

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: POWER CONFLICT: STRUGGLES FOR
INTRAGROUP CONTROL AND
DOMINANCE

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There has been a considerable amount of research at the individual level of analysis examining strivings for power and influence within an organizational context. However, research has largely yet to examine how these individual motives and behaviors designed to garner power may translate to processes at the interpersonal and group level, and in particular, the extent to which they may result in conflicts or power struggles between individuals. Therefore, the goal of this dissertation was to delineate and explore a construct of power conflict using both qualitative and quantitative methods in two complementary studies.

In the first study of this dissertation, I conducted an inductive, qualitative examination of power conflict designed to provide an in depth exploration of different types or manifestations of power conflict. Using data obtained from 58 semi-structured interviews with employees across 23 different bank branches, this study explored how conflicts over power are enacted within context, including key actions and motives. In addition, this study explored potential antecedents and consequences of power conflict in an effort to begin developing a nomological network.

In Study 2, I then built upon these qualitative results by using survey data from 131 bank branches to empirically establish power conflict as an important fourth factor of intragroup

conflict, along with the already established task, relationship, and process factors. In support of this, the confirmatory factor analysis results provide evidence that power conflict is a distinct factor of intragroup conflict and is distinct from the potentially related construct of dominating conflict management strategies. I also test a portion of the nomological network developed through the qualitative study by examining the relationship of power conflict to several group level antecedents and consequences. Regression results indicate that groups with higher mean levels of extraversion, lower mean levels of agreeableness, and that are predominantly female tend to have higher levels of power conflict. In contrast, groups that have high learning goal orientation climates tend to have lower levels of power conflict. In terms of consequences, power conflict was significantly related to branch stress and greater branch turnover above and beyond the other three conflict types.

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Chapter 1: Introduction and Overview

Throughout history, the drive for obtaining status and power has been thought of as a fundamental motivator of human behavior (e.g. Adler, 1966; Frieze & Boneva, 2001; Kipnis, 1976; McClelland, 1975, 1987; Winter, 1973). The philosopher, Hobbes (1651) states, “I put for a generall [sic] inclination of all mankind, a perpetual and restless desire of power after power that ceaseath only in Death” (p. 161). To have power is to have control over resources, to have the ability to influence others’ behavior, and to be able to act of your own volition (see Dahl, 1957; Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003; Ng, 1980; Overbeck & Park, 2001). As such, power has long fascinated scholars as an important topic in understanding human behavior and is studied across many disciplines from politics and economics, to sociology, anthropology, and psychology.

In the organizational and management literature, organizations have long been thought of as political systems in which power is a key mechanism influencing decisions and organizational outcomes (e.g. March, 1962; Mintzberg, 1983; Morgan, 1986; Pfeffer, 1981). As Hawley (1963) states, “Every social act is an exercise of power, every social relationship is a power equation, and every social group or system is an organization of power” (p. 422). Over the last several decades, the research examining power within organizations has predominately focused on power at the individual level, including examining different sources of power (e.g. Brass, 2002; Brass & Burkhardt, 1993; Emerson, 1962; French & Raven, 1959; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Thibaut & Kelly, 1959), types of influence tactics (e.g. Allen, Madison, Porter, Renwick, & Mayes, 1979; Farrell & Peterson, 1982; Kacmar & Carlson, 1998; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982; Kipnis, Schmidt, & Wilkinson, 1980; Ralston, 1985; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990; Vrendenburgh & Maurer, 1984; Zanzi, Arthur, & Shamir, 1991), and individual perceptions of

organizational politics (e.g. Ferris, Russ, & Fandt, 1989; Kacmar & Baron, 1999; Pfeffer, 1981). Thus, it is clear that power and pursuits to gain it have begun to be well documented within an organizational context.

However, research has largely yet to examine how these individual motives and behaviors designed to garner power may translate to processes at the interpersonal and group level (for some exceptions see De Dreu, 1995; Howard, Gardner, & Thompson, 2007; Kim, Pinkely, & Fragale, 2005; Magee, Galinsky, & Gruenfeld, 2007; Mannix, 1994; Tjosvold, Johnson, & Johnson, 1984; Van Kleef, De Dreu, Pietroni, & Manstead, 2006), and in particular, the extent to which they may result in conflicts or power struggles between individuals. As Schein (1977) states, “Power struggles, alliance formation, strategic maneuvering, and ‘cut throat’ actions may be as endemic to organizational life as planning, organizing, directing, and controlling” (p. 64). Thus, conflicts over power or power struggles are likely an inevitable truth as individuals vie for control and status within organizations. Acknowledging this, some discussions of organizational conflict and its causes even mention power struggles as a potential source (e.g. Phillips & Cheston, 1978; Wall & Callister, 1989; Wall & Nollan, 1986). However, there has been no systematic study of power struggles, and conflicts over power largely remain absent from most recent conceptualizations of organizational conflict, which focus instead on task, relationship, and process conflict (Jehn, 1992, 1997). In addition, there are no published validated scales with which to measure such conflicts, and there has been no exploration of antecedents and consequences of power conflict. As a result, the potential for power conflict has not been fully explored in either the power or conflict literature.

The goal of this dissertation, therefore, is to delineate and explore a construct of power conflict within an organizational context. Utilizing both qualitative and quantitative methods,

this dissertation contains two complementary studies. The first study is an inductive, qualitative examination of power conflict designed to provide an in depth exploration of different types or manifestations of power conflict. Using data obtained from semi-structured interviews with employees from 23 different bank branches, this study explores how conflicts over power are enacted within context, including key actions and motives. In addition, this study is designed to explore potential antecedents and consequences of power conflict in an effort to begin developing a nomological network. Finally, in order to provide support for the divergence of power conflict from potentially related constructs, I also examine the overlap between incidents of power conflict and the currently accepted types of intragroup conflict (task, relationship, and process) and dominating conflict management strategies.

Study 2 builds upon this qualitative examination by using a quantitative approach to provide empirical evidence in support of power conflict as a new and valid construct. Using survey data from 131 branches of a large bank, Study 2 is designed to empirically establish the proposed construct of power conflict as a key fourth type of intragroup conflict distinct from the already accepted task, relationship, and process conflict dimensions (Jehn, 1992, 1997). In addition, I examine its discriminant validity from potentially related constructs, such as dominating conflict management strategies. In order to further establish this construct, Study 2 also tests a portion of the nomological network developed in Study 1 by examining several group level antecedents (personality and demographic composition and organizational climate) and consequences (stress and turnover) of power conflict, including examining the extent to which it provides explanatory power above and beyond the current intragroup conflict types.

In the following chapters, I begin by first defining key terms in order to ground power conflict within the literature. I then delineate the proposed construct of power conflict and review

theoretical and empirical work in support of the potential of power conflicts within an organizational context. Finally, I discuss the hypotheses and results of the two studies, including the theoretical and practical implications.

Chapter 2: Key Terms

Before providing a definition of the proposed construct, I define key constructs pertinent to this dissertation. I first provide an overview of current conceptualizations of power. Then, I provide an overview of organizational conflict, including an examination of specific types of conflict that have previously been discussed within the literature. Finally, I provide a definition of the proposed construct of power conflict.

Power

According to Dahl (1957), “The concept of power is as ancient and ubiquitous as any that social theory can boast” (p. 201). As such, many definitions of power have been proposed within the literature. For example, power is often conceptualized based on Dahl’s (1957) definition: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would otherwise not do” (p. 202-203). It can also be defined as “the ability to control resources, own and others’, without social interference” (Galinsky et al., 2003, p. 454). Additionally, others have focused on power as the ability of an individual to have agency (Ng, 1980; Overbeck & Park, 2001) and “to bring about the outcomes they desire” (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977, p. 3). Thus, power can broadly be defined as involving both the ability to act of your own volition as well as the ability to control resources and bring about desired behaviors in others.

Power has been hypothesized to be gained and exercised through various means. For instance, several scholars have conceptualized power as an attribute of the individual and his/her ability to influence others’ behavior through various tactics (e.g. Allen et al., 1979; Farrell & Peterson, 1982; French & Raven, 1959; Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003; Kacmar & Carlson, 1998; Kipnis & Schmidt, 1982; Kipnis et al., 1980; Ralston, 1985; Schriesheim & Hinkin 1990; Vrendenburgh & Maurer, 1984; Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Zanzi et al., 1991). Perhaps the most well

know of these is French and Raven's (1959) bases of power in which they distinguish between formal and informal (personal) power. Formal power is based upon one's position within an organization and consists of coercive power, reward power, and legitimate power. Coercive power is based upon an individual's ability to punish others. Reward power is based upon an ability to provide rewards or positive benefits to others. Finally, legitimate power is based upon formal authority within an organization, such as the position of a manager or supervisor. In contrast to formal power, informal or personal power is based on the characteristics of an individual, not on any formal authority position. Informal power consists of expert power in which individuals have power due to their expertise, knowledge, or skills, and referent power in which individuals have power over others due to admiration, respect, and personal identification by other individuals.

In addition to examining influence tactics, scholars have also taken a more social exchange approach that focuses on scarcity of resources and social dependence on others leading to power, such as was advanced by Thibaut & Kelly's (1959) social psychology of groups, Emerson's (1962) power dependence theory, and Pfeffer and Salancik's (1978) resource dependency theory. Finally, scholars have also focused on power being due to organizational structure in the form of institutional hierarchies and decision rules (e.g. Pfeffer, 1981) or informal positions within a social network (Brass, 2002; Brass & Burkhardt, 1993). In sum then, power can be considered to be a result of organizational structure, control of resources, or an ability to influence and control others.

It is also important to note that intertwined with the concept of power is status. Status is often conceived of as being the position one holds within a social network and is considered something that is conferred to an individual by others in the social group (Sell, Lovaglia,

Mannix, Samuelson, & Wilson, 2004). As Keltner, Gruenfeld, and Anderson (2003) note, “Status in part determines the allocation of resources within groups and, by implication, each individual’s power” (p. 266). Thus, consistent with the distinction made by French and Raven (1959), status is similar to informal power in which one has power due to the respect and admiration of others. Following these distinctions, individuals can have more informal power due to having higher status, or individuals can have more formal power due to a position within the organizational structure, but still not have high status due to low respect from others. Thus, in the case of power conflict, individuals are likely to vie over both formal power as well as status or informal power.

Organizational Conflict

Conflict can be defined as “a process that begins when an individual or group perceives differences and opposition between oneself and another individual or group about interests and resources, beliefs, values, or practices that matter to them” (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008, p. 6). Following a distinction proposed by Pondy (1967), conflict can be latent, in which it may or may not be perceived and felt, or can be manifested in actual behavior. This distinction is important given that as long as one individual perceives a conflict to exist, whether it is acted upon or escalated further, it can have consequences for the individual, future behavior, and overall social interactions.

