). Every "school of organizational thought"—from Weber's bureaucracy and scientific management, to human relations and cooperative systems, to open systems theory—has as its central basis the question of how employees manage their mutual interdependencies and ensuing conflicts (see Jaffee, chapter 2, this volume, for a review). Indeed, conflict, work, and organizations are so strongly intertwined that some have concluded that organizations without conflict do not exist, and that conflict cannot exist without people being interdependent for their task achievements (e.g., Pfeffer, 1997; Pondy, 1967).

This close connection between conflict and collaborative work has become even stronger due to a variety of changes in the world of work and organizations. First, conflicts are more likely to emerge because of the increasing pressures to change, adapt, and innovate with concomitant increases in workload, job insecurity, role conflict, misunderstandings, and related grievances (e.g., Anderson, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2004; Janssen, 2003; Peterson & Behfar, 2003). Second, due to globalization of economies and immigration at an increasingly larger scale, organizations face an exceedingly diverse workforce. Diversity may manifest itself in many different forms, some being more readily visible than others, and some being tied to task-relevant issues more than others. One way or the other, however, diversity is associated with conflict (Jehn, Bezrukova, & Thatcher, chapter 6, this volume). Third, the growing use of Internet and noncollocated interactions in which employees no longer work and communicate face-to-face puts increasing demands on communication processes and easily evokes misunderstanding and irritation (Friedman & Currall, 2003; see also Olekalns, Putnam, Weingart, & Metcalf, chapter 3, this volume). Fourth, and finally, the tendency to organize work in (semi-autonomous) teams creates greater interdependency among employees, undermines the traditional power relations and hierarchical command–control typical of traditional organizations, and requires higher levels of self-management and self-regulation, including negotiation and conflict management skills (Pfeffer, 1997).

CONFLICT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN ORGANIZATIONS: THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOK

Despite the critical importance of the study of conflict in organizations, surprisingly few comprehensive volumes focus exclusively on this phenomenon in organizational behavior and industrial and organizational psychology. In part this is because in (organizational) psychology, conflict is often treated in isolation rather than in connection with other social or organizational phenomena. For example, the *Annual Review of Psychology* chapters on I/O Psychology by Rousseau (1997), Wilpert (1995), O'Reilly (1991), Ilgen and Klein (1988), and Staw (1984) do not treat conflict management and dispute resolution at all, and only the more topical reviews touch on workplace conflict when they review literatures on mood (Brief & Weiss, 2002) or culture (Gelfand, Erez, & Aycan, in press). At the same time, reviews on negotiation and mediation by Carnevale and Pruitt (1992); Greenhalgh (1987); Lewicki, Weiss, and Lewin (1992); Levine and Thompson (1996); Pruitt (1998); Bazerman, Curhan, Moore, and Valley (2000); and De Dreu, Beersma, Steinel, and Van Kleef (2007) discuss conflict management and negotiation in isolation from the broader context of organizational structure, work-related attitudes, and performance.

In this volume, we aim to achieve two interrelated goals. First, we attempt to bring together and integrate classic and contemporary insight in conflict origins, conflict processes, and conflict consequences. Authors were charged with providing critical reviews of how their topics have evolved over time, and with new and promising directions for conflict research in organizations. Recognizing that conflict has multiple functions, some of which are negative and some of which are primarily positive (cf. Coser, 1956; De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997; Jehn, 1995), authors were also charged with highlighting both positive and negative consequences of conflict in their chapters and the multiple context factors that shape its occurrence and outcomes. Second, in designing this book, we started out with the fundamental premise that conflict in organizations is a multilevel phenomenon, and that to truly grasp the roots, dynamics, and consequences of conflict at work, we need to consider multiple levels within organizations, as well as their cross-level influences. Accordingly, we organized the book in terms of antecedents and consequences at the individual, group, and organizational levels.

Whereas each of the chapters in this volume focuses on distinct territory located at a specific level of analysis, in this chapter we provide a "bird's-eye" view of conflict across levels. We organized our chapter around two fundamental questions. First, we ask about the isomorphism of conflict: "What commonalities and differences do we find across levels of analysis, both in terms of antecedent root causes, dynamics, and consequences and functions?" Subsequently, we ask how much cross-level research is being

done on conflict in organizations, and where new and exciting research questions can be identified. Accordingly, we integrate many aspects discussed in greater depth in the various chapters in this volume, connected them where possible, and generated new areas for future research.

In what follows, we first define the very phenomenon about which this volume is concerned—conflict—and note important distinctions that are relevant throughout the book. We then differentiate four levels of analysis that are relevant for understanding conflict in organizations: (a) individual, (b) group, (c) organization, and (d) national culture. After differentiating these levels, we begin to synthesize what is common and different across levels in terms of conflict antecedents, processes, and outcomes. We then turn to research that examines interactions across levels and discuss areas for future research.

DEFINING CONFLICT

Because conflict at work can take many forms, one may shy away from providing an encompassing and comprehensive definition of *conflict.* Throughout this book, chapter authors have implicitly or explicitly defined *conflict* as a process that begins when an individual or group perceives differences and opposition between itself and another individual or group about interests and resources, beliefs, values, or practices that matter to them (e.g., De Dreu, Harinck, & Van Vianen, 1999; Thomas, 1992; Van de Vliert, 1997; Wall & Callister, 1995). This process view dates back to the original work by Pondy (1967), who differentiated between latent and manifest conflict. Latent conflict includes perceived and felt conflict, and refers to within-person or within-group states. Manifest conflict, in contrast, includes constructive negotiations as well as outbursts of violence, and thus refers to between-person or between-group dynamics.

The transfers from within-party latent conflict to between-party manifest conflict is mediated by communication processes, such as verbal and nonverbal, and technology mediated or not (see Olekalns et al., chapter 3, this volume). In other words, the process view of conflict is multilevel in its orientation and well suited to examine cross-level influences and interaction, an issue we return to below. Furthermore, we can apply the process view to all kinds of parties, including (a) entire organizations, (b) formal or informal groups within organizations, or (c) individual employees. Finally, the process view leaves open how parties manage their conflicts, or how formal or informal parties intervene, as well as what outcomes the conflict has. This will become important when we discuss conflict processes and the functions conflict at work may have. Notably, conflict is distinct from other "dark-side" constructs that exist in the literature, including aggression, incivility, deviance, and bullying. Although these constructs share the fact that parties are interdependent and have opposing interests, values, or beliefs, conflict need not involve

intent to harm another party and need not cause negative outcomes (see Raver & Barling, chapter 7, this volume). As will be evident throughout this book, conflict can have positive outcomes across multiple levels of analyses in organizations.

COMMONALITIES AND DIFFERENCES ACROSS LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Organizations can be decomposed into different levels of analysis—the individual, the group level, the organizational level, and the local and national culture in which organizations are embedded. At the *individual level of analysis,* conflict antecedents and triggering events may relate to predisposition (e.g., dogmatism, agreeableness, power motivation) or job characteristics (e.g., role ambiguity, job autonomy), conflict processes involve individual motivation, cognition, and affective states as well as individual differences in tendencies to manage conflict in certain ways, and conflict consequences include individual well-being and health, absenteeism, and turnover (Spector & Bruk-Lee, chapter 9, this volume), as well as learning potential, cognitive flexibility, and creativity (e.g., Schulz-Hardt, Mojzisch, & Vogelgesang, chapter 5, this volume).

At the *group level of analysis* conflict may be rooted in power differences and leadership style (De Dreu & Van Kleef, 2004) or in heterogeneity in group composition (Jehn et al., chapter 6, this volume). Conflict processes relate to interaction patterns in managing conflict, negotiation, and small group communication (Olekalns et al., chapter 3, this volume), and conflict consequences involve aggression and escalation (Raver & Barling, chapter 7, this volume; Pruitt, chapter 8, this volume) as well as team innovation, team performance, and team member satisfaction and commitment (Beersma, Conlon, & Hollenbeck, chapter 4, this volume; Schulz-Hardt et al., chapter 5, this volume).

At the *organizational level of analysis,* conflict occurs as a result of mergers and acquisitions, and systems of conflict management can be analyzed. In this section of the book, authors provide critical insight into the history and current directions of union–management conflict (Friedman, Hunter, & Chen, chapter 12), organizational dispute–resolution systems (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, chapter 11), the role of third parties in managing conflict in organizations (Goldman, Cropanzano, Stein, & Benson, chapter 10), and conflict in mergers and acquisitions (Terry & Amiot, chapter 13).

Finally, organizations are open systems and are embedded in local community contexts (Brief et al., 2005), institutional contexts (e.g., industry), and more distal national cultural contexts (Gelfand & Brett, 2004). Only recently has research begun to systematically explore how these contexts affect conflict in organizations. In this chapter, we discuss cultural influences on the antecedents, functions, and outcomes of conflict. We review some of the key findings on culture and conflict across multiple

levels, discuss what might be universal versus culture-specific in terms of conflict in organizations, and highlight new frontiers of research.

SOURCES OF WORKPLACE CONFLICT ACROSS LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Adopting a perspective that includes multiple levels of analysis neither clarifies the origins of conflict at work nor reveals whether and in what form these origins exist at each level. To explore these questions we discuss three broad classes of origins or sources of workplace conflict that can be found across levels. Acknowledging that there are myriad factors that affect conflict at different levels, we provide some parsimony of antecedents by examining three leading theoretical perspectives that can be, but to date have not been, applied to understand conflict at the individual, group, and organization levels of analysis. We then conclude this section with a discussion of how national culture affects sources of workplace conflict, and whether the sources discussed at other levels may or may not be applicable across national cultures.

In the sections that follow, we distinguish three root causes of conflict that are present across levels: (a) scarce resources, (b) a search for maintaining and promoting a positive view of the self, and (c) a desire to hold consensually shared and socially validated opinions and beliefs. Consecutively, we discuss the mixed-motive nature of social interdependencies in organizations that give rise to *resource conflicts* (sometimes referred to as conflicts of interest, or conflicts over outcomes) at different levels; the need to maintain and develop a positive view of oneself and the group to which one belongs, which gives rise to *ideological and value conflicts* (sometimes referred to as relationship, or affective conflict) at different levels; and the desire to hold a socially validated and consensually shared understanding of the world and the tasks that need to be done, which may give rise to *socio-cognitive conflict of understanding* (sometimes referred to as cognitive, or task-related conflict) at different levels (for similar taxonomies, see e.g., Coombs, 1987; De Dreu et al., 1999; Rapoport, 1960; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959; and Thomas, 1992).

Source #1: Scarce Resources and Conflicts of Interest

Resources within organizations are scarce and finite, and the access to—as well as the availability and distribution of—scarce resources constitutes one major cause of conflict at all levels of analysis. Individuals within a team negotiate time off-task, employees demand a greater share of the team bonus because they perceive their inputs exceed those of some colleagues, organizations negotiate access to new markets, and so on.

To appreciate and understand resource conflicts, it is useful to use as a starting point Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult &

Van Lange, 2003). The theory builds on rational choice theories designed by economists and mathematicians in the late 1940s and early 1950s and includes important insights from Realistic Conflict Theory (Sherif & Sherif, 1953), the theory of Cooperation and Competition (Deutsch, 1949, 1973; Stanne, Johnson, & Johnson, 1999; Tjosvold, 1998), and work on negotiation and bargaining (Pruitt, 1981).