Over the last several decades, scholars have proposed various types and categories of conflict in an effort to refine theories and account for the potentially different consequences associated with conflict. At the center of many of these conceptualizations is a distinction between *relationship* or *affective conflict* and *task* or *cognitive conflict*. For example, Guetzkow and Gyr (1954) argued that conflict could be affective, focused on interpersonal relationships, or

substantive, focused on the particular group task. Similarly, Wall and Nolan (1986) distinguished between people-centered conflicts and conflicts about the content of the task. Priem and Price (1991) also distinguish between cognitive conflict, which they define as “task related, involving the degree of disagreement over the interpretation of a common stimulus” (p. 210), and social-emotional conflict, which they define as “interpersonal, involving competition for payoffs or personal disagreements” (p.210). Finally, in a multidimensional scaling study of conflict frames, Pinkley (1990) discovered a task versus relationship dimension of conflict, which focused on the extent to which conflicts were about interpersonal issues. Other conceptualizations which go beyond the simple task-relationship distinction of conflict, such as conflict over goals, resources, and general frustrations, have also been developed as scholars have attempted to fully explore the entire conflict domain (e.g. Coser, 1956; Cosier & Rose, 1977; Pondy, 1967).

Building on this previous work, current research at the group level is predominately based on Jehn’s (1992, 1997) three dimensional construct of intragroup conflict. This intragroup conflict scale maintains the above task versus relationship distinction as well as proposes a third type of conflict, process conflict. *Task conflict* is defined as “an awareness of differences in viewpoints and opinions pertaining to the group task” (Jehn & Mannix, 2001, p. 238). It focuses on the content of the task and potential differences in interpretations, ideas, and opinions. *Relationship conflict* is defined as “an awareness of interpersonal incompatibilities” (Jehn & Mannix, 2001, p. 238). It can include differences in personality, values, attitudes, or even opinions that are not task related. The third conflict dimension, *process conflict*, has been the least examined in the organizational literature (for some exceptions see Jehn, 1997; Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Jehn, Northcraft, & Neale, 1999). Process conflict can be defined as “an awareness of controversies about aspects of how task accomplishment will

proceed” (Jehn & Mannix, 2001, p. 239). It is most related to task conflict, but instead of focusing on the content of the task, process conflict is “about the means to accomplish the specific tasks . . . about strategies for approaching the task” (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003, p. 201).

This current conceptualization of intragroup conflict (Jehn, 1992, 1997) has been widely accepted and has been used in a variety of research (e.g. Amason, 1996; Amason & Mooney, 1990; Amason & Sapienza, 1997; Janssen, Van De Vliert, & Veenstra, 1999; Jehn et al., 1999; Langfred, 2007; Pelled, 1996; Pelled, Eisenhardt, & Xin, 1999; Simons & Peterson, 2000). Nevertheless, the question remains as to whether other forms of conflict exist. In this dissertation, I propose that one important type of conflict that seems to have been omitted from previous conceptualizations is conflict over power.

Power Conflict

Power and status have been an important topic in understanding human behavior for many decades. Like many species, from primates to birds, the existence of human status hierarchies and related status striving for greater power is well documented across the social sciences (e.g. Gould, 2002; Mazur, 1973). Thus, in a world where everyone wants to get ahead, the search for power is no different in the organizational context. As Culbert and McDonough (1980) comment, “When people get together in groups, power will be exerted. People want to carve out a niche from which to exert influence, to earn rewards, and to advance their careers” (p. 6). Of course, not everyone can have power and control, making conflict inevitable.

In this dissertation, I propose power conflict as an additional fourth dimension of the currently accepted task, relationship, and process intragroup conflict types (Jehn 1992, 1997). I define power conflict as a group level construct that focuses on members’ *awareness of struggles for control and dominance within the group*. By the nature of the definition of power, not

everyone can have power within a group. Thus, in any situation in which more than one individual strives to have power or status for themselves and over others, conflict is likely to occur. With this definition, I also acknowledge the fact that these struggles for power can occur both between supervisors and subordinates and between peers of equal rank. Following French and Raven's (1959) typology, power conflict may involve struggles to have more formal authority, such as the ability to reward and punish others or may involve struggles for more informal power or status, such as being viewed as the most knowledgeable or important within a group. This distinction is further supported in the qualitative results exploring different types of power conflict as will be discussed in Study 1.

Level of Analysis

As recent work on organizational conflict notes (Korsgaard, Jeong, Mahony, & Pitariu, 2008), conflict can theoretically be represented in different ways across levels of analysis. In the case of power conflict, it can be represented as individual perceptions or conflict behaviors, represented at the dyad level, or represented at the group level as shared perceptions of the level of conflict within a group. In this research, I define power conflict as a group level construct. That is, I am interested in power conflict as a group level construct that focuses on the level of intragroup conflict or the level of power conflict within the group as a whole that members perceive. I advance a composition model of emergence in which individual level perceptions of the extent to which group members engage in these various types of power conflicts are shared among group members and thus, represented at the collective level (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Through their everyday social interactions and mutual experiences of conflict incidents in the workplace, individuals develop shared perceptions concerning the level of power conflict that exists within the group. Therefore, in Study 2, I examine power conflict as a group level

construct meant to represent the level of power conflict that is perceived to exist within a group as a whole and examine aggregation statistics to bolster the case for the collective nature of the construct.

Now that I have defined power conflict, in the following chapters, I provide an overview of theoretical and empirical support for the existence of power conflicts within an organizational context and then present the qualitative and quantitative studies.

Chapter 3: A Review of the Literature

The idea of conflicts over power or power struggles is not new, with many examples of power conflict within other disciplines, such as sociology and political science. For example, in his development of a general theory of conflict processes, the sociologist, Hubert Blalock (1989), incorporates the concepts of power and dependency as key components of explaining real world conflicts including warfare, international conflicts, ethnic conflicts, and even interpersonal interactions. Blalock (1989) argues that with its basis around dependency created by a need or desire for certain resources, the notion of power is a key part of conflict processes and influences both the initiation of conflict as well as the outcomes of conflict episodes. Similarly, other sociologists include struggles for power and status as key components in their definitions of social conflict. Himes (1980) defines social conflict as “purposeful struggles between collective actors who use social power to defeat or remove opponents and to gain status, power, resources, and other scarce values” (p. 14). Similarly, Coser (1956) defines social conflict as “a struggle over values and claims to scarce status, power, and resources in which the aims of the opponents are to neutralize, injure, or eliminate their rivals” (p. 8).

Like sociology, the existence of conflicts over power can also be seen across other disciplines. For example, discussions of power struggles can be seen in works describing the conflicts among economic class systems for power and resources as the poor try to rise up and the rich try to maintain their control (e.g. Boulding, 1962). Similarly, descriptions of conflicts among ethnic tribes, political factions, states, and nations include a focus on struggles for control and power (e.g. Boulding, 1962; Mearsheimer, 2001; Snyder & Tilly, 1972).

In the organizational behavior and management literature, struggles for power have also been acknowledged in a number of areas, including work on individual motives, teams,

leadership, and negotiation. For example, implicit in the above definition and the assumption that conflicts over power occur within groups and organizations is that individuals desire and actively seek power and control over others. Thus, at a basic level, support for the potential of power struggles to exist within groups is found in the significant amount of research on power as a fundamental human motivator (e.g. Adler, 1966; Frieze & Boneva, 2001; Kipnis, 1976; McClelland, 1975, 1987; Winter, 1973). According to work on power motives, individuals are argued to strive for social power or power over others as well as for personal power, in which individuals have agency to act on their own interests (Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006). The most prominent argument for a power motive is likely McClelland's (1987) theory of motivation which includes "need for power" as one of the fundamental motivators of human behavior, along with a "need for affiliation" and "need for achievement." McClelland (1987) argues that these needs are innately satisfying. Once an individual has experienced power and the resulting satisfaction, he/she will have learned or been socialized into having a power motive. In support of a motivational need for power, laboratory studies have found that individuals with a high need for power are "concerned about having impact on other people. They seek and get formal social power. They are concerned about prestige" (Winter, 1993, p. 533). Overall, a need for power has been found to be associated with such things as occupying higher or more prestigious positions in organizations, being more competitive, participating more in discussions, occupying positions of leadership, and making more influence attempts (see Winter, 1973). Thus, theory and research on power motives clearly demonstrates that first, such motivation does exist and second, that it affects behavior, with individuals actively pursuing positions of power and attempts to influence others.

The theory of power distance (Mulder, 1977) and related research also provides support for the notion that individuals desire and actively strive for power. Power distance theory (Mulder, 1977) focuses on the extent to which individuals strive to increase their power over others and in particular, the extent to which the status difference to the more or less powerful person influences strivings for gaining or maintaining power. The main tenants of this theory that are especially important to this dissertation are first, that people desire power due to related feelings of satisfaction, and second, that people strive to gain power regardless of whether they already have it or need it. As Mulder (1977) states, “The more powerful individual will strive to maintain or increase the power distance to the less powerful person” (p. 4), and “Individuals will strive to reduce the power distance between themselves and more powerful persons” (p. 5). Consistent with the theory, Mulder (1977) found support for the proposition that “the mere exercise of power will give satisfaction” in both a laboratory simulation and a field experiment (p.2). Specifically, Mulder (1977) found that more powerful individuals did indeed report greater satisfaction compared to those individuals with less power. This is also consistent with McClelland’s (1975) proposition that one reason individuals desire power is due to related feelings of satisfaction. Research on power distance theory also finds that individuals make efforts to gain power at various levels of status (e.g. Bruins & Wilke, 1992; Mulder, 1977; Mulder, Veen, Hijzen, & Jansen, 1973; Mulder, Veen, Rodenburg, Franken, & Tielens, 1973; Poppe, 2003). Thus, the above research again provides support for the notion that a desire for power can be a key motivational factor for many individuals and exists across levels of formal authority.

This notion that individuals desire power and greater status has also been acknowledged in work examining the larger organizational context in the form of research on organizational

politics (Pfeffer, 1981). Organizational politics has been defined as “those activities taken within organizations to acquire, develop, and use power and other resources to obtain one’s preferred outcomes” (Pfeffer, 1981, p. 7). Pfeffer (1981) goes on to argue that “politics involves the exercise of power to get something accomplished, as well as those activities which are undertaken to expand the power already possessed or the scope over which it can be exercised” (p. 7). As research on organizational politics has had a resurgence in recent years, there is a considerable amount of support for the existence of organizational politics (e.g. Ferris et al., 1996; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar, Bozeman, Carlson, & Anthony, 1999; Parker, Dipboye, & Jackson, 1995), including the potential for organizational politics to involve conflict as organizational coalitions and individuals exercise their power (e.g. Mintzberg, 1985). Most importantly, this research also provides support for the proposition that individuals often behave with a focus on their own self-interests or to obtain power within the organization and that perceptions of such political behaviors are negatively related to outcomes, such as turnover intentions, job satisfaction, OCBs, and commitment (see Kacmar & Baron, 1999 for a review). However, work on organizational politics does not directly examine the existence of conflict between individuals in their pursuits for power, especially within a group context, further highlighting the insight that research on power conflict could bring to bear.

The potential existence of conflicts over power has also been more directly acknowledged in the organizational literature. For example, Owens (1998) and Owens and Sutton (2001) discuss the existence of power struggles in the formulation of a model of status dynamics within groups. Through qualitative interviews and observations of project teams within a research and development organization, they found that status moves tend to be patterned based upon the current status of group members. More specifically, lower status members were

found to make more integration moves in order to increase their status. Middle-level status individuals were found to make more contesting moves in order to increase their status, and, finally, high status individuals were found to make more dominating moves in an attempt to maintain their status positions. Based on these findings, they argue that individuals actively gain and lose their status within groups and that meetings provide an important means for organizational members to have “status contests.” Furthermore, they argue that status moves continue to occur even in long-standing groups.

Similarly, the potential for power conflict is acknowledged in the leadership literature focused on the team context. For example, in proposing a model of distributed leadership in self-managed teams, Barry (1991) argues that one potential problem facing self-managed teams is that the lack of authority can result in power struggles within the group. This is further exemplified in a case description of an unsuccessful team. Barry (1991) describes how in one manufacturing quality control team, competitive group members often got into “yelling matches” in which “an unstated norm was that the ‘winner’ of these bouts would set the team’s direction, at least until another match occurred” (p.40). Similarly, he describes how another team started in an already dysfunctional state as team members argued over who should be the leader. As a result, this team was dissolved after only four months due to low productivity.

Elsewhere in the leadership literature, Bass (1990) also discusses the potential for power struggles, arguing that such struggles are even more likely when all members of a group are of equal status or when group members overestimate their own status or power. In a study of ROTC candidates, Bass & Flint (1958) arbitrarily gave power to certain group members through their ability to provide incentives to others and found that attempts at leadership by these higher power group members often resulted in power struggles with others. According to Bass & Flint

(1958), this was partly due to the fact that power had been arbitrarily assigned. Therefore, when these individuals with higher power overestimated their status and influence within the group, other group members contested their control.

This potential for conflict due to differences in power is also discussed in the negotiation literature. For example, in a study by Hornstein (1965), data indicated that unequal power between negotiators often produced “power struggles.” Hornstein (1965) found that in negotiation dyads where one individual had lower status compared to another, the lower status individuals would fight for more resources and higher status than was perceived appropriate by their counterparts. In response, the higher status dyad member fought back, ultimately resulting in an unsuccessful negotiation. This was further supported in research by Vitz and Kite (1970), who found similar results in their study of negotiation behaviors.

Finally, the potential for power conflict has even been acknowledged in the organizational conflict literature itself, including in previous conceptualizations of conflict types. For example, in Wall and Nolan’s (1986) distinction between people conflicts and task conflicts, one of the sub-themes of people conflict that was revealed in their qualitative analysis was struggles for leadership. They defined struggles for leadership as “those conflicts described as having their origin in efforts to control, dominate, exert power over, or lead the group” (p. 1039). Similarly, Pondy’s (1967) distinction of bureaucratic conflict systems also alludes to power struggles as it focuses on conflicts between superiors and subordinates of which differences in status are certainly a cause.

More recently, Wall and Callister (1995) include power struggles as a behavioral source of conflict. Consistent with this, Phillips and Cheston (1978) describe power struggles between departments with conflicting objectives as a cause for conflict, and Friedman, Hunter, and Chen

(2008) describe power struggles as a key part of conflict between labor unions and management. In a discussion of the literature and research findings concerning the benefits and detriments of conflict within teams, Mannix & Sauer (2006) also hypothesize that one reason some teams perform worse than others is due to power struggles. Specifically, they argue that conflict becomes more detrimental when dealing with unclear status hierarchies in which members may be focusing on obtaining status positions instead of the task.

Additionally, since this dissertation was originally proposed, Bendersky and Hay (2008) have proposed a similar measure of intragroup conflict in an unpublished study, which they label “status conflict.” They define status conflict as “an attempt to modify or challenge the implicit or explicit status hierarchy, usually by asserting superior legitimacy of a viewpoint, attempting to gain influence or assert dominance relative to others, or devaluing another’s contributions” (Bendersky & Hay, 2008, p. 15). Bendersky and Hay (2008) observed and then coded recordings of the meetings of MBA class project teams over a ten week period for the current intragroup conflict types (task, relationship, and process) as well as status conflict. From these qualitative findings, they then developed and validated a three-item measure of status conflict on a second MBA sample. Using this scale, they tested the extent to which the measure of status conflict exerted a significant main effect on group performance and individual satisfaction, finding that status conflict had a significant negative main effect on both outcomes after controlling for task and relationship conflict. They also found evidence that a model with task, relationship, and status conflict explained more variance in outcomes than a model without the status conflict dimension added.

Similarly, in another unpublished study, Greer and van Kleef (2008) propose a measure of “status conflict” as a mediator of the relationship between power distance and conflict

resolution within teams. They define status conflict as “disagreement between team members over the relative levels of influence that members should hold in the team” (p. 3-4). Thus, other researchers have also begun to explore the importance of conflicts over power and status within organizations.

The current research goes beyond these studies in several ways, however. First, I use data from semi-structured interviews within a real organizational context to gain insight into individuals’ experiences of power conflict and how conflicts over power are perceived within organizations, including related motives. Second, I provide a more thorough examination of power conflict by exploring antecedents and consequences in an effort to begin building and testing a nomological network for power conflict. Finally, I also examine the influence of power conflict above and beyond the other three types of intragroup conflict on additional outcomes, such as mean levels of employee stress and branch turnover. Thus, this research provides a new and in-depth exploration of conflicts over power and status in organizations.

Summary

In summary, the existence of power struggles is acknowledged across other disciplines as well as within the broader organizational psychology and behavior literature. However, no systematic study of power conflict appears to exist within the literature and although acknowledged as a potential type of conflict, power conflict has yet to be included in conceptualizations and published measures of conflict types. Therefore, an exploration of power conflict can provide important insight into group functioning as well as advance both theoretical and practical thinking on the role of power within an organizational context.

Chapter 4: A Qualitative Exploration of Power Conflict (Study 1)

Study 1 of this dissertation is an inductive study designed to provide a broad exploration of power conflict. Given that group interactions and processes such as conflict are dynamic in nature, an exploratory, qualitative approach offers the opportunity to gain a more detailed, rich understanding of power conflict that cannot be gained using traditional survey methodologies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As Strauss and Corbin (1990) argue, “Qualitative methods can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known” (p.19). Consistent with this notion, there have been numerous qualitative pieces designed to examine similarly complex group phenomena (e.g. Bettenhausen & Murnighan, 1985; Edmondson, Bohmer, & Pisano, 2001; Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Ericksen & Dyer, 2004; Gersick, 1988; Jehn, 1997; Klein, Zeigert, Knight, & Xiao, 2006; Murnighan & Conlon, 1991; Wageman, 1995).

Using this approach, my goal in Study 1 is to begin to explore power conflict by examining such conflicts within context. More specifically, this qualitative study is designed to explore how power conflicts are enacted by examining the various actions and motives involved in different types of power conflict. In addition, I attempt to begin building a nomological network around power conflict by exploring potential antecedents and consequences as well as any distinct relationships that may exist with the different types of power conflict that emerge in the data. Included in this, I also examine the different conflict management strategies used to deal with the various power conflict types. Finally, in order to begin to establish the discriminant validity of power conflict, I explore its distinctiveness from other potentially related constructs already within the literature.

In particular, since I view power conflict as an important fourth type of intragroup conflict, I explore the extent to which power conflict is distinct from the current intragroup conflict types of task, relationship, and process conflict (Jehn, 1992; 1997). Overall, I expect that power conflict will be related to some degree to all three types of conflict given that these different dimensions could coincide or even affect each other. However, I argue that it is a distinct and separate factor given its unique focus on conflicts over power and status. The first factor, task conflict, focuses on the content of the task and differences in opinions or interpretations about the task itself. This is often viewed as cognitive conflict (e.g. De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Although power conflict may result in task disagreements if individuals are attempting to demonstrate their expertise compared to others, for example, it is distinct from task conflict in that it is focused on struggles for control and status, not on differences about the task. For example, a group could have disagreements over a correct decision or course of action, but not have individuals engaging in power struggles to control activities or increase their standing within the group. Alternatively, a group could have individuals engaging in struggles over power such as trying to control each other with such actions being unrelated to disagreements over the task at hand. Thus, although these conflict types may affect each other, they are distinct in nature.

The second factor, relationship conflict, focuses on personal incompatibilities and emotional tension within the group (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Although power conflict may result in relationship conflict if there are personality conflicts and leftover tension as a result of individuals struggling for power or control, it is distinct in that it focuses on conflict over power, not over personal incompatibilities. For example, individuals may like and respect each other, but at the same time come into conflict over wanting to have

higher status than the other such as wanting to have the most recognition from the boss or be known as being the most skilled in a particular area. At the same time, individuals may dislike each other and not get along, without engaging in power conflicts such as trying to control one another's behavior. Thus, although these conflict types may affect each other, they are again distinct in nature.

Finally, the third factor, process conflict, tends to be the least studied but is likely the most closely linked to power conflict. Process conflict is defined as "an awareness of how task accomplishment will proceed" (Jehn & Mannix, 2001, p. 239). More specifically, process conflict involves "conflicts about how task accomplishment should proceed in the work unit, who's responsible for what, and how things should be delegated" (Jehn, 1997, p. 540). Included in this conceptualization are disagreements over resource allocations and who should occupy what role. Therefore, it overlaps with power conflict to some extent in its focus on task responsibilities such as who might be in charge within the group, but is also broader given its focus on conflict over resource allocation and task procedures. Furthermore, the process conflict items that do focus on responsibilities include such statements as "How often do members of your work unit disagree about who should do what?" and "How much conflict is there about delegation of tasks within you work unit?" (Jehn et al., 1999; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Thus, these items do not inherently correspond to struggles over gaining status or power. For example, there may be disagreements over responsibilities that are unrelated to power strivings, such as a desire for a particular responsibility due to an affiliation for that particular task. Likewise, individuals may engage in power struggles that do not relate to responsibilities, such as trying to demonstrate expertise compared to others to gain informal power within the group. Thus, although these conflict types may affect each other, they are distinct in nature.