In essence, Interdependence Theory assumes that participants within any social system—a dyad, a group, or an entire organization—depend on one another to obtain positive outcomes, and to avoid negative outcomes. The way participants' interests relate to one another, or are perceived to be related, then has important implications for their subsequent behavioral choices, the emerging interaction patterns, and the extent to which participants reach their desired end-state. Within the theory, the options and outcomes of interaction can be represented using a tool from classic game theory, the outcome matrix. An outcome matrix describes interdependence patterns involving two participants (individuals or groups A and B), each of whom can enact one of two behaviors, yielding four combinations representing the consequences of the participants' choices in terms of outcomes for A and B (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978).

Figure 1.1 provides an example of an outcome matrix. The matrix in Fig. 1.1 is a social dilemma (also called the Prisoner's Dilemma). It reflects the situation in which participants are better off individually by choosing D (the noncooperative choice), whereas both are better off by choosing C (the cooperative choice) than when they both choose D. From a selfish point of view, each player is motivated to choose D because no matter what the other player chooses, personal outcomes are maximized. This is sometimes referred to as individual rationality. From a collective point of view, however, each player is motivated to choose C because no matter what the other player chooses, collective outcomes are maximized. This is sometimes referred to as collective rationality. Interestingly, individual rationality is collectively irrational, and collective rationality is individually irrational. The dilemma facing participants in this situation thus is to be individually or collectively rational (Colman, 2003).

Mixtures of Motives as the Foundation of Resource Conflicts. The social dilemma depicted in Fig. 1.1 reflects that in most organizations, each individual employee is better off defecting (e.g., showing up late, not performing, stealing company property, laying low) when colleagues cooperate (e.g., work hard, help out, voice opinions), yet all employees are worse off when all defect and nothing gets produced at all (Katz & Kahn, 1978; Weber, Kopelman, & Messick, 2004). We note that social dilemmas can take different forms (e.g., public good vs. resource dilemmas), and that these different forms can have substantial impact on behavioral choices and the emergence of resource-based conflict of interest. Discussing this in greater depth, however, is beyond the scope of this chapter.

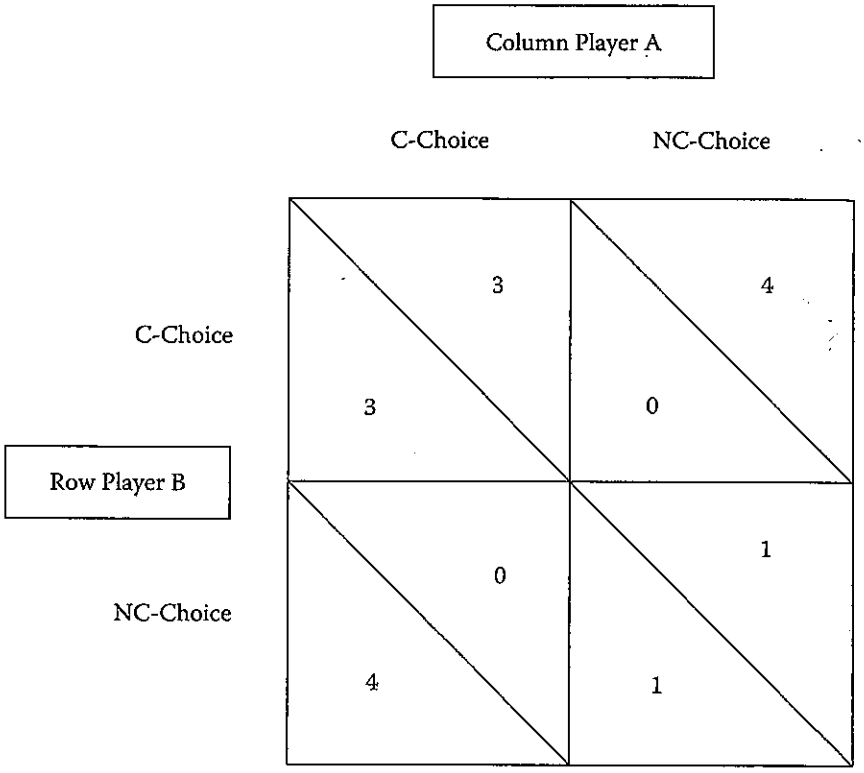

FIGURE 1.1. Schematic representation of a two-player social dilemma.

When we adopt social dilemmas as representative of interdependencies within organizations, we limit ourselves to two levels of analysis: (a) the individual and group level, when we see participants as individuals choosing between individual and group interests, and (b) the group and the organization level, when we see participants as groups choosing between group and organization interests (e.g., Wit & Kerr, 2002). This obvious shortcoming can be tackled in two ways. First, we may conceive of organizations, and the interdependence structures therein, as "nested social dilemmas" (e.g., Polzer, Stewart, & Simmons, 1999; Wit & Kerr, 2002). Second, we may identify the way interdependencies within as well as between groups are structured and drive behavior (Bornstein, 2003). We discuss each possibility in more detail.

Nested Social Dilemmas. In nested social dilemmas, three levels are identified: the (a) individual, (b) group, and (c) organization levels. An example, based on Wit and Kerr (2002), is the situation in which an R&D

department has succeeded in winning board approval to launch new projects and to recruit the necessary personnel. The R&D department has two equally sized subunits, one specializing in antidepressants and the other in pain relievers. Each senior researcher within the subunits now has to decide how to spend his or her own resources—in time, in effort, by calling in favors, and so forth. Focusing on a project proposal that nicely fits within their private interests—let us call it Proposal P(ersonal)—would offer each senior researcher the greatest possibility of fruitful collaboration with new colleagues and would result in the greatest personal benefit. Contributing resources to increase the chances of alternative project proposals from colleagues (Proposal C[olleague]) within one's subunit would be of less benefit personally, but would bring recognition to one's own subunit and could translate into a greater share of departmental resources for one's subunit as well as some potential for fruitful collaboration with newly recruited colleagues. Finally, trying to get Proposal O(rganization) awarded would be of little direct benefit either to oneself or to one's subunit, but would clearly yield the greatest benefit of any of the three proposals for the entire R&D department as a whole—it might increase the chances of the department acquiring even more and larger grants that would improve the department's prestige and financial situation, from which all employees, including the one submitting Proposal P, benefit.

The example shows that resource-based conflicts of interest emerge not only between individuals within the same unit, but also between individuals belonging to different subunits located within the same organization. Individuals as well as groups thus have overarching, common interests, and both individuals and groups can face the dilemma of being individually (or group) rational versus being collectively rational. Interestingly, as this example clarifies, being rational vis-à-vis the interests of one's subgroup is irrational vis-à-vis one's personal as well as one's overarching organization's interests. Likewise, pursuing personal benefits is at odds with group as well as with organization goals, and serving organizational goals hurts both one's group and one's personal interests. As Wit and Kerr (2002) explained, "The question is, 'How vigorously would you pursue your private interest, your own subgroup interest, or the collective interest?' In other words, would your primary concern be for 'me,' for 'just us,' or for 'us all'?" (p. 616).

Taken together, because conflicts of interests exist between individuals, their group, and the overarching organization, conflict over the access to and distribution of resources is likely to emerge. Conflicts are built into any organizational structure and will become manifest for one of two reasons. First, by pursuing their immediate and short-term self-interests, individuals or groups deliberately or inadvertently hurt collective interests including those of interdependent others. Such selfish choices are unlikely to be condoned—"a substantial proportion of the population is . . . willing to punish non-cooperators (or individuals who do not make fair offers) at a cost to themselves" (Ostrom, 1998,

p. 12)—and latent conflict of interest is turned into manifest conflict over resources. Our discussion of the nested social dilemma demonstrates that such conflicts are *inevitable* because no matter what participants do, they always hurt another participant's interests, being located at either the individual, the group, or the organization level.

Second, within nested social dilemmas conflicts over resources emerge because of premature suspicion, misunderstanding, incomplete information, or lack of insight. That is, conflict over resources may be the result of (own and others') misinterpretation of (other's and own) intentions and actions. For example, work on "noise" in social dilemmas shows that sometimes people's failure to cooperate is erroneously attributed to malevolent intent instead of to endogenous factors—as is the case when you forget to respond to an important and very urgent e-mail from your supervisor, not because you intentionally ignored the request, but because it arrived in your spam box, where you overlooked it (Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Tazelaar, 2002). This second reason why conflicts of interest turn into manifest conflict over resources is rooted in imperfect trust among organizational participants; a grain of doubt suffices to bring about conflict over resources.

Team Games. A second contribution to a multilevel theory of interdependencies and resource conflicts in organizations derives from an analysis of the ways interdependencies within as well as between groups are structured and drive behavior (Bornstein, 2003). Many models, theories, and descriptions—including the nested social dilemma analysis discussed above—treat organizations, firms, and social groups as unitary actors. These actors, however, are obviously not unitary. Decisions are made—or emerge—within a complex internal structure of governance (election, delegation, representation, leadership, networks). Moving to the (inter)group level increases the number of interdependencies among participants, which manifests itself in the need to use decision rules (e.g., majority rule vs. unanimity rule; see Beersma & De Dreu, 2002), in increased cognitive load (e.g., Kramer, 1991), and in the possibility of forming coalitions (Murnighan, 1978).

In intergroup relations, it is typically neither feasible nor desirable for all those concerned to be present at the bargaining table, and usually representatives conduct the negotiations (Walton & McKersie, 1965). Representatives are often accountable to their constituents, either for the outcomes they achieve or for the process of making decisions (Tetlock, 1992). Accountable representatives are motivated to impress constituents (Wall, 1991), and this often translates into a competitive stance toward their counterparts (e.g., Carnevale, Pruitt, & Seilheimer, 1981; O'Connor, 1997; but see Gelfand & Realo, 1999; Peterson & Thompson, 1997). In other words, representatives face a double social dilemma. First, their choices are cast within the intergroup context where benefiting their ingroup hurts the interests of the outgroup, and vice versa. At the same time, their choices

are cast within the in-group context, where benefiting oneself hurts the interests of other individuals within the team, and vice versa.

Bornstein (2003) argued that when parties are groups rather than individuals, individuals experience mixed-motive interdependence within their in-group, as well as with the out-group. Consider a group of soldiers waiting to surprise attack their enemy. On both sides, each group is best off when all its group members fight hard and heroicly, thus increasing the probability of total victory and fending off the chances of total defeat. Within each group, however, individual members are better off playing hide-and-seek while their in-group members take the lead and fight hard and heroicly; the individual benefits from his or her group members' heroic actions yet minimizes the personal risk of injury. Obviously, when all group members think and act this way, they become collectively vulnerable, and each individual is worse off by not fighting than by fighting collectively.

The team-game analysis reveals that hostility toward the out-group is often perceived as cooperative, loyal behavior by members of one's in-group, and vice versa, cooperative and conciliatory behavior toward an outgroup may be perceived, by one's fellow ingroup members, as disloyal behavior that jeopardizes the in-group's fate. Consequently, groups tend to less cooperative with one another than individuals are in an interpersonal situation (Mikolic, Parker, & Pruitt, 1997; Robert & Carnevale, 1997; Wildschut, Pinter, Vevea, Insko, & Schopler, 2003). This reveals the double-edged-sword character of mixed-motive interdependencies within and between groups. On the one hand, intergroup conflicts tend to escalate more easily into cycles of exceedingly hostile exchanges, but on the other hand, within groups, cooperation is stimulated and team members are more motivated to work hard (Bornstein & Erev, 1997).