In addition to the above conflict types, I also explore the extent to which power conflict is distinct from conflict management strategies that may involve the use of power to obtain a desired outcome. Several different conflict management typologies have been developed over the years (e.g. Blake & Mouton, 1964; De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, & Nauta, 2001; Pruitt, 1983; Rahim & Bonoma, 1979; Thomas, 1976). Across these typologies, one of the main styles for managing conflict that has emerged is a dominating or forcing conflict management style. This strategy is said to arise when there is high concern for the self and low concern for others (De Dreu et al., 2001; Rahim, 1983) and involves “forcing behavior to win one’s position” (Rahim, 2002). Although power conflict and a dominating style of conflict management may be related, I argue that power conflict is distinct. I conceive of power conflict as a type of conflict itself, not a means for managing conflicts that have already arisen. In other words, it is possible for individuals to use more dominating styles of conflict management, even if power conflict is absent. For example, group members may experience task conflict, such as who the best candidate is for a position and try to force their choice on one another, without the end goal being to increase one’s power within the group. Likewise, it is possible for power conflict to exist within a group, without members using a dominating or forcing style of conflict management to resolve the disagreement or struggle. For example, group members may resort to more passive-aggressive means of handling power struggles, such as withholding important information from others. Alternatively, individuals may experience power struggles, but use more conflict avoidant strategies and suppress their desire for power and resulting conflict with others if they realize that openly dealing with their conflict may harm the functioning of the group. Thus, I argue that these two constructs are distinct. In sum, an exploration of the extent to which individuals can generate incidents of power conflict that are distinct from the other types

of intragroup conflict and that do not simply involve engaging in a dominating conflict management strategy in response to an already existing conflict should provide further support for the validity of power conflict as a new and meaningful construct.

This research is guided by four main questions: (1) *What are the different types or manifestations of power conflicts within groups (i.e. what are the different actions and motives involved in power conflicts)?* (2) *What are antecedents and consequences of power conflict and how do they relate to different power conflict types?* (3) *What are the different means through which power conflicts are managed or resolved?* and (4) *To what extent do incidents of power conflicts overlap with the other types intragroup conflict and dominating conflict management strategies?*

Method

Participants

Participants were employees of branches of a regional bank in Northern Pennsylvania and Upper New York State. In order to gain a broad perspective of potential conflict experiences within the workplace, I instructed the bank to randomly sample employees across various positions and ranks within the bank branches. These employees were then contacted by the bank's Human Resources Department and asked to volunteer for the research. A total of 58 employees, across 23 branches as well as from the bank's administrative offices volunteered and were interviewed. Anywhere from one to five employees were interviewed per branch or department office, with an average of two employees interviewed per work unit.

Of those employees interviewed, 38% were tellers, 12% were branch managers, 12% were loan officers or specialists, 10% were customer service representatives, and the remaining 22% held a number of different positions ranging from accounting services to credit analysts. All

but one participant were full time employees. Tenure within the organization ranged from 4 months to 37 years, with a mean tenure of 8.38 years ($SD=7.98$). The final sample was 84% female and 16% male. In terms of ethnicity, the sample was 98% Caucasian and 2% Native American. In terms of age, 14% of employees were between the ages of 23 and 29, 17% were between the ages of 30 and 39, and 69% were 40 or older. In terms of education level, 41% of participants had a high school education, 31% had completed community college, 21% had completed a four-year college, 5% had completed some type of graduate school, and 2% did not report their education level.

Data Collection

I collected data through in-depth semi-structured interviews, which lasted approximately 30-60 minutes. Participants were interviewed in a private room at their place of business, during their regular working hours. All interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed, except for eight participants who requested to not have their answers recorded. For these eight participants, I took detailed notes throughout the interview and attempted to write down their verbatim responses to key questions as much as possible. There were no significant differences in the demographics (age, gender, education, tenure) for these participants from the regular sample, and there seemed to be no noticeable differences in their responses. Given the sensitive nature of the interview topic and the observable reactions to the recorder, it is likely that the participants simply did not feel comfortable having a verbal record of their interviews, despite the assurance of confidentiality.

Interview structure. The interview questions were focused on: (1) generating critical incidents of conflicts involving power or status or power struggles (including associated actions and motives), (2) antecedents and consequences of these critical incident descriptions and power

conflict in general, (3) how the critical incident descriptions of power conflict were managed or resolved, and (4) the extent to which incidents of power conflict overlap with the current intragroup conflict types developed by Jehn (1992, 1997). See Appendix A for the full interview guide.

In order to first build rapport with participants, I initially focused on general questions, including their position, tenure, and perspective on some recent initiatives within the bank, which the organization asked to be included in the interview process. Once I felt a sufficient amount of rapport and trust had developed, I then focused questioning on their experiences of organizational conflict within their branch or administrative department.

The first goal of the interviews was to gain rich descriptions of how conflicts over power are enacted or manifested within groups. However, given the sensitive nature of conflict, I began by first asking participants a broad question to make them more comfortable and to get them thinking about conflicts in general. Specifically, I asked participants to “describe how a typical employee of their work unit would describe the types of conflicts that take place.” This indirect technique has been shown to allow individuals to respond more openly to sensitive questions (Burstin, Doughtie, & Raphaeli, 1980) and is consistent with techniques used in other qualitative work on conflict (e.g. Jehn, 1997). Following this more general question, I then attempted to get participants to focus on more specific conflict episodes they could recall. Using the critical incident technique, I asked participants to “tell me about a time when they experienced or witnessed conflicts over power or status or power struggles among employees.” This line of questioning also included asking participants to describe what was going on in the organization at the time of the conflict and what they believed triggered the particular incident. I also asked participants to describe how the particular power conflict incident affected him/her as well as

how it affected the work unit as a whole. Participants were asked to discuss as many of these particular incidents as they could recall. The second line of questioning then focused on participants describing critical incidents for task, relationship, and process conflict. I then asked them to describe whether in their experience, conflicts over power tend to be involved or occur with these same types of conflict.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Following recommendations for qualitative data analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Eisenhardt, 1989; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Miles & Huberman, 1984), I employed an iterative, multi-phase approach in analyzing the data. First, I read through the entire set of transcripts to re-familiarize myself with the interviews in general and to gain a broad perspective on the data. I then went through the transcripts a second time and employed an open coding method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) in which I went through the transcripts line by line and took notes on emerging concepts and themes in the data. In an attempt to ensure that my personal biases and any apriori hypotheses were not influencing the concepts being noticed, I also had a research assistant independently code the transcripts for key concepts. The research assistant was instructed to read through each transcript line by line and take notes on concepts and themes related to the descriptions of the critical incidents of power conflict, including related antecedents, consequences, and conflict management styles.

In the second step of analysis, I then grouped these concepts and themes into more abstract categories to develop a coding scheme for the transcripts. Once a draft of the coding scheme was developed, I went back through the transcripts a third time to ensure that the coding scheme was comprehensive in nature. The final coding scheme was broken down into five broader categories: actions, motives, contextual antecedents, consequences, and conflict

management styles. Each of these broader categories was then composed of anywhere from 6 to 11 more specific codes. Finally, given that one goal of this study was to explore the extent to which power conflict is distinct from the other types of conflict as well as from dominating conflict management strategies, I also made sure to search for any disconfirming or counter-evidence (Miles & Huberman, 1984) by specifically including a set of codes to explore the discriminant validity of power conflict from task, relationship, and process conflict as well as from the potentially related construct of dominating conflict management strategies. The definitions and examples quotes for the conflict codes came directly from research done by Jehn (1997), while the definition and example for dominating conflict management strategies was adapted from work by De Dreu et al. (2001) and Rahim (2002). Coders were instructed to assign these codes even if only a part of the thought unit or quote applied. However, when coding the dominating conflict management strategy code, they were instructed to only apply the code if the main conflict being described focused on a power struggle over resolving a disagreement, not if it only applied to the resolution of the conflict focused upon in the critical incident question. The full coding guide and instructions can be found in Appendix B. Each code includes a definition, examples, and distinctions from the other codes contained in the guide.

Coding process. To ensure that the coding process was done in an unbiased, reliable, and systematic manner, I trained research assistants blind to any a priori hypotheses to code all the transcripts. Given the number of categories and codes, the coding was done in several phases to ensure the highest accuracy and reliability between coders. Phase one consisted of coding the power conflict critical incidents in terms of consequences and conflict management style. Phase two consisted of coding the critical incidents in terms of actions, motives, and antecedents (this also included coding antecedents of power conflict that may have been described separately from

the specific critical incidents). Finally, phase three consisted of coding the critical incidents in terms of their discriminant validity. Phases one and two were coded by the same two research assistants, while phase 3 was coded by a different pair of research assistants. This was done in order to ensure that the coding designed to explore discriminant validity was in no way influenced by the other codes assigned to the descriptions of the critical incidents.

Training for all three phases of coding took place in a similar manner. First, the research assistants read through the coding guide to familiarize themselves with the codes, definitions, and examples. We then sat down as a group and discussed each code and how the codes were different from one another. Once the coders felt comfortable with the coding guide, we coded three transcripts independently to discuss during the training sessions. In coding the transcripts, coders were told they could apply more than one code per thought unit or quote (each response to an interview question was considered its own thought unit), but should use no more than four codes if possible. If more than four codes were necessary, they were instructed to highlight that thought unit for later discussion. As disagreements or confusion emerged in the coding of the three training transcripts, we discussed the finer distinctions between the codes and adapted the coding guide to include such differences and decision rules. Once I felt confident in the coders' understanding of the coding scheme and their level of agreement, I then gave them the same set of roughly 10% of the total transcripts to code independently. Once there was a sufficient level of agreement across this 10%, I then divided the remaining transcripts in half and each coder independently coded their set of transcripts. Each set of transcripts also included another 10% of overlapping transcripts so that I could ensure that the coding scheme was being used in a systematic and reliable manner throughout the entire coding process.

I assessed the level of agreement between coders by calculating Cohen's Kappa, which is an index of inter-rater reliability. Given that each thought unit could be assigned up to four codes, I counted each thought unit as consisting of four trials and included an additional code of miscellaneous as part of the total number of coding categories to represent the fourth code of a thought unit that had only been assigned three codes. In other words, this miscellaneous code was included to represent instances where less than four codes had been assigned to a thought unit in order to be able to effectively calculate Cohen's Kappa. For all three phases of coding, both the initial and final checks of average inter-rater reliability between the two coders were very high (Cohen's $K > .95$). However, in many instances significant portions of the transcripts did not include any codes due to the separation of the coding into different phases. Since each thought unit consists of four trials, any thought units that included no codes from the coding guide by either coder would be assigned four miscellaneous codes and be considered to have perfect agreement on each of those trials, potentially inflating the value of Cohen's Kappa. Therefore, I also calculated Cohen's Kappa by examining agreement across only those thought units where at least one code from the coding guide had been assigned. Although not as high, the average inter-rater reliability using this method of calculation was still sufficient for both the initial and final agreement checks across all three phases of coding (Cohen's $K > .76$). The majority of disagreements involved one coder having more codes in a thought unit than the other. Therefore, most disagreements were resolved by the addition of extra codes. In those cases where the coders coded the same thought unit differently, the coders met and discussed the differences until they reached agreement on the correct code that should be used in the final analysis.

Once all transcripts had been coded, I then followed the recommendations of Eisenhardt (1989) and employed a within-case and cross-case approach to identify patterns in the data. This

involves first examining each coded critical incident in the data separately to gain an in-depth understanding and then looking for similarities and differences between critical incidents within the same category. This type of approach helps in the development of “accurate and reliable theory” and “enhances the probability that the investigators will capture the novel findings which may exist in the data” (Eisenhardt, 1989, p. 541). Following this method, I read through all coded transcripts individually. I then sorted transcripts into different categories based on the coding of the critical incidents. I did this in several different phases, looking first at the different types of actions and then at the different types of motivations. I examined the similarities between incidents within the same categories and the differences between incidents across the various categories. I then examined the links between the different categories of actions and the categories of motives. Finally, I examined the extent to which any distinct patterns or relationships existed between these different types of power conflict that were emerging in the data and the different antecedents, consequences, and conflict management strategies. In doing so, I also calculated the frequencies for each of the codes to find further support for the potential links or patterns of association I was noticing in the data. In the following section, I now discuss the results that emerged through this process.

Results

Given that conflicts over power largely remain absent from recent conceptualizations of organizational conflict, the main goal of this study was to begin to explore the existence of power conflicts in context. I found that the conflicts involve power or status through both actions and motives, can involve only two individuals or multiple individuals, and cross lines of formal authority, occurring both between peers of equal rank and between supervisors and subordinates. When asked to “tell me about a time when he/she witnessed or experienced a conflict involving

power or status or a power struggle,” 52 of the 58 participants (90%) were able to produce descriptions of their experiences surrounding power conflicts with relative ease. This resulted in participants discussing a total of 65 critical incidents focused on power conflict. Only six individuals out of 58 (10%) responded that they had not experienced or witnessed any conflicts over power or power struggles within their work unit. However, these individuals also described little experience with conflict in their work units in general, indicating low levels of conflict of any type within their work unit, or potentially demonstrating a social desirability bias in which they wished to portray themselves and their work units in a positive light.

Below, I will first discuss the different types or enactments of power conflict that emerged in the data, including related motives described by respondents. Included in this discussion, I will also present the discriminant validity findings, in which I examined the extent to which incidents of power conflict overlap with the three other types of intragroup conflict and dominating conflict management strategies. Finally, I will discuss the findings regarding consequences, antecedents, and management strategies of power conflict. Frequency results across the types are presented in Tables 1-6.

Manifestations of Power Conflicts

When asked to provide a critical incident of a conflict that involved power or status or a power struggle, I discovered distinct themes across respondents. First, there seemed to be two distinct categories into which all types fell, whether the conflict occurred between *peers of equal rank* (65%) or between a *supervisor and subordinate* (35%). Within these categories, several different themes or types of power conflicts became apparent. The main types of power conflict among peers included:

- **Actions of overstepping authority** in which individuals acted as if they were in charge and attempted to dominate and control their peers (40% of peer incidents)

- **Displays of superiority** in which individuals engaged in competitions with their fellow peers to show they were better than one another (33% of peer incidents)

The main types of power conflict between supervisors and subordinates included:

- **Displays of formal authority or abusive supervision** in which supervisors abused or over asserted their formal power over others in response to status threats (35% of supervisor-subordinate incidents)
- **Actions of insubordination** in which subordinates resisted the orders of a supervisor (48% of supervisor-subordinate incidents)

A final type of power conflict that occurred between both peers and supervisors and subordinates involved:

- **Territoriality behaviors** in which individuals refused to share responsibilities or tasks in order to preserve their status within the organization (12% of peer incidents and 9% of supervisor-subordinate incidents)

Intertwined with these types, descriptions also focused on motives involving power and status, such as:

- **Desires for power or advancement** to a higher position within the organization (21% of peer incidents and 4% of supervisor-subordinate incidents)
- **References to feelings of job insecurity** or worries that someone wants one's job (7% of peer incidents and 13% of supervisor-subordinate incidents)
- **Desires for recognition** (7% of peer incidents)
- **Feelings of being more qualified** than others (21% of peer incidents and 43% of supervisor-subordinate incidents)
- **Competition for promotions**, including frustrations at not receiving a desired promotion (14% of peer incidents and 30% of supervisor-subordinate incidents)
- **Feelings of being threatened by others' abilities** (7% of peer incidents and 13% of supervisor-subordinate incidents)

Thus, these power conflicts were not purely about actions alone, but the motives behind them also stemmed from a focus on both formal and informal power or status. As I examined each

case based on the coding scheme, looking for similarities and differences across similarly coded cases, several distinct patterns emerged from the data.

Below, I describe each of the five types of power conflict that I discovered, including (a) a description of each type, (b) examples from the data, (c) the related motives and their frequencies within each type of power conflict, and (d) the frequencies with which each of these types of power conflict overlap with the other types of intragroup conflict.

Overstepping authority: Peers dominating peers. One of the dominant categories of power conflict that was described between peers or persons of equal rank within the organization involved overstepping authority. These actions involved individuals displaying out-of-role behavior and acting like they were in charge and giving orders to their peers. As such, respondents described being upset at being told what to do by a peer that does not have any actual authority or power over them. Thus, consistent with classic definitions of power (e.g. Dahl, 1957) in which power is proposed to result from an ability to direct the behavior of others, as one individual tries to assert power over others by attempting to control their behavior, conflict ensues as they resist those attempts at control.

For example, one teller stated,

When the manager is gone, the CSR (customer service representative) is like I'm your boss you better listen to me, which is not at all true . . . no one is in charge. We can pretty much take care of ourselves (Respondent 5).

Similarly, another respondent commented,

I've been where there's the power play and the person wants to be in charge and thinks that she is in charge, and she's not your supervisor, and she's trying to tell you like, 'this needs to be done' and 'that needs to be done' (Respondent 43).

Another manager also describes how the tellers in her branch refer to a coworker as "the sheriff," because she monitors what everyone else is doing and gives out orders. However, in reference to

this she states, “[but] none of them are any kind of authority at all and that might be the problem right now cause they’re all equal pretty much” (Respondent 9).

Many of the respondents spoke of these actions as being motivated by desires for higher status or power (18%). For example, when asked whether the description of the power struggle was about a supervisor, one respondent stated, “No, but she’s trying to be. She wants to be, she wants to climb up the ladder” (Respondent 43). Similarly, another individual describes the controlling behavior occurring when “someone wanted the supervisor position, things like that, or thought that they were better suited to be supervisor” (Respondent 44). Several respondents also described individuals that had failed to receive a promotion as engaging in these actions in an effort to exert the power they thought they should have (18%). For example, two employees from the same branch both describe the same incident in which a customer service representative (CSR), who has no authority over the tellers, attempts to tell them what to do and acts like their boss when the head teller is out of the office (Respondents 37 and 39). Both of these individuals attribute the behavior to the CSR feeling like she should be in the head position. Thus, the conflict stems from not only resistance to dominating actions, but perceptions that the other is trying to actively obtain and assert power over others.

Additionally, many of the respondents made references to the fact that the person exhibiting the controlling behavior had less, experience, tenure, or knowledge compared to them (41%). For example, one teller stated,

“She just wants to show her authority when she’s [manager] not here, she has no more authority than I do. You know, she’s been here less than a year. I’ve been here 14 years. I don’t try to run anybody around here” (Respondent 5).

Similarly, when describing the power struggle between two tellers, a manager commented that,

“She has been here for a long period of time . . . I think that bothers her because he’s been here for such a short period of time that first of all, how does he know

what he's doing and don't tell me what to do because I've been here forever"
(Respondent 9).

Thus, again it seems that part of these conflicts stem not only from resisting actions of control, but also from feelings that someone is overstepping the informal status hierarchy.

As one individual attempts to assert dominance and control over another and that individual resists those attempts, there is clearly a conflict over power. However, the data reveal that most of these power conflicts are more complex than these observable actions alone, with the conflict really occurring as a result of perceptions that individuals are actively trying to obtain or assert power over others and are potentially overstepping the informal status hierarchy in doing so.

In terms of the overlap with the other types of intragroup conflict, several of these incidents were also coded as including task (18%), relationship (18%), and process conflict (18%), due to some of the bossy, controlling behavior involving being told what to do about a procedure or particular task. Generally, the relationship conflict occurred as more of a consequence, with individuals describing their frustrations with the controlling behavior and generally not "getting along" with the individual as a result of the power struggle.

Displays of superiority: Peer competition. In addition to conflicts focused on control over others, another theme I found in the power conflicts between peers involved conflicts that arose due to displays of informal status or power. More specifically, these conflicts involved individuals getting upset or into struggles and competitions with others who attempted to show themselves as having superior status within the group or came across as trying to show that they were better than others. These actions are different than individuals giving orders or attempting to dominate others and instead more reflect French and Raven's (1959) idea of informal or personal power in which individuals engage in conflicts over other's attempts to demonstrate

their superior knowledge, expertise, skills, etc. Therefore, instead of trying to assert greater power or status through acting like the boss or controlling the behaviors of others, these actions involved trying to assert greater status through demonstrations of having more expertise, skills, or generally trying to show one's self as more valuable to the organization.

For example, one respondent describes how individuals in the teller line will get into conflicts with one another when individuals try to demonstrate their superior skills or value compared to others, such as by making sure all the customers choose to go to his or her line. She states,

You know that everybody is trying to get to the top. So, then I think it creates conflict with one person trying to outdo the other, and to be noticed, recognized for what they've done or what they're trying to do (Respondent 42).

Similarly, one of the branch managers describes her employees' frustrations with one of the teller's attempts to always make herself look like she has greater knowledge and expertise compared to others.

One of the girls, if you ask a question, she immediately becomes an authority on it, and it maybe just be you want a simple answer, but it just comes across like 'I know more about this than you do' (Respondent 35).

Several respondents also described such power conflicts as involving co-workers trying to display their superiority by taking credit for other's ideas or work. Ultimately, these actions were attempts to demonstrate what they deemed were their superior expertise, skills, or dedication over co-workers in an effort to gain more status and value in the eyes of management. For example, one respondent describes a power conflict with a coworker in which the coworker always tried to show she worked harder and knew more than others in the branch, even though she did not actually put in the same level of effort. She states, "She wanted to take credit for

everything even if her involvement was five minutes and someone else's involvement was five months" (Respondent 44).

Similar to the above incidents of controlling behavior, these behaviors perceived as demonstrations of superiority were often attributed to desires to gain status (29%) or recognition (14%) within the organization. As one teller notes, "They're trying to push their way or stomp on other people to get there" (Respondent 42). Similarly, another respondent describes a co-worker as always taking credit for others' work due to a desire for advancement and recognition. She comments, "You know, it was always the need to be noticed" (Respondent 44).