Summary and Synthesis. Resource conflicts emerge when and because individual, group, and organizational interests are misaligned, so that choices that benefit interests at one level hurt the interests at another level. This follows from a basic social dilemma analysis, but also from a more sophisticated analysis of organizations as nested social dilemmas, and of mixed-motive interdependencies in team games. By applying and extending interdependency theory, we can thus understand where resource conflicts come from and predict that they will be more complex, and more likely to escalate, as one moves up from the individual, to the group, to the organization level of analysis. The chapters in this volume illustrate this insight. For example, resource conflicts are the source of frustration and stress at the individual level (Spector & Bruk-Lee, chapter 9, this volume), the source of competition and escalation at the dyad and group levels (Pruitt, chapter 8, this volume), and the driving force behind union–management relations over the last century (Friedman et al., chapter 12, this volume). Moving up a level, research has shown that competition over resources in the community context can also affect negative attitudes within organizational contexts as well (Brief et al., 2005). In all, resource

conflicts or conflicts of interest are powerful sources of conflict that traverse multiple levels of analysis.

Source #2: The Need for Positive (Social) Identity: Value and Relationship Conflicts

Apart from the fundamental need among most species to acquire and protect resources, higher-order animals, including chimpanzees and humans, also have a basic need to develop, maintain, and protect a positive view of the self. Work in social psychology has pointed out that the self-concept can be decomposed into individual and group level components, and that both individual and group-based aspects of the self-concept drive conflict at the individual and (inter)group level, respectively. In this section, we discuss this work in some detail. We begin with the individual level of analysis and discuss self-esteem and the stability of the self-concept. We then move on to discuss social identity theory (SIT) and the role of the self-concept in intergroup relations.

The types of conflicts that emerge because of participants' need to develop and maintain a positive identity often are ideological and value-laden. Ideologically based disputes, such as those involving societal issues (e.g., environment, gender equity, civil rights, abortion, and poverty), are conflicts in which one or more parties represent—or believe they represent—deeper ideological values. Value-related conflicts, such as those involving issues concerning morality or right and wrong, are conflicts in which one or more parties defend or promote their personal or group identity in terms of moral issues, social standing and reputation, likeability, and so on. Jehn (1994) has referred to these as "affective conflicts"; others refer to these ideological and value-related conflicts as "relationship conflicts" (e.g., De Dreu & Weingart, 2003a).

Ideological and value-related conflicts can be differentiated from resource conflicts in a number of ways. Perhaps the most important one is that parties may believe that mutually beneficial outcomes will require tradeoffs and compromises that strike at the core of their moral identity (Druckman & Zechmeister, 1973; Harinck & De Dreu, 2004; Harinck, De Dreu, & Van Vianen, 2000). For example, a prochoice/prolife value conflict cannot be settled by a 50–50 compromise that a random 50% of the requests for euthanasia and abortion are granted, or by an integrative solution in which the right to euthanasia is traded for the right to abortion. No party in a value conflict would perceive these types of solutions—which are typical in resource conflicts—as acceptable or defendable. Similarly, a "bad chemistry" conflict within a specific department of an organization cannot be solved by sprinkling nice odors or by instructing parties to behave and become friends. In other words, ideological and value-related conflicts require different types of management strategies and solutions.

But where do these ideological, value-related, and relationship types of conflicts come from? In the remainder of this section, we argue that at the individual, group, and organizational levels people strive for positive

identity and self-view, and that in the process of developing, maintaining, and restoring a positive self-view, they deliberately or inadvertently hurt the positive self-view of proximal others—putting people together in an organization, group, or interpersonal interaction means exposure to (latent or manifest) ego-threat, and herein lies the second source of workplace conflict. We first consider this idea at the individual level of analysis, and discuss work on the self, on self-esteem, and on self-concept clarity. We then consider this idea at the group level of analysis and discuss work on social identity and self-categorization theory. We also discuss ideological and value conflicts at the organizational level, especially as they relate to organizational mergers and acquisitions.

Self-Esteem, Ego-Threat, and the Emergence of Value-Related Conflicts. The self can be defined as the totality of interrelated yet distinct psychological phenomena that either underlie, causally interact with, or depend upon reflexive consciousness (Sedikides & Strube, 1997). Because humans generally strive for a positive self-view, they seek to affirm the self through promotion, enhancement, and protection of the self-view (Sedikides & Strube, 1997; Steele, 1988). People are motivated to convince themselves and relevant others that they are worthwhile, attractive, competent, and moral individuals, and to achieve this, a variety of cognitive and behavioral tactics and strategies are employed (Greenwald, 1980; Taylor & Brown, 1988; Tesser, Martin, & Cornell, 1996). For example, people are unrealistically optimistic that good things will happen to them (Weinstein, 1980); they are prone to an illusion of control (Langer, 1975); they overestimate their standing on a number of valued attributes such as leadership ability, logical reasoning, or athletic prowess (Kruger & Dunning, 1999); and they value objects they own more than identical objects they do not own (Beggan, 1992; Kahneman, Knetsch, & Thaler, 1990).

The habitual ability or inability to satisfy the self-enhancement motive is reflected in someone's self-esteem—an attitude toward oneself that associates with numerous self-beliefs pertaining to the self as a whole or to its particular attributes (Sedikides & Strube, 1997; see also Banaji & Prentice, 1994; Markus & Wurf, 1987). When people are successful at self-enhancing, their self-esteem is positive and high; when they are unsuccessful, their self-esteem is negative and low. Although self-esteem is relatively stable and can be seen as a positive trait, positive feedback and flattery, or negative feedback and criticism, can lead to temporary positive or negative departures, respectively (Heatherton & Ambady, 1993). Especially when negative feedback or criticism is received and a drop in positive affect and self-esteem is experienced (Jussim, Yen, & Aiello, 1995), will people become motivated to self-enhance and to restore a positive self-view (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996; W. K. Campbell & Sedikides, 1999; De Dreu & Van Knippenberg, 2005). For example, self-threat produces less constructive and more hostile interaction than self-affirmation (Cohen & Sherman, 2002).

Recent work has pointed out that individual differences in the stability and clarity of the self-concept play a critical role in the extent to which ego-defensive tendencies are enacted. Put simply, the less stable and the more unclear the self-concept is, the less well the individual deals with hostility and negative feedback, and since hostility and negative feedback are part and parcel of social conflict, the more likely the conflict is to escalate (e.g., Bushman & Baumeister 1998; De Dreu & Van Knippenberg, 2005; Stucke & Sporer, 2002). For example, individuals with high explicit self-esteem but low implicit self-esteem tend to be more hostile and prone to prejudice compared with individuals in whom explicit and implicit self-esteem correspond (Jordan, Spencer, Zanna, Hoshino-Browne, & Correll, 2003). Kernis, Granneman, and Barclay (1989) found that persons with unstable, high self-esteem had the highest propensity for anger, as assessed by self-report, whereas those with stable, high self-esteem had the lowest (see also Bushman & Baumeister, 1998). Similar findings have been obtained in work on the individual's self-concept clarity—the extent to which the contents of an individual's self-concept are clearly and confidently defined, internally consistent, and temporally stable (J. D. Campbell, 1990). Ratings on the self-concept clarity scale negatively correlate with ratings on the Buss–Perry Aggression Questionnaire (Von Collani & Werner, 2005). Likewise, there is evidence that those with low rather than high self-concept clarity tend toward more aggressive responses following negative feedback (Stucke & Sporer, 2002) and toward greater hostility after being provoked by their conflict counterpart (De Dreu & Van Knippenberg, 2005).

Because individuals desire to develop, improve, and maintain a positive sense of themselves, in conflict situations, they tend to develop an inflated view of their own cooperativeness and their counterpart's hostility. This self-serving bias increases the likelihood of impasse in labor–management disputes (Babcock, Loewenstein, Issacharoff, & Camerer, 1995), increases negative perceptions and evaluations of counterparts and their conflict resolution behavior in intergroup conflicts (Mo'az, Ward, Katz, & Ross, 2002), and reduces the quality of settlements in interpersonal negotiations (De Dreu, Nauta, & Van de Vliert, 1995; Thompson & Loewenstein, 1992). Moreover, this general and quite fundamental human tendency leads individuals to react with hostility and competitiveness to any real or imagined threat to their positive self-view (Baumeister, 1998; see also Pruitt, chapter 8, this volume). Because conflict inherently involves a threat to the self-concept, increasing levels of hostility and competitiveness in response to one's counterpart are more likely than de-escalatory and constructive conflict behaviors (e.g., De Dreu & Van Knippenberg, 2005; Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004).

Social Identity Theory and Group-Level Value Conflict. The central assumption underlying social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel, 1978) is that while people may think of themselves as independent individuals and define themselves

on the basis of personal characteristics or preferences, there are many social settings in which people primarily think of themselves and others in terms of particular group memberships (e.g., in terms of their professional roles). Tajfel and Turner (1979) specified three processes that underlie such group-based thinking: (a) social categorization, (b) social comparison, and (c) social identification (Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002). Social categorization refers to the notion that people categorize individuals into groups, which enables them to focus on collective properties that are relevant to the situation at hand (e.g., marketing vs. production), while neglecting differences in age or clothing style that occur among individuals within the same group. Generally, a particular categorization is more likely to be used when group memberships are relatively invariable over time, whereas any category becomes less useful as an information-organizing principle to the extent that individuals are likely to change from one group to another (e.g., Ellemers, 1993).

Social comparison is the process by which a social categorization is invested with meaning. While people may have a relatively clear idea of the range of properties that apply to a particular group, proponents of the social identity approach maintain that social comparisons with other groups (e.g., salespersons versus customers in a store/salespersons versus production workers in the organization) determine which features or behavioral norms help to define the group in a particular situation. Generally, these features are those that distinguish the group from relevant comparison groups (e.g., Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997; Van Rijswijk & Ellemers, 2002). Thus, which different possible group memberships will become salient depends on the so-called comparative and normative fit of a particular categorization to the situation at hand (Haslam & Turner, 1992).

Social identification, finally, is the process by which information about social groups is related to the self. That is, it refers to the inclination of individuals to perceive themselves as representative of a particular group, which makes them perceive characteristic group features as self-descriptive and leads them to adopt distinctive group norms as guidelines for their own behavior. While most of us belong to multiple groups simultaneously, people are relatively willing to identify with groups that seem to contribute to a positive sense of self, such as high-status or high-power groups (Ellemers, 1993; Spears et al., 1997).

The cognitive tool of social categorization and the evaluative implications of social comparison processes can elicit a person's emotional involvement with a particular social group (Tajfel, 1978; see also Ellemers, Kortekaas, & Ouwerkerk, 1999): their sense of social identification. Because people seek to develop and maintain a positive identity, as well as engage in social comparison processes, one group's positive identity is cast in relative terms vis-à-vis other individuals or groups within or between organizations. Striving for a positive identity thus goes hand in hand with feeling better and superior to others, and it readily forms the basis for prejudice, competition, and hostility toward those seen as differ-

ent from oneself or one's own group or community (Ellemers et al., 2002; Van Knippenberg, De Dreu, & Homan, 2004). This is clearly seen at the group level, where social category diversity leads to more value-related and relationship conflicts than social category homogeneity (Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). It is also seen at the intergroup level, where fault-line research shows that when individuals in a collective can be categorized into separated social entities, intergroup hostility and value-related conflicts emerge (e.g., Homan, Van Knippenberg, Van Kleef, & De Dreu, in press; Lau & Murnighan, 1998; also see Jehn et al., chapter 6, this volume).

Summary and Synthesis. Identity-related conflicts often take the form of value conflicts, or relationship conflicts (e.g., Jehn, 1995; see also Jehn et al., chapter 6, this volume). Importantly, conflicts rooted in threatened self-views appear at both the individual level and the intergroup level. Social identity theory provides clues as to whether identity conflicts emerge at the individual, within-team, or intergroup level; it depends on which level is made salient through incentive structures, categorization principles, and so on. Research by Wit and Kerr (2002) on nested social dilemmas showed, for example, that when the individual level was made salient—it was emphasized that individuals differed from one another—participants more often made choices that served their personal interests and not those of their group or the overarching organization. However, when the group (organization) level was made salient—it was emphasized that individuals within the group (organization) shared important features—participants sacrificed their personal interests to serve those of their group (organization). Thus, this work shows how social categorization processes can lead individuals to identity at the personal, group, or organizational level, and that identification subsequently drives strategic choices in resource-based conflicts of interest.[1]

It is important to note that social identity theory—and its core principles—allows one to understand conflicts at any level. Whereas our discussion thus far emphasized the interindividual and the intergroup level, the theoretical predictions can be equally well applied to conflicts between entire organizations. A good example here is the work on mergers and acquisitions discussed by Terry and Amiot (chapter 13, this volume), who have applied social identity theory to understand conflicts between individuals and groups who belonged to different organizations now being merged. Their work also highlights that many of the interpersonal and intergroup conflicts that arise out of identity issues are latent rather than manifest—they exemplify themselves in prejudice, feelings of superiority, implicit tendencies to serve one's ingroup at the expense of the outgroup, and so forth.

[1] It is worthwhile noting that in contrast to controlled laboratory experiments where resource-based conflicts of interest can be separated from identification-based value conflicts, such clean-cut distinctions cannot be made in the context of organizations where participants are outcome-interdependent by definition.

Source #3: Cognitive Consistency, Social Validation, and Sociocognitive Conflicts

The third theoretical perspective on conflict that can be applied to multiple levels of analysis is rooted in work around so-called sociocognitive conflict. It combines early thinking by developmental and child psychologists (e.g., Doise, Mugny, & Perret-Clermont, 1975; see also Levine, Resnick, & Higgins, 1993) with social psychological thinking about the individual's need for cognitive consistency and socially validated knowledge about oneself and the (immediate) surroundings (e.g., Festinger, 1954). Sociocognitive conflict theory is not about scarce resources and opposing interests, or about opposing values and the search for a positive identity. Instead, it addresses incompatible or diverging understanding and interpretation of facts and figures, and concerns the way people manage these conflicts of information, as well as the consequences of such conflicts for learning, understanding, and perceptual accuracy (e.g., Brehmer, 1976).

Sociocognitive conflict theory proceeds on the basis of three fundamental assumptions. First, it is assumed that people are motivated to hold accurate perceptions and insights about themselves, about others, and about the nonsocial world around them, including the (joint) tasks they are facing. Second, it is assumed that people are bounded in their rationality and lack both relevant information and information-processing capacities. As a result, different people develop distinct, diverging insights, beliefs, and understandings of otherwise identical objects of perception. Third, it is assumed that people seek cognitive consistency and social validation of their beliefs, insights, and understandings, and that divergence vis-à-vis others' perceptions, insights, and understandings creates tension that needs to be resolved.

Sociocognitive conflicts can be about intellective and judgmental problems. Intellective issues have correct solutions according to commonly accepted standards. Examples are "What is the shortest way from A to B?" and "Which procedure is most efficient?" Judgmental issues, however, have no correct solution and are a matter of taste. Examples are the question of how to get from A to B, and whether efficiency should be the prevailing criterion in selecting a procedure (cf. Baron, Kerr, & Miller, 1993; Kaplan & Miller, 1987). Intellective issues are associated with the influence to accept information about reality from another person (informational influence), while judgmental problems are associated with the influence to conform with the positive expectations of another person (normative influence; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Either way, divergent viewpoints regarding intellective or judgmental problems—sociocognitive conflict—create cognitive dissonance that needs to be resolved by (a) persuading the opponent, (b) changing one's own perspective or opinion, (c) integrating seemingly opposing viewpoints, or (d) dissolving the relationship.

Taken together, an important third source of conflict in organizations involves opinions, insights, and beliefs that are not consensually shared and that trigger opposition and debate (Brehmer, 1976; De Dreu et al., 1999;

see also Schulz-Hardt et al., chapter 5, this volume). These types of conflict are sometimes referred to as cognitive or information conflicts and have much in common with so-called task-related conflicts (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; see also Jehn et al., chapter 6, this volume). Sociocognitive, task-related conflicts emerge out of preference or belief diversity in groups. Work on minority dissent and devil's advocacy has shown, for example, that when a minority faction opposes the majority view in the group, group members are more likely to doubt their fundamental assumptions, to search for new information, and to consider the task from multiple perspectives (Nemeth & Staw, 1989; Schulz-Hardt et al., chapter 5, this volume). Similarly, work by Jehn, Northcraft, and Neale (1999) showed that informational diversity in groups increased sociocognitive, task-related conflicts within those groups (also see Jehn et al., chapter 6, this volume).

There is quite some work on sociocognitive conflict at the individual and small-group level, primarily looking at its effects on learning and creative decision making. This work is reviewed in several chapters in this volume. Far less—if any—work has been done on the intergroup and organization levels of analysis. Although there seems to be no reason a priori to assume that sociocognitive conflicts are absent at the intergroup and organization level, research and theory development is clearly needed. For example, the ambiguous context of mergers between organizations would purportedly trigger opposition and debate among beliefs, opinions, and ideas, in addition to social identity conflicts discussed in Terry and Amiot's chapter (chapter 13, this volume). Also, as Friedman et al. (chapter 12, this volume) noted, a major component of labor–management relations involves the initial formation of preferences within groups (e.g., "attitudinal structuring"; Walton & McKersie, 1965) and fundamental transformations of the problem definition over time between groups (e.g., Putnam, 1997). Thus, sociocognitive conflict is relevant to the organizational level as well.

Cross-Cultural Variation in Sources of Conflicts

Last, we consider another level of analysis—national culture—and its influence on the antecedents of conflicts in organizations. Surprisingly little research has been done on sources of conflict and whether they are universal or culture-specific. Broadly speaking, universals are likely to occur when a phenomenon is influenced by a common biological process, a common social process, or a common ecological process (Pepitone & Triandis, 1987). We would speculate that the aforementioned sources of conflict (e.g., conflicts of interest, ideological and value conflicts, and sociocognitive conflicts) are likely universal; that is, they are likely to exist across many, if not all, national cultures. For example, we can surmise that in all national cultures, there is bound to be a scarcity of resources, producing conflicts of interest. Likewise, the need to defend one's values or

identity is likely to be a fundamental need that traverses national cultures (thus producing affective or value-based conflicts). Finally, differences in viewpoints are perhaps inevitable regardless of the national culture conflict, suggesting that our third source of conflict—cognitive conflict—is also a universal antecedent of conflict.

At the same time, although these are likely broad universal sources of conflict, cross-cultural variation exists in the specific triggers of conflicts within each category. For example, what is perceived to be a threat to one's values can clearly vary across national cultures. Shteynberg, Gelfand, and Kim (2005) argued that conflict processes are "sparked" or initiated when core *cultural focal concerns* are violated, and thus, different events elicit conflict in different cultural contexts. Consistent with this, they found that violations to rights were perceived to be much more harmful and incited anger to a much greater degree in the United States, whereas violations to duties and face caused much more harm and incited anger to a greater degree in Korea. Individuals can project their values onto identical situations and perceive different "cultural slights" that are salient in their own cultural contexts. For example, Gelfand and colleagues (2001) found that identical conflict situations were perceived differently in the United States and Japan: Americans perceived conflicts to be more about winning and violations to individual rights, whereas Japanese perceived the same conflicts to be about compromise and violations to duties and obligations.

The processes that lead to value conflicts can also vary across cultures. For example, self-serving biases and self-enhancement—processes we have argued are facilitating factors in value conflicts—have been found to be more pronounced in individualistic cultures as compared with collectivistic cultures (Gelfand et al., 2002; see also Heine, Lehman, Markus, & Kitayama, 1999). Other self-processes—such as self-esteem and self-concept clarity, previously discussed—may also play a more powerful role in the production of conflict in individualistic cultures. On the other hand, given that individuals in collectivistic cultures focus on group identity, group-level constructs—group enhancement, group esteem, group concept clarity—will play a more powerful role in the elicitation of conflict in collectivistic cultures. This is consistent with research that has shown that samples from collectivistic cultures are much more competitive in intergroup or outgroup negotiations (Chen & Li, 2005; Probst, Carnevale, & Triandis, 1999; Triandis et al., 2001).

We would also argue that although resource and cognitive-based conflicts are likely universal, there is likely cultural variation in the nature and extent of these antecedents. Given that individuals are socialized to develop, express, and affirm their own ideas and seek to maximize their own outcomes in individualistic cultures, resource and cognitive-based conflicts might be more rampant at the individual level in these contexts. By contrast, in collectivistic cultures, individuals are socialized to subject their own interests and opinions to the group (and in high-power distance

cultures, to the authority), suggesting that at the individual level, resource and cognitive conflicts might be more suppressed in these contexts. Yet again, because of higher group-level identity and associated processes, resource and cognitive conflicts may be even more acute in collectivist cultures at the between-group level, as compared with individualistic cultures. In all, while the general categories we have identified are likely universal, the specific triggers of conflict can be culturally variable.

Conclusions About the Sources of Conflict

In keeping with previous work, we defined conflict as a process that begins when one party perceives its interests, norms and values, or opinions and viewpoints being opposed, hurt, or countered by another party. We argued that within work settings, conflict may arise because of mixed-motive interdependencies (conflicts of interest, resource conflicts), because of the need to develop and maintain a positive identity vis-à-vis others (value conflicts), and because of the need to develop and maintain cognitive consistency and to hold socially validated and consensually shared understandings (information conflicts). In contrast to past work, we explicitly located these various sources of conflict at the individual, group, and organization levels of analysis and uncovered that at each of these levels conflict can be traced back to these fundamental sources. We also noted that little work has been done to integrate these levels; with regard to sociocognitive, information conflicts, there has been very little work even at the intergroup and organization level of analysis. The commonalities in explanatory mechanisms within each of these broad classes of theories, however, allow one to develop a more complex yet also more accurate understanding of the sources of workplace conflict and the ways they come about—that is, turn from latent into manifest conflicts. We also noted the potential cross-cultural universality of these sources of conflict, along with possible culture-specific triggers of conflict.

Before moving on, we should emphasize that it would be wrong to assume that workplace conflict involves only one of these three sources. Conflicts are not about access to scarce resources, or about the striving for positive and distinct identity, or about interpretations of reality. More often than not, workplace conflicts are about a mixture of opposing interests, clashing values, and incompatible beliefs. For example, De Dreu and Van Knippenberg (2005) showed that people anticipating a debate about judgmental issues ("Should economic growth be sacrificed to preserve the natural environment?") quickly identified with their position in the debate and the arguments supporting that position. As a result, identity striving became part of the conflict, and ego-threats were experienced. Work by Carnevale (2004) showed that groups (e.g., Israeli settlers) ascribe symbolic value to scarce resources (e.g., parts of Jerusalem) and that having versus not having access to these resources becomes affirmation ver-

sus threat of their social identity. Work by Jehn and Mannix (2001) showed that different types of conflict (e.g., relationship, task, process) emerge at different stages of group work.