In addition to these simple desires for power though, many individuals described such conflicts as occurring due to competition for jobs or promotions (21%). For example, one teller describes a power conflict incident in which three tellers were competing for the same customer service representative position. The tellers spent their time trying to demonstrate their superior status to everyone else trying "to show they are better" by making sure everyone knew what they were working on and how good they were at it compared to others (Respondent 36). Similarly, with the threat of layoffs at some of the branches, individuals described conflict incidents involving employees competing with each other to demonstrate their expertise in an effort to maintain their current positions. For example, one employee stated that many of the power struggles she has seen in the past year involved,

a lot of finger pointing, a lot people trying to make themselves look like they're more important than other people . . . and I think what they are trying to do is promote their own job security. . . I just think that there is a lot of jockeying around and jonesing around to justify the reason for having a job (Respondent 13).

Thus, not all power conflicts are necessarily about asserting formal power, but instead may also involve "status contests" in which individuals struggle over more informal power issues, such as expertise and ability.

A small number of these incidents were coded as including elements of task (14%), process (7%), and relationship conflict (7%). However, in all of these incident descriptions, the other types of conflict were not the focus of the description. Instead, all the incidents were described as focused upon power or status contests. Furthermore, in the case of relationship conflict, it seemed to again be more of a consequence of such status contests among employees.

Displays of formal authority in the face of status threats. One of the main themes running across descriptions of power conflicts that did focus on more formal power was between supervisors and subordinates and arose from displays or demonstrations of authority or abusive supervision. More specifically, these conflicts involved supervisors reinforcing and asserting their formal authority over subordinates, such as through demonstrations of their ability to control subordinates' behaviors or their ability to dole out punishments. Therefore, these actions correspond closely to French and Raven's (1957) notion of formal power due to legitimate authority and its expression through the power to reward and punish as well as styles of leadership involving power and dominance, such as abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) and petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1994). For example, one teller describes the relationship between her boss and the branch employees, stating,

She was a power freak. She would just unleash on anybody that you know, just to prove that she was the branch manager and you were below her and that's how it was gonna be that's how it was gonna stay (Respondent 32).

This idea of establishing authority was echoed in other recollections of conflict as well. A teller at a different branch describes a power conflict with her supervisor saying, "She wanted us all to know she was in charge, and she threw her credentials at us" (Respondent 50).

However, more than just actions that demonstrated authority, most respondents also referred to the actions being motivated by the supervisor feeling his/her status as an authority figure was threatened (13%), including believing that others thought they were better qualified (38%) or even wanted to take over his or her job (25%). For example, the above respondent goes on to say, “She must have sensed that we questioned whether she was qualified” (Respondent 50). Similarly, another employee describes an incident in which her supervisor made her revise a report as not a conflict about the correct way of formatting the report, but as a conflict that at its core was about the supervisor demonstrating his power or authority due to a perceived status threat.

They want to make sure you’re aware that they have control. They have the last say, so therefore they make you change it even though you have somebody else over here that prefers it . . . the person you are doing it for prefers it a certain way . . . They want to make sure that they are in control and therefore, they don’t necessarily, they will just come up with things, just to make sure that you know that you have made mistakes or that they know more than you do (Respondent 57).

She goes on to state that she thinks part of this is due to the supervisor “not having confidence or afraid of somebody taking over their position” (Respondent 57). Thus, the core of these conflicts seems to stem from supervisors’ over assertion or abuse of their formal power. However, such actions and resulting conflicts are due to perceived status threats experienced by supervisors, in which they worry that others do not view them as competent or worthy of the formal status. Therefore, the conflict involves both the formal and informal status hierarchy.

A small number of these incidents were also coded as including elements of the other intra-group conflict types, with one incident being coded for each of the other types (11% coded for each type). However, again, these tended to be part of the power struggle, such as a boss disagreeing about the best way to do the task as an attempt to assert control and reinforce his/her

formal authority. Therefore, although some of these conflicts may be intertwined with other types of conflict, individuals again report perceiving the heart of the conflict as focused on power.

Insubordination: Challenges to formal authority. Another theme of power conflict that ran through conflicts involving supervisors and subordinates involved subordinates resisting the authority or orders of the supervisor. Although any conflict between a supervisor and subordinate could be considered a power struggle given the inherent difference in formal authority, the power conflicts described by respondents went beyond this superficial distinction. Instead, critical to the incidents of power conflicts described in these interviews was that they also involved a distinction of informal status, with subordinates resisting the formal authority of their supervisors, due to their perception of having more informal status (i.e. experience, knowledge, skills, etc.) compared to the supervisor (55%). In a number of the incidents, this also involved instances where the supervisor had been previously promoted or received the job over the individual(s) (45%).

For example, one respondent describes a power struggle between the supervisor and a fellow coworker in which the coworker often ignores the manager's instructions on purpose. Part of this behavior, she perceives, stems from the subordinate thinking that she has more experience than the manager.

I think it's the person who isn't the boss has been here several years longer than the person who is the boss so they have the perception that, you know, I've been here longer, I know more than you (Respondent 6).

Similarly, a supervisor describes a power conflict he had with a subordinate in which the subordinate thought he was better qualified for the position. In one episode of this conflict, the

supervisor describes how the subordinate flat out refused to comply with his instructions during an important group meeting.

One time, I remember we were doing something, a kick off of some event, and I said okay we're making phone calls that we'll make from 5 'till 6 o'clock for two weeks, and he stood up and said, 'I'm not doing that' . . . He thought he kind of oughta be calling some of the shots . . . He thought he was smarter than me. He thought he knew more about lending than I did. I mean he was an older guy. He had been in banking longer than I had (Respondent 8).

This supervisor even found out later that this individual had listed his position at the bank as being the supervisor on his resume.

Interestingly, the age difference between the supervisor and subordinate also seemed to be an important informal status characteristic that affected the power relationship and subsequent conflict incidents. For example, a new, young manager discussed getting involved in power struggles with many of the older tellers when he first started at the branch.

I think here 'cuz I'm so young you know, I mean and in a position where you know you're second in charge of the branch and on of the branch managers are not here, you run the branch . . . so and same thing with you know people that have been in banking for along time, and you know you're overseeing on a teller line and you ask them to do something . . . they are more reluctant to act . . . you know, I'm not gonna do it 'cuz he's just a kid and, you know, what does he know (Respondent 29).

A subordinate at another branch also makes a similar reference when discussing her experiences of a power conflict incident. She states,

There's always a time like when somebody tells you to do something and they're younger than you and you look at them like what are you talking about or I know I've been in banking longer than you . . . (Respondent 7).

Thus, these power conflicts described occurring between supervisors and subordinates go beyond just simple resistance to formal authority, but instead again also involve a conflict over informal status or power given that the actions often stem from subordinates thinking that they have more expertise, skills, and experience than their supervisor.

As would be expected, some of these incidents were also coded as including task (9%), relationship (9%), and process conflict (18%) as subordinates would disagree and resist supervisors' decisions and task instructions. However, again, respondents described the incidents as being about power, not simple disagreements over the task, for example.

Territoriality behaviors. Finally, a theme that emerged involving both peers and supervisor-subordinate relationships focused on territoriality actions. These actions involved individuals refusing to share their responsibilities or being very protective over their work domains in an effort to maintain a certain level of power or status within the organization. Such actions are consistent with conceptualizations of power that focus on control over resources as a source of power (Galinsky et al., 2003) and has recently been explored in work by Brown, Lawrence, and Robinson (2005) who describe territoriality as a "behavioral expression of his or her feelings of ownership toward a physical or social object" (p. 578). Consistent with the findings of this study, they assert that territoriality behaviors may be motivated by a desire to have control over certain resources that will provide a means for influence and advantage within the organization. In this case, I found that any potential encroachment on one's responsibilities that is perceived as a power play is likely to incite a conflict, such as the above cases. As such, respondents described these individuals engaging in these actions especially due to desires for advancement (29%) and feelings of their status or power being threatened by others (29%), including potentially their job (29%).

For example, one individual describes how a fellow teller kept a list from a training meeting and wouldn't let anyone else look at it or help with it. The respondent goes on to say that she thought her co-worker's actions were due to wanting "more, more power" (Respondent

48). Similarly, another respondent describes how a person in a position of authority refused to delegate some of her responsibilities to others for fear that she would lose her higher status.

I can think of a person who basically was in charge and had a big job to do, and the bank asked more of her to do, and she really couldn't handle it all, but didn't want to give it up and didn't want anybody else to help . . . It was a struggle to her to remain on top, in charge . . . she would be threatened by the help (Respondent 50).

In another description, a customer service representative describes a similar incident.

You know like one girl, she didn't want to give up any of her duties to cross train you 'cause she felt that you were stepping on her toes. You know it's not that I want your job. I just want to learn how to do other things, and you know, they'd have that possessiveness, you know about them (Respondent 12).

The same customer service representative goes on to describe another incident in which she became very territorial herself. She states that part of her job responsibilities were to open accounts. However, she became very upset and protective when another teller that was her backup would bypass her and open accounts for people herself. When asked what she believed the girls motives were for behaving this way, she comments, "Because she wanted my job, 'cause she wanted my job" (Respondent 12). Thus, many of these incidents go beyond simple territorial behaviors, but seem to ultimately stem from a desire to maintain one's status or power within the organization.

Again, some of these incidents included elements of the other types of intragroup conflict, with one incident being coded for task conflict (14%) and one incident being coded for relationship conflict (14%). Not surprisingly, 43% of these incidents were also coded for process conflict, given that the power conflicts focused on disagreements over responsibilities. Thus, these types of power conflicts seem to have the most overlap with process conflict. However, respondents focused on the core of the incidents as being about power and status, not just simply

responsibilities. This is further supported by the descriptions of the motivations behind these actions as being due to desires to advancement or feelings of one's status being threatened.

General Discriminant Validity

In support of power conflict being a unique construct, 40 out of the total 65 critical incidents (62%) were not coded as including any of the other types of conflict or as focusing solely on dominating conflict management strategies. Only 25 of the critical incidents (38%) were coded as including at least one type of other intragroup conflict or dominating conflict management strategies (see Table 7).