The specific combination of various sources may have important effects on the ways these conflicts are managed, about the effectiveness of intervention techniques, and about the ultimate consequences these conflicts may have for individual well-being, team effectiveness, or organizational survival. For example, sociocognitive conflicts may be quite functional and promote the quality of group decision making but only when conflicts of interest are absent. That is, when participants perceive their goals to be cooperatively linked, they engage in constructive controversy and benefit from sociocognitive conflict. When they perceive their goals to be competitive linked, as in conflicts of interest, however, they do not engage in constructive controversy, and cognitive conflict hinders rather than helps team performance (e.g., Tjosvold, 1998). We believe herein lies an important question for future research and theory development: "How do mixtures of conflict sources affect conflict dynamics and ultimate outcomes?"

CONSEQUENCES OF WORKPLACE CONFLICT ACROSS LEVELS OF ANALYSIS

Conflict in organizations has multiple functions; it influences a number of outcome-related parameters and it does so in a variety of ways. Conflict outcomes can be seen in terms of the utility gained or lost by participants alone and together. Utility can be narrowly defined in economic, monetary terms or broadly defined in terms of both material (money) and nonmaterial (love, respect) value. Traditionally, conflict research has focused on material outcomes in terms of individual and collective gains and losses. For example, much of the work on interpersonal and small-group negotiation concentrates on predicting the joint gain parties realize in so-called integrative, win–win agreements that reconcile seemingly opposed aspirations (Bazerman et al., 2000; Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992; De Dreu et al., 2007).

The quality of agreement following dispute resolution has a variety of important influences on subsequent interaction processes and performance-related issues. For example, the party who gains the upper hand in the conflict sees its power-base strengthened and thus can operate more effectively in future endeavours. Integrative, win–win solutions create order and stability, foster social harmony, increase feelings of self-efficacy, reduce the probability of future conflict, and stimulate economic prosperity. Poor agreements, or failures to agree, leave parties dissatisfied, create frustration and annoyance, disrupt social order, drive new conflict, and fuel disharmony (De Dreu, Beersma, Stroebe, & Euwema, 2006; Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994).

Apart from these indirect effects, conflict can have more direct effects that are not necessarily mediated by the quality of the negotiated agreement. Alternative functions of workplace conflict can include health,

well-being, life and/or job satisfaction, relationship commitment, community values, justice, and so forth. In studying other consequences of conflict and conflict management, the *time horizon* of short- versus longer-term effects becomes critical (Thomas, 1992). Conflict may increase or decrease the likelihood of short-term achievement of a shared goal such as making profit. In the longer run, the positive or negative effects may persist, become stronger, or disappear. For example, an intense but relatively short-lived conflict in a hospital between the head of operations and the nursing staff may lead to inefficiencies and medical errors in the short run but, in the long run, result in better working conditions, more participative decision making, and improved health care. In other words, conflict consequences may be found at the individual, group, and organization levels of analysis, but also across time. We discuss the issue of time in more depth at the end of this chapter.

In the sections below, we discuss four functions in more detail—the creating force of conflict, the influence on health and well-being, the effects on in-role and extra-role work performance, and the shaping of social structures. The creating force of conflict and the influence on health and well-being are treated extensively by Schulz-Hardt et al. (chapter 5, this volume) and Spector and Bruk-Lee (chapter 9, this volume). We will therefore devote more space to the effects on performance and on the shaping of social structures. In each section, however, and in keeping with our overarching goal in this chapter, we link our discussions to different levels of analysis and argue that effects are "quasi-isomorphic" at different levels of analysis. We also discuss whether and when these outcomes are likely to be invariant across national cultures.[2]

[2] It is important to note that when discussing the consequences of conflict, a distinction needs to be made between two classes of comparison. The first is that different ways of managing conflict can have different effects on individual well-being, creativity and innovation, performance, and so forth. Most research on conflict and conflict management is concerned with this analysis, and many of the insights gleaned from this work are reviewed in the chapters in this volume. For example, Beersma and colleagues (chapter 4, this volume) review the quality of negotiated agreement when conflict parties adopt a prosocial instead of a proself motivation. The second type of analysis implicitly or explicitly compares situations in which there is (intense) conflict with situations in which there is no (or mild) conflict. Obviously, both types of analyses are highly complementary. For example, compared with a no-conflict situation in which there is harmony, conflict may promote decision quality when the conflict is managed through cooperative problem solving and undermine decision quality when the parties withdraw and remain inactive. More elaborate discussions of the ways different conflict strategies influence decision quality and negotiated agreement can be found elsewhere (De Dreu, Harinck, & Van Vianen, 1999; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003b; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Tjosvold, 1991, 1998) and in other chapters in this volume (e.g., Olekalns et al., chapter 3; Beersma et al., chapter 4; Schulz-Hardt et al., chapter 5).

Conflict and Performance

Perhaps the most obvious area for organizational scientists to look for conflict's consequences is the impact conflict has, or can have, on individual, group, and organizational performance. Performance may be operationalized in many different ways, such as the productivity relative to one's most salient competitor, as the supervisor's evaluation of her employees' commitment, or as the quality of group decisions (e.g., Pritchard, 1992). Several scholars further argue that individual, group, and organizational performance can be decomposed into task-related performance and organizational citizenship behavior—compliance with collective goals, taking initiatives, and coordinating activities. Organizational citizenship behavior, sometimes referred to as extra-role or contextual performance, involves behaviors of a discretionary nature that are not part of the employee's formal role requirements, but nevertheless promote the effective functioning of the organization (Borman & Motowidlow, 1993; Organ, 1988; Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997). Thus, first of all, conflict may influence *individual-level effectiveness*—personal development of skills, abilities, and knowledge, as well as the motivation to work hard and to achieve one's goals. In other words, conflict may impact task-related performance because through conflict people learn new skills and acquire new insights or because conflict undermines their motivation to perform and contribute.

Second, conflict may influence interpersonal, or *group-level effectiveness*—learning to work together, developing relationships, or reaching high-quality group decisions. Group performance may be undermined because conflict hurts efficient coordination or undermines the trust needed to communicate effectively and to share task-relevant information (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). Conflict may increase group performance, however, because it leads people to reevaluate their working assumptions, to correct errors, and to approach decision problems from multiple perspectives (see also Schulz-Hardt, Jochims, & Frey, 2002; Schulz-Hardt et al., chapter 5, this volume). In particular, moderate compared with low levels of sociocognitive, task-related conflict contribute to team effectiveness (Jehn, 1995) and team innovation (De Dreu, 2006).

At the *intergroup and organization level*, conflict may influence performance in a number of ways as well. Consider, for example, the field experiment by Erev, Bornstein, and Galili (1993). They compared three conditions. In an individual incentive condition, workers had to pick oranges and were paid on the basis of their individual performance. In a team incentive condition, workers had to pick oranges and were paid on the basis of their team's task performance. In an intergroup competition condition, workers were paid on the basis of their team's outperforming the competitor. Results showed that the intergroup competition condition led to a higher task performance than the team condition, with the individual incentive condition being intermediate. The idea behind these findings is that resource-based

conflicts of interest between groups strengthen within-group cohesion and individual work motivation to contribute to the group's success.

Other work on resource-based conflicts between groups points toward the same conclusion. Putnam (1997) analyzed teacher–board negotiations and concluded that active confrontation through negotiation promotes intergroup communication, increases mutual understanding, and results in greater acceptance of agreements and decisions than more tacit coordination. Finally, Walton, Cutcher-Gershenfeld, and McKersie (1994, pp. 72–73) reported both the negative and the positive consequences of union–management negotiations in the auto-supply, the pulp and paper, and the railroad industries. Inspection of their data reveals that within the pulp and paper industry, 20% of the negotiations resulted in negative consequences only, such as costly strikes, while 20% of the negotiations improved organizational effectiveness parameters. For the auto supply and the railroad industries, these percentages were 30 and 60, and 25 and 50, respectively. Apparently, active confrontation between competing groups—teams picking oranges, teacher and board representatives, or union and management—influences distal task performance at the overarching organizational level in a sometimes fairly positive way. As we will discuss below, however, the national culture context is likely a key moderator of the impact of active confrontation on performance in teams.

Conflict and Well-Being

Workplace conflict has important consequences for health and well-being (De Dreu, Van Dierendonck, & Dijkstra, 2004; Spector & Jex, 1998; see also Spector & Bruk-Lee, chapter 9, this volume). Conflict is a social stressor, bringing about stress responses such as elevated heart rate, increased respiration, dry mouth, and increased alertness. These responses are, in principle, functional and reflect the individual's readiness to cope with the stressful situation. When the stressor continues to be present and responses continue to be in effect, however, psychic and physical exhaustion may lead to deteriorated health and well-being.

Although all types of conflict may elicit stress, it seems reasonable to assume that resource-based conflicts of interest and sociocognitive task conflicts produce less severe and less intense stress than identity-based value and relationship conflicts. The idea behind this is that identity-related conflicts are more fundamental and emotional (De Dreu et al., 2004). Prolonged exposure to conflict may therefore result in behavioral consequences such as absenteeism, accident proneness, and drug abuse; psychological consequences such as lowered self-esteem and self-efficacy; psychosomatic complaints (Spector & Jex, 1998); or burnout (Dijkstra, Van Dierendonck, Evers, & De Dreu, 2005).

Reduced health and well-being is likely to manifest itself at higher levels of analysis. A unit with frequent conflicts between leaders and employ-

ees is likely to have a relatively large number of employees with lowered well-being and, thus, will be exemplified by high levels of absenteeism and turnover. In addition, such units are likely to have negative group affective tone, which in turn lowers group effectiveness and unit members' job satisfaction (George, 1991). In short, workplace conflicts influence employee health and well-being, and this in turn affects group affective tone and organization-level absenteeism and turnover rates.

Conflict and Change

Ample research indicates that conflict serves as a key driver of change at the individual, the group, and the organization level—without conflict no change, and no change without conflict (e.g., Coser, 1956; Moscovici, 1980). For example, at the individual level, moderately intense conflicts stimulate employee performance more than harmonious, peaceful settings (e.g., Van de Vliert & De Dreu, 1994) and promote individual creativity and cognitive flexibility (Carnevale & Probst, 1998; Nemeth, 1986). At the group level, sociocognitive task conflict within work teams increases members' innovative capacity, helping them to solve problems, and leads them to make better decisions (De Dreu, 2006; Jehn, 1995). Also, at the organization level, external threat and resource scarcity have been linked to organizational innovation in both primary studies and meta-analytic reviews (Anderson et al., 2004). For example, at the organizational level of analysis, there is evidence that budget deficiency and lower "slack" resources stimulate organizations to be more innovative in marketing and product development. Also, at the organizational level, Zaltman, Duncan, and Holbeck (1973) suggested that an organization innovates in order to cope with work overload or changing circumstances beyond their immediate control. Thus, at the organizational level, it seems that resource-based conflicts of interest may actually stimulate innovativeness.

Conflict and Social Structure

A final function of workplace conflicts is that they help define boundaries and clarify who and what belongs where. Conflict leads to (re)defined social identities, but also to the disappearance of certain group characteristics, institutions, languages, or specific subcultures and their expressions. A good example of this function is seen in work on mergers and acquisitions (Terry & Amiot, chapter 13, this volume), where conflict between groups shapes and sometimes redefines the relative status positions of formerly separate groups or organizations within the new constellation. Conflict also contributes to the shaping of group identity and organizational culture by implicitly or explicitly stimulating some members to leave the organization and by fostering turnover among peripheral group members more than among those seen as core (cf. work on attraction, selection,

and attrition; Schneider, 1987). We return to this when we discuss cross-level influences of workplace conflict.

Cross-Cultural Variation in Outcomes of Conflict

Much, if not all, of the previous synthesis of conflict and organizational outcomes is based on research conducted in the United States or Western Europe. Cross-cultural influences on outcomes of conflict at the individual, team, and organization levels has received scant attention, yet we would expect that national culture is a highly relevant factor in considering the impact of conflict on outcomes in organizations. Using Jehn and Bendersky's (2003) parlance, national culture might serve as an *ameliorating* factor; that is, it might ameliorate the *negative* impact of conflict in organizations. For example, as chapters by Pruitt (chapter 8, this volume) and Spector and Bruk-Lee (chapter 9, this volume) attest, attributions to other parties is a critical determinant of when conflict will have a negative impact on individuals' health and escalation processes. At the same time, research has long demonstrated that culture plays a key role in attributional processes (see Choi, Nisbett, & Norenzayan, 1999, for a review). In general, individuals in collectivistic cultures are more likely to make situational attributions, whereas individuals in individualistic cultures are more likely to make dispositional attributions across numerous situations (Miller, 1984; Morris & Peng, 1994) and in conflict situations in particular (Morris, Leung, & Iyegnar, 2004; Valenzuela, Srivastava, & Lee, 2005). This suggests that the negative effect of conflict on individual health and escalation may be less pronounced in collectivistic cultures, especially with ingroup members.

Yet at the same time, culture might play a *suppressor* role; that is, it might suppress the *positive* effects of conflict. For example, the preceding discussion and numerous chapters in this volume highlight the fact that conflict and dissent can have a positive effect on innovation and creativity at multiple levels of analysis, yet this assumption has been rarely put to the cross-cultural test (Anderson et al., 2004). Research has shown that conformity pressures are stronger in collectivistic cultures (Bond & Smith, 1996), and heightened concerns for harmony might suggest that conflict is less likely to translate into creativity in collectivistic cultures (cf. Goncalo & Staw, 2006). Indeed, Nibler and Harris (2003) found that that high levels of debate benefited U.S., but not necessarily Chinese, groups. Similarly, Adair, Okumura, and Brett (2001) showed that among collectivistic groups, high joint gain was achieved through indirect (and not direct) communication (see Olekalns et al., chapter 3, this volume, for further discussion). Research has shown, however, that certain contextual conditions can enable open dissent to have positive effects in collectivistic cultures. For example, Tjosvold and Sun (2002) found that open discus-

sion of conflict can be beneficial for relationships in China by it is complemented by nonverbal expressions of interpersonal warmth, and Tjosvold, Poon, and Yu (2005) showed that in China conflict can have positive consequences, so long as social face is confirmed during the process. Ng and Van Dyne (2001) also showed that dissent (minority influence) can have a positive impact on decision quality in collectivistic groups, particularly when individuals who express dissent occupy a high-status position. In all, culture is likely to moderate the impact of conflict on both positive and negative outcomes, and the situational context is likely crucial in helping to understand whether and when conflict has positive or negative effects across cultures.

Conclusions About the Consequences of Conflict Across Levels

Several functions of workplace conflicts other than economic and material outcomes can be identified. Some of these transcend various levels of analysis, such as the effects of conflict on creativity, innovation, and change, and the effects of conflict on health, well-being, workplace stress, and withdrawal responses. Other functions are located at some levels but not at others, and relate to the shaping and (re)definition of social boundaries, group membership, and cultural expression. Thus, an important payoff of taking a multilevel perspective on workplace conflict is that new functions can be identified, functions that go unnoticed when the analysis remains focused on one single level of analysis and functions that might change when moving across national cultures as discussed.

It seems that some sources of conflict discussed earlier are likely to be associated with some functions more than with others. For example, conflicts rooted in ego-threat and the need to defend and restore a positive (social) identity may be more likely to relate to lowered well-being and health complaints than information conflicts rooted in divergent interpretations of facts and figures, and vice versa, the creative force of conflict seems to be tied especially to sociocognitive conflicts and less to resource and identity conflicts.

When taking multiple functions into account, it becomes clear that conflict may have positive effects on some aspects located at one level (e.g., group cohesion and cooperation, individual work motivation) yet negative effects on aspects located at other levels (e.g., intergroup hostility, organizational effectiveness). Whether workplace conflicts benefit or hurt the organization as a collective thus heavily depends on where, how, and how intensely conflicts impact individual-, group-, and organization-level functions. Researchers and practitioners alike should be aware of this when concluding that conflicts are detrimental, or beneficial, and designing strategies to counter, or stimulate and preserve the situation—clearly, there often is more than meets the eye.

The Management of Conflict Across Levels of Analysis

In principle, the sources of conflict reviewed above say little about the particular outcomes conflict has, and in and by itself specific sources of conflict do not have certain outcomes. As mentioned earlier, the critical moderator between the emergence of conflict and the outcomes it has is the way conflict is managed. Broadly defined, conflict management is what parties—individuals, groups, or organizations—who experience conflict intend to do as well as what they actually do (Van de Vliert, 1997).

Although an infinite number of conflict management strategies may be conceived, one useful way to organize our thinking is by means of a three-way system distinguishing among unilateral action, joint action, and third-party decision making. Unilateral action involves those strategies and tactics that can be implemented by one conflict party and thus do not need the counterpart(s) to consent or work along. It includes (a) withdrawal and inaction, (b) yielding and giving in, and (c) dominating and forcing. Joint action refers to those strategies and tactics that cannot be implemented by one conflict party alone and that need the counterpart(s) to consent or work along. It includes negotiation, searching for a compromise, and mediation. Third-party decision making refers to those strategies aimed at handing over to a third party with the discretionary control to make a decision. Examples of third-party decision making include arbitration, adjudication, and mediation.

The three classes of conflict management are not mutually exclusive: Strategies may be used simultaneously or sequentially. Van de Vliert and colleagues (e.g., Van de Vliert, Euwema, & Huismans, 1995; Van de Vliert, Nauta, Euwema, & Janssen, 1997) have argued and shown that joint problem solving may be performed in close conjunction with unilateral forcing. As an example of sequential use of strategies from different classes, consider the famous tit-for-tat strategy (Axelrod & Hamilton, 1981) and the classic good-cop/bad-cop strategy, in which a conflict party seeks joint cooperative action after a period in which he or she (or some ally) has performed forceful and competitive unilateral pressure tactics (Hilty & Carnevale, 1992).

Olekalns et al. (chapter 3, this volume) provide a state-of-the art review of this and related work on sequences in conflict management and negotiation. In this and related work, several conflict phases have been identified. For example, following an in-depth analysis of labor-management negotiations, Walton and McKersie (1965) suggested that negotiations often begin in quite a harsh and competitive way. After a series of competitive exchanges, parties come to realize that this leads nowhere but to a costly impasse, that a change in behavior is needed, and that mutual problem solving is a viable alternative for safeguarding and promoting self-interest. This so-called "differentiation-before-integration" pattern is not limited to the ritual dance of labor–management negotiations. A laboratory study by Brett, Shapiro, and Lytle (1998) showed that procedural remarks—statements that refer to the process of the negotiation itself—changed the

focus from contentious, distributive communication to more constructive, integrative communication. Harinck and De Dreu (2004) coded temporary impasses—points in the negotiation where parties deadlocked on some issues and remained stuck for a while. Higher levels of contending early in the negotiation were related to temporary impasses, and temporary impasses were, in turn, related to problem solving late in the negotiation. Stepping back from and reflecting upon the negotiation during a temporary impasse appears to facilitate a switch from competitive contending to more cooperative problem solving (see also Olekalns, Brett, & Weingart, 2003), especially when competitive strategizing during such breaks is avoided (Harinck & De Dreu, in press).

Because various chapters in the current volume treat conflict management in great detail, here we selectively highlight that there appears to be quite some consistency in tactics and strategies across levels of analysis. We briefly discuss several more or less related taxonomies of conflict management strategies that have been applied to the individual, group, and organization levels of analysis. We then discuss the relationship between the three sources of conflict identified earlier—(a) resource scarcity, (b) need for a positive identity, and (c) need for a correct and socially shared understanding—and the effectiveness of conflict management. Finally, as in previous sections, we end with a discussion of research on culture and conflict management, and whether the taxonomies and findings discussed in this section are universal or subject to culture-specificity.

Individual and Small Group Level

An important theory about conflict management is Deutsch's Theory of Cooperation and Competition (Deutsch, 1949, 1973). In brief, the theory argues that disputants may perceive their ultimate goals to be positively linked (cooperative interdependence), negatively linked (competitive interdependence), or not linked (independence). Cooperative versus competitive goal-interdependences, and their origins, are closely related to the concept of prosocial versus proself motives, discussed by Beersma and colleagues (chapter 4, this volume). In the case of competitive interdependence (or to a lesser extent, independence) disputants try to maximize their own outcomes, with no (or negative) regard for the outcomes obtained by their counterparts. In contrast, in the case of cooperative interdependency, disputants try to maximize both own and other's outcomes. Competitive interdependence leads to distrust, hostile attitudes, and negative interpersonal perceptions. Disputants use persuasive arguments, positional commitments, threats, bluffs, and coercive power to get their way. Cooperative interdependence, in contrast, leads to trust, positive attitudes and perceptions, and constructive exchange of information. Parties listen and seek to understand one another's perspective, which is what Tjosvold (1991, 1998) referred to as "constructive controversy." The theory has been tested in experimental game situations, as

well as in a variety of field studies, and has generally received good support (for a review, see Tjosvold, 1998). This work has also shown that constructive controversy yields desirable outcomes to disputants and their collective alike. It promotes learning and innovation, team effectiveness, and the quality of group decision making, to name but a few.

Another important theory about conflict management is Dual Concern Theory (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; also see Blake & Mouton, 1964; Olekalns et al., chapter 3, this volume). In a nutshell, it argues that conflict management is a function of high or low concern for self combined with high or low concern for other. A high concern for self and low concern for other results in a preference for forcing focused on imposing one's will on the other side (unilateral action). Forcing involves threats and bluffs, persuasive arguments, and positional commitments. Low concern for self and high concern for other results in a preference for yielding, which is oriented toward accepting and incorporating other's will. It involves unilateral concessions, unconditional promises, and offering help (unilateral action). Low concern for self and other results in a preference for avoiding, which involves reducing the importance of the issues and attempts to suppress thinking about the issues (unilateral action). High concern for self and other produces a preference for problem solving, which is oriented toward an agreement that satisfies both own and other's aspirations as much as possible (joint action). It involves an exchange of information about priorities and preferences, showing insights, and making tradeoffs between important and unimportant issues.

Recently, some authors have suggested that intermediate concern for self paired with intermediate concern for other results in a preference for compromising. Some see compromising as "half-hearted problem solving" (e.g., Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). Others, however, see it as a distinct strategy that involves the matching of other's concessions, the making of conditional promises and threats, and an active search for a middle ground (e.g., Van de Vliert, 1997). Empirically, the debate seems to be settled in favor of those viewing compromise as a separate strategy, although more work needs to be done (De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, & Nauta, 2001).