In terms of the overlap with other intragroup conflict types, as expected, process conflict was coded the greatest number of times, being coded in 11 critical incident descriptions (17%), while task conflict was coded in 10 critical incident descriptions (15%), and relationship conflict was coded in 7 critical incident descriptions (11%). However, as discussed above, for those conflict incidents that were coded as including other types of intragroup conflict, the crux of the conflicts described by respondents focused on power or status and were perceived as being motivated by power concerns, not simple disagreements over fees or who should maintain a task list, for example. Furthermore, it is also not uncommon that different types of conflict co-occur or lead to one another (e.g. De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Greer, Jehn, & Mannix, 2008; Jehn, 1997; Simons & Peterson, 2000) as especially seemed to be the case with power conflict leading to later relationship conflict among individuals. This is also consistent with responses to questioning focused on whether power conflict overlapped with the three other conflict types. When asked to describe critical incidents for the other three types of conflict and whether power conflicts were ever involved in those types of conflicts or tends to be separate, the majority of participants stated that across the different types, they sometimes occur together and sometimes

are separate. When they do occur together, respondents generally indicated that sometimes power conflict triggers later types of conflict and sometimes the other types of conflict lead to later power conflicts. Thus, although the data indicate some overlap in the occurrence of the conflict types, I believe there is strong support indicating that power conflict is a distinct type of conflict.

In terms of its overlap with dominating conflict management strategies, only three out of the 65 critical incidents (5%) were coded as being primarily about individuals using dominating conflict management strategies. Although these incidents did appear to be about how another conflict was managed, the fact that only 3 out of 65 total incidents were coded as such, provides strong support that individuals perceive conflicts over power as a type of conflict in itself, not just a strategy for conflict management.

Consequences

Another one of the goals of this study was to begin to build a nomological network around power conflict by exploring potential consequences. Overall, respondents reported the power conflict incidents as having a negative and harmful impact on both individual and branch level functioning with the majority of conflict types having similar consequences. I discovered four broad themes involving the consequences of power conflict:

- **Negative emotions and attitudes**
- **Conflict escalation**
- **Stressful climate**
- **Lower branch effectiveness**

Negative emotions and attitudes. At the individual level, respondents reported the various conflict types as leading to negative emotions, ranging from anger and frustration to general

anxiety (26% of all incidents). For example, when asked how the power struggles in her work unit affected individuals, one respondent stated, “I think very negatively . . . I think it makes people anxious” (Respondent 44). Likewise, another respondent describes an incident in which a coworker of the same rank oversteps authority and attempts to control her behavior as leading to anger. She states, “You get pissed at them. You get upset” (Respondent 1). Respondents described the power conflicts as having a negative effect on workplace attitudes as well, particularly job satisfaction (6% of overall incidents). For example, when discussing the pervasiveness of power conflicts going on in her branch, one teller commented, “I use to love coming to work. I love my job, but she’s made it so miserable right now. I could care less if I came to work, and that’s sad” (Respondent 5).

Conflict escalation. Additionally, many of the respondents reported that power conflict led to later conflict escalation (28% of all incidents). This appeared to be a consequence that extends across all types, except displays of formal authority. It was also the most frequently mentioned consequence for incidents involving peers (overstepping authority, 35% and displays of superiority, 50%). For example, many individuals reported that the particular power conflict incident led to later emotional tension among the parties involved and later disagreements over work related matters. As one respondent commented, “It builds up and that’s where ya know it’s like a bomb waiting to explode, ya know what I mean? You build it all up. You hold it all in and then it blows” (Respondent 20). Similarly, another respondent stated, “They might start biting other people’s heads off because they’re pissed at that other person. It’s kind of a chain reaction” (Respondent 1). Such a chain reaction is not surprising given that many conflicts occurred as episodes of a longer cycle. Furthermore, as previously mentioned regarding discriminant validity, research has also found that different types can lead to one another, such that an incident

of power conflict may lead to later emotional tension or disagreements on unrelated tasks as individuals hold on to resentment from the initial conflict (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1997; Simons & Peterson, 2000).

Stressful climate. The power conflict incidents were also reported as having a more ambient effect (Hackman, 1992) and creating a stressful environment across the entire work unit (34% of all incidents). Furthermore, this was reported across the different conflict types, but was the most frequently mentioned consequence for incidents involving supervisor-subordinate relationships (displays of formal authority, 38% and insubordination, 36%). For example, one respondent stated, “You come back and there’s tension. Just a lot, you feel it, a lot of tension and just a lot of, you just feel it, you know in the air” (Respondent 43). Similarly, another respondent commented that after the conflict “things are tense...just walking on eggshells at times” (Respondent 18). Likewise, another respondent stated, “It was horrible. It was just horrible. I mean everyday you came to work with that feeling of friction in the office” (Respondent 24).

Lower branch effectiveness. Finally, power conflict was also described as having a significant effect on branch effectiveness. Specifically, respondents described the various conflict incidents as contributing to deficiencies in communication (20% of all incidents), performance (9% of all incidents), and teamwork (5% of all incidents) and leading to the creation of group coalitions (5% of all incidents). For example, one respondent describes the displays of superiority among peers often leading to the “silent treatment” (Respondent 22). Similarly, when asked how the power struggles affected the group, another respondent stated that “one is it tears apart any team work, any bond that could help that...actually more that its... it provides um...it takes away any loyalty that could exist, does not help any mentoring. There can be no mentoring going on, at least not in a positive way, and it just provides a very stressful frustrating work

environment for all involved” (Respondent 57). Ultimately, respondents also attributed the various power conflict types as a factor in many individuals’ decision to leave the organization or change positions (17% of all incidents).

Summary. Thus, power conflict seems to have detrimental consequences at both the individual level and for the entire work unit. Although the above consequences were reported across the various conflict types, there were several distinctions that are also important. For instance, while conflict escalation was the most frequently mentioned consequence for incidents involving peers (overstepping authority, 35% and displays of superiority, 50%), a stressful or tense climate was the most frequently mentioned consequence for incidents involving supervisor-subordinate relationships (insubordination, 36% and displays of formal authority, 38%). For territoriality behaviors, the most frequently mentioned consequence was actually communication issues (57%). Finally, there were also a few outcomes mentioned as unique to only one type of conflict. Specifically, respondents involved in incidents of displays of superiority between peers described such conflicts as contributing to relationship damage (7%) and distrust (7%) among group members.

Antecedents

Along with exploring potential consequences, I also sought to further broaden the nomological network of power conflict by exploring potential antecedents. I discovered five broad themes involving antecedents of power conflict:

- **Group member composition**
- **Leadership**
- **Unclear hierarchy**
- **Layoffs and mergers**

- **Organizational climate**

The majority of these factors were identified as influencing general levels of power conflict, however, and were not identified as relating uniquely to specific types of power conflict.

Therefore, the percentages reported below represent references to these factors across respondents.

Group member composition. One of the prominent factors mentioned by respondents focused on the composition of individuals within the branch as contributing to general levels of power conflicts. In particular, respondents referenced group size, personality, and gender as important. For example, several respondents that reported little to no power conflict within their branches cited the smaller number of employees as a potentially contributing factor (5%). As one individual states,

I think sometimes the larger the office, the more number of people in the office. But I'm sure, [X] branch, they have a lot more conflict and personalities and power struggles then they would in the [X] office, in the smaller branch. I think that can make a difference (Respondent 40).

Respondents also cited individuals with overall dominating personalities within the organization as leading to incidents of power conflict (15%). For example, one respondent commented that such behaviors occur when “you get somebody with a real dominant personality that doesn't understand the power of persuasion” (Respondent 54). Several respondents also cited the gender composition of individuals within the branch as influencing the general level of power conflict (8%). Contrary to what I expected, however, the majority of respondents who mentioned gender as a factor commented that it was more women that tended to incite greater levels of conflict, not men. “You get a group of women working together they can be pretty aggressive” stated one teller (Respondent 13). Similarly, another respondent commented that “some women just can be vicious” (Respondent 38). It is important to note, however, that the majority of branches tended

to be composed predominantly of women. Therefore, there may have been little experience working in different gender compositions to really make an accurate comparison.

Leadership. Respondents also commented that poor management, in particular the absence of management or what we might term laissez-faire leadership and more abusive leadership (17%; Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Tepper, 2000) and related communication issues (3%) seemed to contribute to the existence of power conflicts among employees. For example, one respondent commented, “I think an environment where you have a strong management system, you have a boss who says this is how it is, this is how you’re going to do it, I think um, people are more resigned to do that and they don’t have so many power struggles” (Respondent 34). In contrast, another individual stated, “I think when people manage by fear they have lost the respect and trustworthiness of their employees and that creates kind of a hostile environment to work in” (Respondent 13).

Unclear hierarchy. Respondents also cited commented that uncertainty or ambiguity concerning the level of hierarchy within the branch contributed to the existence of power conflicts (9%), likely due to greater opportunity for status moves among individuals. For example, when commenting on organizational factors that contributed to the existence of power conflicts in her branch, one woman commented, “It was weird, you had your supervisor, but you would go straight to you department head, or your manager, so it was kind of like a difference, you would have this middle person that you were supposed to report to but it didn’t work, it was kind of you weren’t sure which way to go (Respondent 30).

Layoffs and mergers. Respondents also cited organizational changes such as layoffs (5%) and mergers (6%) and the resulting tense organizational climate as contributing to incidents of power conflict as well. For instance, several of the respondents mentioned that their branch was

facing the threat of layoffs, leading to a tense atmosphere among employees and contributing to employees trying to prove their worth compared to others in the organization. Discussing the influence of such feelings of job insecurity, one respondent states,

There is a lot of uncertainty among people and a lot of fear you know, let's face it, I mean you walk out of this place and you don't have a job, I mean, looking at the conditions that we're in now I don't think anybody doesn't want to have a job, so...(13)

Similarly, when discussing the effects of some recent mergers that occurred with some of the branches, one respondent states, "There have been a lot of power struggles there, you know, new collection manager comes in, he's my boss's new boss now, don't necessarily agree on things so you see a lot of conflict and things like that" (Respondent 14).

Organizational climate. Finally, similar to the tense organizational climate associated with the threat of layoffs and mergers, several respondents described just a general competitive and cold work atmosphere as contributing to greater incidents of power conflict (6%). For example, one respondent who works a few days at another branch that she describes as having considerably more power conflicts describes the atmosphere at the branch stating, "I have no idea why, it is so cool, that you think you're in a whole different . . ." (Respondent 35). Thus, when the climate is more hostile and competitive, individuals tend to engage in more power conflicts to get ahead.

Summary. In conclusion, several broad factors emerged as antecedents of power conflicts, providing further insight into different contexts in which power conflicts may develop. In particular, leadership (17%) and personality composition (15%) were reported as the most frequently mentioned factors contributing to power conflicts. Additionally, although I was unable to directly link specific antecedents with specific power conflict types, these findings

provide practical insight in terms of situations and aspects of the organization that can be addressed to prevent or mitigate the negative effects of power conflicts.

Conflict Management Strategies

The final goal of this study was to explore the different conflict management strategies that individuals tended to use to deal with power conflicts. Therefore, interviews were coded for the prominent conflict management strategies found in the literature (e.g. Blake & Mouton, 1964; De Dreu et al., 2001; Rahim, 1983, 2002). These strategies include avoiding, yielding, compromising, problem solving, and dominating or forcing. Avoiding involves trying to ignore or withdraw from the conflict. Yielding involves giving in to the other party. Compromising involves splitting differences down the middle. Problem solving involves attempting to work out a solution that meets the needs of both parties involved. Finally, dominating involves a focus on winning or dominating the other party. Based on the open coding of the interviews, I also included an additional category of “manager intervention” in which a manager is called upon to intervene or resolve the conflict.