Ury, Brett, and Goldberg (1993) differentiated forcing and dominating into two subcategories—rights and power—in their taxonomy of approaches to dispute resolution. When using a rights-based approach, parties attempt to resolve the dispute by applying some standard of fairness, precedent, contract, or law. A focus on rights is likely to lead to agreements in which each party has to give up something in order to reach an agreement, with the possibility of one party giving more than receiving. A power-based approach results in the dispute being resolved by determining which party is able to force his or her desired outcome—who is stronger, has higher status, is able to coerce the other, or can force a concession from the other party. A power-based approach usually leads to agreements that have greater potential to escalate due to feelings of resentment and a desire for revenge (Brett et al., 1998; Tinsley, 2001; also see Friedman et al., chapter 12, this volume; Goldman et al., chapter 10, this volume; Pruitt, chapter 8, this volume). While

either a rights-based or power-based approach can lead to concessions from the other party, rights-based concessions are usually evidenced when there is agreement about a standard, whereas power-based concessions reflect submission to a greater force.

Between-Group and Organizational Level

At the between-group and organization level of analysis, much effort has been invested in understanding (the effectiveness of) systems of conflict management. Rather than analyzing what individual parties or small groups do, researchers focusing on the organizational level of analysis have examined grievance-filing systems and their effectiveness (Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, chapter 11, this volume), formal and informal mediation and related forms of third-party intervention (Bendersky, 2003; Goldman et al., chapter 10, this volume), and the more or less ritualized labor–management conflict resolution process (Friedman et al., chapter 12, this volume). A common theme across all of these chapters is the importance of creating *structures* in organizations that help foster positive conflict-management strategies.

We would also add that at a more macro level of analysis, organizations can also create *conflict cultures* that are more or less effective in their approach to conflict (De Dreu, Van Dierendonck & Dijkstra, 2004). That is, although specific situational influences may cause individuals to adopt different conflict-management strategies across time, work settings are often highly stable and quite predictable. Employees interact with the same coworkers, incentive structures do not change overnight, employees do the same kinds of work for longer periods of time, and they face the same (interpersonal) problems on a recurring basis. In addition, individuals within the same unit, team, or department tend to influence one another (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), thus creating their own social environment with, most likely, rather stable and socially shared preferences for, and views about, the tasks to be done and the ways of dealing with one another.

An implication of these notions is that work teams and work units are likely to develop a *conflict culture.* Units within organizations, or even entire organizations, develop over time a relatively stable set of orientations toward, and strategies to manage conflict within that unit or between that unit and relevant outsiders such as other units within the organization, clients, and the like. Thus, in some units or in some organizations employees may develop a shared tendency to view conflict as negative and annoying, whereas in other units or other organizations employees may develop a shared tendency to view conflict as exciting and providing opportunity. Likewise, in some units or in some organizations employees may develop a shared tendency to approach and manage conflict through problem solving and open-minded debate, whereas in other units or other

organizations employees may develop a shared tendency to approach and manage conflict by assuming a passive stance (De Dreu et al., 2004). Identifying the antecedents and consequences of conflict cultures in organizations is an important area for future research.

SOURCES OF CONFLICT AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Earlier we noted a critical difference between resource-based conflict of interest and identity-based value and relationship conflicts: the fact that trade-offs and compromise solutions are unacceptable in the latter type of conflict. Indeed, Druckman and colleagues (Druckman, 1994; Druckman & Zechmeister, 1973) have shown repeatedly that negotiating a compromise solution becomes much more difficult when interests are tied to ideological values, and Harinck and colleagues (Harinck & De Dreu, 2004; Harinck, De Dreu, & Van Vianen, 2000) have shown that participants in a resource-conflict more easily switch from ineffective forcing to more effective and constructive problem solving than participants in value conflicts. In other words, resource-based conflicts of interest seem to lend themselves better to problem solving and compromise than identity-based value conflicts, and rights-based forms of forcing may lend themselves better to identity-related value conflicts (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003).

Whereas negotiation and problem solving may not be suitable for identity-based value conflicts, avoidance and withdrawal may be. Several studies found that teams with value and relationship conflicts functioned better to the extent that the members of these teams avoided these conflicts and did not attempt to manage them proactively (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001; Jehn, 1997; Murnighan & Conlon, 1991). In sociocognitive conflicts, where some truth-finding and learning takes place, forcing and persuasive bolstering one's position may be a much more acceptable and effective strategy than it is in resource-based conflicts of interest or in identity-based value conflicts. Indeed, group-decision-making research has shown time and time again that adding task-related dissent and devil's advocates to the team improves creativity, innovation, and decision quality (Janis, 1972; Nemeth & Staw, 1989; also see Schulz-Hardt et al., chapter 5, this volume).

Cross-Cultural Variation in Conflict Management

As in other areas that we have reviewed, most of the typologies of conflict management strategies were developed in the United States and Western Europe. Compared with research on antecedents and outcomes of conflict, however, there have been numerous studies of culture and conflict management strategies, which have most typically examined cultural differences in preferences for different strategies (see Gelfand & Brett, 2004;

Gelfand et al., in press). In general, research has shown that in individualistic cultures, individuals tend to prefer forcing conflict resolution styles (Holt & DeVore, 2005) along with integrating interests (Tinsley, 2001). By contrast, individuals in collectivistic cultures tend to prefer power strategies (Tinsley, 2001) or styles of avoidance and withdrawal (Friedman, Chi, & Liu, 2006; Holt & DeVore, 2005; Morris et al., 1998; Oetzel et al., 2001), especially in intense disputes and disputes with ingroup members and superiors (Brew & Cairns, 2004; Derlega, Cukur, Kuang, & Forsyth, 2002; Friedman et al., 2006; Pearson & Stephan, 1998).

Fewer studies have examined whether the basic assumptions underlying these taxonomies (e.g., the dual concern model, interest–rights–power theory) are applicable in other cultural contexts. Gabrielidis, Stephan, Ybarra, Pearson, and Villareal (1997), for example, showed that avoidance reflects a *concern for others*, rather than a lack thereof, as originally conceived in the dual concern model (see also Cai & Fink, 2002). Similarly, Brett and Gelfand (2005) argued that while silence and avoidance are strategies that are viewed negatively in Western cultures, they are viewed quite positively in Eastern cultures. As discussed in Tsjovold and Sun (2002), the motives and strategies for avoidance in East Asian cultures range from passive strategies to highly proactive strategies, which often involve working through third parties (Tinsley & Brett, 2001). Thus, research on avoidance needs to capture this complexity in order to capture cross-cultural variation in the construct. Additionally, while basic tenets of interest–rights–power framework are likely universal, the theory also likely needs to be expanded to capture conflict management strategies in other contexts. For example, power strategies might be more likely to include the interests and well-being of subordinates when used in high power distance and paternalistic cultures. In line with this, Tinsley (2004) argued that theory and research would benefit from examining not only individual but also collective rights, interests, and power as foci of conflict strategies, to better capture conflict management strategies in East Asian cultures. In sum, although the typologies discussed previously are applicable to other cultures, they need to be expanded and/or refined to adequately reflect cross-cultural variation in conflict management.

Conclusions About Conflict Management at Different Levels of Analysis

Across levels of analysis, conflict management strategies can be meaningfully classified as unilateral actions (e.g, forcing, avoiding, yielding), as joint actions (e.g, negotiation, problem solving, mediation), or as third-party intervention (e.g., arbitration, going to court, fate). At the organization level, these tendencies to manage conflict are less fluid and subject to exogenous influences such as the fundamental sources of the conflict, and more ingrained in organizational structures, rules and regulations, and perhaps, organizational culture. Finally, national culture also plays

an important role in the preferences and functions of different conflict management styles.

NEGLECTED LEVELS AND CROSS-LEVEL INFLUENCES: THE NEXT GENERATION OF CONFLICT RESEARCH

Collectively, the chapters in this volume highlight conflict antecedents, processes, and functions at the individual, group, organization, and cultural levels of analysis. We conclude this chapter with a discussion of important areas of future research on conflict in organizations from a levels of analysis perspective. We first focus on the importance of incorporating issues of *time* into research on conflict in organizations. We then discuss the importance of cross-level organizational research, including top-down and bottom-up processes on conflict in organizations.

Time: A Neglected Dimension of Conflict

Although thinking in terms of individual, group, and organization levels of analysis is increasingly common in the organizational sciences (e.g., Klein & Kozlowski, 2000), scholars sometimes overlook other levels of analysis that have to do with the fluidity of change over *time*. Conflict is clearly a dynamic phenomenon that unfolds over time (Pondy, 1967), and thus issues of time are by definition critical for the study of conflict. For example, research on time and conflict can illustrate *when* different types of conflict are particularly impactful for later performance. Jehn and Mannix (2001) showed that the time period in which conflict occurs and the patterns of conflict over time are critical for understanding group performance. Groups that had low to moderate levels of process conflict in early stages, moderately high levels of task conflict during middle and later stages, and low levels of relationship conflict across all stages were more successful than groups with other conflict profiles over time. Beersma and De Dreu (2005) found that groups with individualistically motivated negotiators achieved lower joint outcomes than groups with prosocially motivated negotiators, but subsequently performed better on tasks that required high levels of creative and innovative thinking.

Research on time and conflict can also call into question age-old assumptions about causal relationships of conflict and organizational outcomes. For example, Peterson and Behfar (2003) found that negative performance feedback increased task and relationship conflict in groups, and Janssen (2003) showed that organizational innovations caused (rather than predicted) relationship conflicts among team members. Both studies thus illustrate that the conflict-to-outcome linkage discussed previously can have a reverse causality. Although studies of time and conflict such as these are relatively rare, they clearly illustrate that time is of the essence in the study of conflict.

In highlighting frontiers of research on time and conflict, we turn to historians such as Braudel (1947) and propose that conflicts at all three levels are dynamic and embedded in different layers of time—structure, conjuncture, and events—as they each have different implications for conflict in organizations. Figure 1.2 provides a summary of our discussion below.

Structure refers to those aspects of the context that are fixed and hardly change. Workplace conflicts are embedded in *geographical contexts* within which organizations are located and this context influences conflict dynamics in organizations (Brief et al., 2005; Dietz, Robinson, Folger, Baron, & Schultz, 2003). For example, levels of community violence are significant predictors of workplace aggression, above and beyond organizational norms for fairness (Dietz et al., 2003). Interethnic conflict in communities also affects the dynamics of conflict within organizations (Brief et al., 2005). Other factors in the immediate geographical context that influence conflict include thermodynamic features, including ambient temperature. Van de Vliert, Huang, and Parker (2004) have shown that temperature has notable and quite stable influences on the emergence and management of conflicts. As we have noted throughout this chapter, the *national cultural context* within which organizations operate influences the emergence, outcomes, and management of workplace conflicts. A third and final example is the *historical context*, which provides a relatively stable

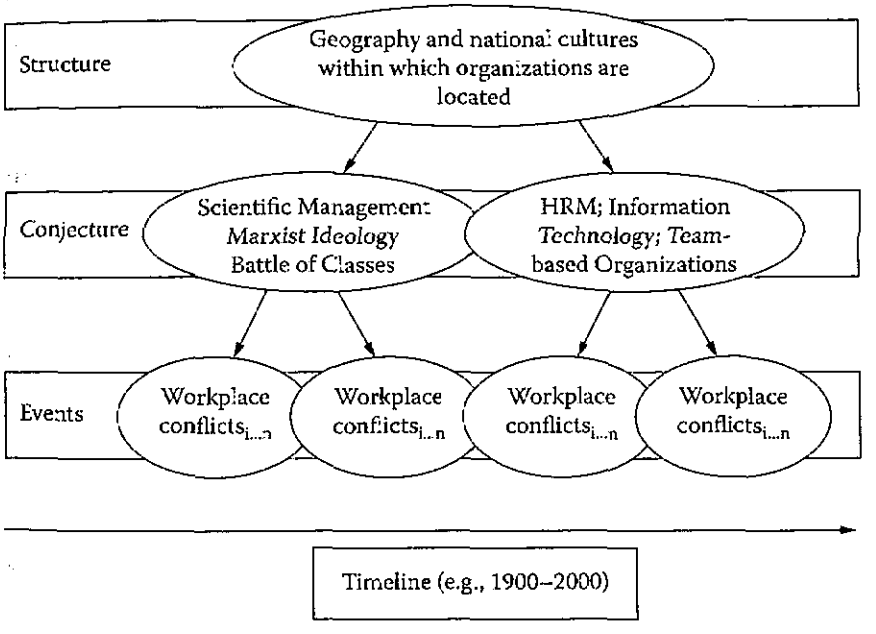

FIGURE 1.2. Conflict in and around organizations across different layers of time.

background—worker relations between U.S. citizens and Japanese managers, or between Dutch managers and German employees, are likely to be influenced by and interpreted in light of World War II, and although the impact of such historical events weakens over time, it does so at an exceedingly slow pace.

As can be seen in Fig. 1.2, thermodynamics, national culture, and history constitute the structural layer of time, within which conjunctures emerge. *Conjuncture* refers to those aspects of the situation that do change, but at a relatively slow pace. One may think about organizational culture, or about the fads and fashions that infatuate organizational life and dominate practices for relatively long stretches of time before fading out and being replaced by other, seemingly superior fads and fashions (Pfeffer, 1997; see also Jaffee, chapter 2, this volume). An example of conjuncture is the system installed by organizations to manage conflict and to assist third-party dispute resolution (see Goldman et al., chapter 10, this volume; Olson-Buchanan & Boswell, chapter 11, this volume).

Finally, another level of time that is relevant is *Events*, which refer to those aspects of the situation that change rapidly. Examples include the hefty debate within a cross-functional team that emerges and dissolves within a month's time, the fight between a supervisor and her employee about a particular task assignment, or the two-week strike called by unions to pressure management into an agreement. Within this level of analysis, scholars are interested in analyzing the temporal unfolding of discrete acts, and the situational and personal factors that affect bilateral conflict escalation and de-escalation (see Pruitt, chapter 8, this volume; Raver & Barling, chapter 7, this volume).

It is important to note that the four levels of analysis identified earlier—(a) individual, (b) group, (c) organization, and (d) national culture—are theoretically independent of the three layers of time. Across all levels, we can identify structures, conjunctures, and events. For example, at the individual level, employee behavior is a complex function of genetic make up (structure); life cycles, including career phases and family situation (conjunctures); and specific situational demands and opportunities that present themselves (events). Although organizations tend to be more stable than groups and individuals, dramatic and catastrophic "events" can occur at the organizational level as well. Even the climatic aspects of the national environment are subject to disruptive events such as volcanic eruptions, hurricanes, wars (see also the following discussion of how organizational events trigger conflict).

Figure 1.2 shows that distinguishing between various layers of time, each with a different pace, allows one to view relatively fluent and rapidly changing conflict events that emerge between individuals or between members of opposing groups and take place within a context characterized by particular conflict-management and dispute-resolution tools installed by the overarching organization. These systems and perspectives do not change overnight, and they provide

an important background against which more fluid and emerging workplace conflicts take place. Finally, grievance-filing and dispute-resolution systems are embedded in, and legitimized by, nationwide judicial arrangements, longstanding traditions in labor–management exchanges, and perhaps national or regional culture. Again, while these may change, they do so at a slower pace than organization-specific, dispute-resolution systems.

Future research needs to explicitly incorporate these three layers of time into theories and research on conflict management. This will ultimately require the development of cross-level theories, which link more distal and relatively fixed aspects of the context (e.g., national culture, history) with organizational practices, cultures, and systems (conjunctures), with more dynamic and fluid interactions (events) at the micro-level of analysis. In the following, we highlight illustrative examples of the type of cross-level research that draws upon the previously made temporal distinctions.

Cross-Level Influences of Conflict in Organizations

In this chapter, we discussed antecedents and consequences of conflict at multiple levels, yet the frontiers of research on conflict will inevitably involve examining how factors at higher levels of analysis have cross-level influences on conflict at lower levels of analysis (top-down processes) and how factors at lower levels influence conflict at higher levels of analysis (bottom-up processes). We discuss each in turn.

Top-Down Processes and Conflict in Organizations. From a levels perspective, conflicts always occur in an organizational context, features of which can influence the nature and outcomes of conflict that occurs at lower levels. We note two distinct "roads" for this frontier: (a) top-down antecedents to different types of conflict at lower levels, and (b) top-down moderators of the conflict-to-outcome relationship.

First, future research would benefit from examining how factors at higher levels affect the emergence of different types of conflict among individuals and groups. Keeping in mind the previously made temporal distinctions, we can theorize that higher-level factors that are largely *structural or conjunctural* (e.g., national and organizational culture) affect the nature of conflict at lower levels, but also higher-level dynamic *events* (e.g., downsizing, restructuring, changes in leadership) can serve as facilitators of conflict at lower levels. For example, higher-level factors might facilitate or inhibit the extent to which there are conflicts at lower levels in organizations. Value and resource conflicts might be activated more in organizations where there are competitive organizational cultures with clear factions versus those that have cooperative organization cultures and superordinate organizational identities. Future research should also

examine how community demographic composition and fault-lines filter down to affect the types of conflicts that occur in organizations (Brief et al., 2005). As another example, higher-level factors are also likely to affect the *co-occurrence* of different types of conflict at lower levels. For example, in organizational contexts where there is a lack of trust, task and relationship conflict are more highly related than in contexts where there is trust among employees (Simons & Peterson, 2000).

While the previous discussion focused on how factors at higher levels that are relatively stable (e.g., structure and conjuncture) affect conflict and lower levels, top-down effects on conflict types at lower levels may also occur due to highly dynamic *events* that occur at higher levels of analysis. For example, events such as organizational downsizing and restructuring, organizational changes in leadership, and/or changes in composition of workgroup can also affect conflict at lower levels of analysis. Terry and Amiot (chapter 13, this volume), for example, discuss how organizational merger and acquisitions can affect social identity conflicts at lower levels in organizations. Organizational changes, such as new leadership, might also facilitate resource-based conflicts in organizations because they result in increased ambiguity regarding resource allocations and increased competition. More generally, research needs to examine how both stable structures and dynamic events at higher organizational levels affect the incidence and type of conflict that occurs at lower levels of analysis.

Previously, we discussed how phenomena at higher levels of analysis can trigger and shape conflict at lower levels. Another important area for cross-level research on conflict is the examination of how factors at higher levels moderate the effects that different types of conflict have on outcomes. De Dreu and Weingart's (2003b) contingency approach to task conflict and outcomes suggested the need to examine moderators of the conflict-outcome relationship. Likewise, in their conflict-outcome moderated model (COM), Jehn and Bendersky (2003) similarly suggested that features of the group context (e.g., task interdependence, routineness of the task, group diversity, openness norms) as well as features of the organizational context (e.g., use of rights- versus interest-based third parties and dispute systems) can moderate the impact of task, relationship, and process-related conflict on outcomes. Chapters in this volume also attest to the importance of context as a moderator of the conflict-to-outcome relationship. For example, Jehn and colleagues (chapter 6) discuss the importance of context as a moderator of diversity effects on conflict in organizations.

Emergent, Bottom-Up Cross-Level Influences. Previously, we discussed top-down processes related to conflict in organizations, yet from a level of analysis perspective, it is equally important to examine bottom-up influences of conflict at lower levels on higher levels of analysis. Several chapters in this volume point to the importance of

bottom-up processes. For example, drawing upon Schneider's (1987) attraction–selection–attrition model, we would argue that people with certain personalities (e.g., competitive, aggressive) self-select into organizations and create teams and organizations that have more resource based conflicts and competitive norms for managing conflict. In a related way, Jehn and colleagues (chapter 6, this volume) demonstrate how individual characteristics compile into group diversity structures that may have qualitatively different effects on the types of conflicts that emerge and the ways these conflicts are managed. Olekalns et al. (chapter 3, this volume) highlight how individual utterances and statements feed into distinct patterns of exchange that relate to meaningful outcomes at the group level.

An area not covered extensively in this volume that provides a good example of bottom-up, emergent cross-level influences is work on motivation and information processing in interpersonal and group negotiation. Building on behavioral decision theory (Neale & Bazerman, 1991) and dual concern theory (Rubin et al., 1994; see also Olekalns et al., chapter 3, this volume), De Dreu and colleagues (De Dreu, 2004, 2005; De Dreu & Carnevale, 2003; De Dreu et al., 2006; De Dreu, Weingart, & Kwon, 2000) proposed a motivated information-processing model of strategic choice in conflict and negotiation. Focusing primarily on negotiation in resource conflicts, they argued that interpersonal and group agreement is the result of a complex interplay between individual parties' cognitions and motivations—to reach high joint outcomes, negotiators need a deep understanding of the task, which requires them to exchange information and to systematically process new information. All this depends on their prosocial versus proself motivation, their high versus low motivation to engage in systematic information processing (so-called epistemic motivation), and the interaction between these social and epistemic motives.

Conclusions About Neglected Levels and Cross-Level Influences in Workplace Conflict

Conflict is a dynamic phenomenon and occurs within a multilevel organizational system. Cross-level and temporal theorizing on conflict in organizations is in its infancy, and we noted several exciting frontiers of future research. We discussed the importance of modeling how structural and conjectural factors affect conflict events and, thereafter, discussed how phenomena at macro levels of analysis affect conflict dynamics at lower levels, or how microlevel factors might affect conflict at higher levels of analysis. Fortunately, the advancement of complex statistical tools, such as hierarchical linear modeling and latent growth modeling, is uniquely situated to help develop this tradition in conflict research. For example, the former discussion of top-down influences on conflict types at lower levels can be seen within an *"intercepts-as-outcomes model"* (Hof-

mann, Griffin, & Gavin, 2000), wherein higher-level factors are predictors of the amount and nature of conflict at lower levels. By contrast, the discussion of top-down moderators of the conflict-to-outcome relationship is consistent with a *"slopes-as-outcomes"* model, wherein higher-level factors moderate the impact of conflict on outcomes (Hofmann et al., 2000).

CONCLUSION

Multilevel theory and techniques are relatively new to organizational behavior and industrial and organizational psychology (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000). Conflict research and theory has a strong tradition in multilevel thinking, but this has remained implicit. Throughout this chapter, we have highlighted the (quasi)isomorphism of conflict at the individual, group, and organization levels of analysis, showing that at each of these levels, conflict can be traced back to similar sources—resources, identity formation and maintenance, reality checking—and many functions of conflict can be found at each of these three levels. We also provided examples of work on bottom-up and top-down influences that cross levels of analysis, where conflicts at one level may have consequences for performance, innovation, or health and well-being at higher or lower levels.

Whereas the multilevel revolution is taking place in other areas in the field, conflict scholars and researchers seem to continue to work multilevel implicitly. In this chapter, we made this multilevel perspective explicit to provide a basis for further understanding, integration, and new research into cross-level influences in workplace conflicts.

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