Although one might expect individuals to engage in a more power laden approach to resolve such power conflicts, the most common conflict management strategies across incidents were avoidance (25%) and manager intervention (25%). For example, although frustrated, individuals commented that they often just ignored the bossy or controlling attempts of their fellow co-workers or didn't speak up about someone stealing an idea because they didn't want to “rock the boat” (Respondent 17). In particular, this strategy of avoidance was a dominant approach for power conflicts that focused on incidents of overstepping authority (41%), insubordination (27%), and territoriality behaviors (29%). Manager intervention was a dominant approach for power conflicts that focused on displays of superiority (21%), territoriality

behaviors (29%), and displays of formal authority (38%). The third most common strategy was to use a forcing or dominating conflict management style and fight it out until one person got their way. Interestingly, however, only 9% of incidents were coded for dominating as a conflict management strategy, providing some additional support for the distinction between a dominating conflict management strategy and power conflict. The fourth most common strategy involved yielding to the other party (8%) and was referenced across the different types of power conflict. Finally, the fifth most common strategy involved problem solving (6%) in which individuals discussed a solution that could benefit all parties involved. This strategy was referenced in power conflicts that involved overstepping authority (6%), insubordination (18%), and displays of superiority (14%). Finally, compromising was not mentioned in any of the critical incident descriptions. This is not surprising, however, as it would likely be difficult to compromise on issues of power and status.

Discussion

Study 1 was designed to qualitatively explore power conflicts within an organizational context by examining how such conflicts are manifested or enacted as well as to begin to build a nomological network around power conflict by examining potential antecedents and consequences. The data revealed that power conflicts exist across levels of formal authority, occurring both between peers of equal rank and between supervisors and subordinates. Furthermore, the power conflicts involved struggles not only over formal power but over informal power and status as well.

Over the past several decades, various definitions of power have been proposed. Power has been argued to result from formal positions within institutional hierarchies, informal status through expertise or social position, control over resources, and direct control or influence over

others (e.g. Brass, 2002; Dahl, 1957; Emerson, 1962; French & Raven, 1959; Pfeffer, 1981; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). In some form, many of the power conflicts described by the respondents fit these definitions. I discovered five main types of power conflict. First, between peers, power conflicts included individuals *overstepping their authority* and attempting to assert control over the behaviors of others and *displays of superiority* in which individuals of equal rank engaged in competitions over informal status. I also discovered distinct types of power conflict between supervisors and subordinates, which highlights a potential connection between the conflict and leadership literatures that has not been previously explored. These types of power conflict included supervisors' *displays of their formal authority* due to their perceptions of status threats, similar to abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) and petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1994) in the leadership literature, and incidents of *insubordination* in which subordinates defied the orders of their supervisor. Finally, a type of conflict that existed across both peer and supervisor-subordinate relationships involved *territoriality behaviors* in which individuals refused to share responsibilities or resources in an effort to maintain their power and status.

Interestingly, the power conflicts described by respondents were much more complex than these simple actions. Instead, key to understanding the conflicts are the perceived motives behind such actions. Although the main objective for many of the behaviors may have been to gain more formal power within the organization, many of these conflicts also focused on the informal status hierarchy within the organization. Respondents described many of the conflicts as resulting from individuals feeling that either their informal or formal power was threatened as well as perceptions that individuals were overstepping the informal status hierarchy. Thus, issues over power and status were manifested in both the actions and motives of the individuals involved.

In addition to exploring different types of power conflict that may exist, I also sought to explore the discriminant validity of power conflict from potentially overlapping constructs, such as the other three types of intragroup conflict and dominating conflict management strategies. Overall, 62% of the conflict incidents did not receive any codes for the other types, leaving only 38% of the incidents being coded as containing some element of the other types of intragroup conflict or dominating conflict management strategies. Of those incidents that did include other types of conflict, the core of the conflict still focused on a struggle over power as demonstrated by both the actions and motives attributed to the particular conflict. In most cases, task and process conflict were present as a means to engage in a power struggle, while relationship conflict tended to be more of a consequence of the power conflict. Furthermore, as discussed previously, it is not surprising that there is some overlap given that previous research on task, relationship, and process conflict tends to find that they are significantly correlated in self-reported data (e.g. De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Greer et al., 2008; Jehn, 1997; Simons & Peterson, 2000). In regards to whether power conflict is distinct from a dominating conflict management strategy, only 3 of 65 incidents (5%) were coded as primarily being about individuals engaging in dominating conflict management strategies. Thus, this provides some initial support for the distinctiveness of power conflict from the other types of intragroup conflict as well as from dominating conflict management strategies.

This qualitative study was also designed to begin to build a broad nomological network around power conflict by exploring antecedents and consequences. In terms of antecedents, respondents cited such factors as the group composition, leadership, clarity of the organizational hierarchy, and organizational climate as contributing to general incidents of power conflict. In terms of consequences, power conflict was described as having negative and harmful effects at

both the individual and branch level. In particular, respondents reported power conflicts leading to negative outcomes such as lower work attitudes and negative emotions, conflict escalation, a stressful climate, and lower branch effectiveness.

Finally, this study explored the different conflict management strategies used to resolve power conflicts in an effort to further distinguish power conflict from dominating conflict management strategies. Overall, the majority of power conflict incidents were described as involving individuals avoiding the particular conflict or engaging a manager to help resolve the issue. Only 9% of total incidents were coded as involving dominating conflict management strategies. Therefore, this provides additional support for the assertion that power conflict is distinct from dominating conflict management strategies.

Limitations

Despite the strengths of this study, there were also several limitations. First, although I attempted to sample participants broadly by interviewing individuals across 23 branches and several administrative departments, I was still limited in that the research was conducted within only a single organization and was done only with those individuals that chose to volunteer to participate in the research. Thus, future research would benefit from examining the extent to which other types or manifestations of power conflict may exist within other organizations and particularly within other work structures. For instance, as acknowledged in the leadership literature, power conflicts may be particularly prevalent in organizational structures utilizing self-managed teams (Barry, 1991).

Additionally, the sample significantly lacked ethnic diversity as the vast majority of participants were Caucasian. Given that race can be used as a social status cue in society (Berger, Rosenholtz, & Zelditch, 1980), it is possible that individuals with different ethnic backgrounds

have different experiences in regards to power conflicts within the workplace. Therefore, in the future it will be important to examine the existence of power conflict in more diverse samples of participants as well as to explore whether differences in ethnic diversity have an influence on types of power conflict.

Finally, although this study identified several different antecedents and consequences of power conflict, these relationships represent individual perceptions. Therefore, based upon this qualitative data alone, it is not possible to determine the extent to which an association truly exists. Instead, this research begins to build a nomological network that can to be tested in future examinations of power conflict.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to provide an in-depth exploration of power conflict and its potential types or manifestations. In doing so, I discovered several distinct types of power conflict which focused on both the formal and informal status hierarchy. In addition, this study began to build a nomological network for power conflict by identifying antecedents and consequences. Overall, Study 1 provides a greater understanding of power conflict and highlights the important implications it has for advancing theory and our practical understandings of conflict and power in the workplace.

Chapter 5: A Quantitative Exploration of Power Conflict (Study 2)

In the second study of this dissertation, I build upon the qualitative exploration of power conflict in Study 1 by taking a quantitative approach to begin to establish the construct validity of power conflict. Specifically, the goal of this second study is to empirically establish the construct of power conflict as an important fourth dimension of the current conceptualization of intragroup conflict developed by Jehn (1992, 1997), which includes task, relationship, and process conflict. Using confirmatory factor analysis, I examine the extent to which power conflict represents a distinct fourth factor of the currently accepted types of intragroup conflict as well as the discriminant validity of power conflict from the potentially related construct of dominating conflict management strategies. Additionally, this study begins to test a portion of the nomological network that was developed in Study 1 by examining several group level antecedents and consequences of power conflict. Two of the prominent antecedents identified by respondents in Study 1 included the group member composition and the organizational climate. Therefore, in this study I examine the influence of group personality (extraversion and agreeableness) and gender composition and organizational climate (goal orientation climate) on the level of power conflict that exists within a work unit. Respondents in Study 1 also identified a number of consequences of power conflict. I examine two of those variables that were identified: branch stress as well as the more objective outcome of branch turnover. Thus, study 2 will provide important theoretical and practical insight into power conflict as well as provide further evidence of construct validity.

Discriminant Validity

Intragroup Conflict Scale

The goal of the first part of this study is to show that power conflict is a distinct and separate fourth factor of intragroup conflict along with the previously established factors of task, relationship, and process conflict (see Table 8 for items used in previous studies). To review, *task conflict* is defined as “an awareness of differences in viewpoints and opinions pertaining to the group task” (Jehn & Mannix, 2001, p. 238). It focuses on the content of the task and potential differences in interpretations and ideas. *Relationship conflict* is defined as “an awareness of interpersonal incompatibilities” (Jehn & Mannix, 2001, p. 238). It can include differences in personality, values, attitudes, or even opinions that are not task related. *Process conflict* is defined as “an awareness of controversies about aspects of how *task* accomplishment will proceed” (Jehn & Mannix, 2001, p. 239). It is most related to task conflict, but instead of focusing on the content of the task, process conflict is “about the means to accomplish the specific tasks. . . . about strategies for approaching the task” (Jehn & Bandersky, 2003, p. 201).

In developing this conflict typology, Jehn (1992) first conducted a multidimensional scaling study with MBA students concerning their experiences of conflict. The study revealed a three dimensional solution that along with theory and literature reviews was used to develop a three factor conflict scale composed of the current task (initially labeled content conflict), relationship (initially labeled emotional conflict), and process conflict scales (initially labeled administrative conflict). An initial factor analysis supported the three dimensional model of conflict. The developed intragroup conflict scale was then further supported in a study of 116 work groups in a freight transportation firm as part of hypothesis testing concerning a model of the relationship between conflict types and various outcomes (Jehn, 1992, 1995). Finally, in

further support of the conflict dimensions, the three types and their potential consequences were then examined through an ethnographic study (Jehn 1992, 1997). For the ethnography, Jehn (1992, 1997) observed six of the groups that participated in the previous survey study over a 20-month period. She also simultaneously conducted a series of semi-structured interviews with all group members.

This current conceptualization of intragroup conflict has been widely accepted and has been used in research ranging from topics such as decision making (e.g. Amason & Mooney, 1990; Janssen et al., 1999) to diversity (e.g. Jehn et al., 1999; Pelled, 1996; Pelled et al., 1999) to top management teams (e.g. Amason, 1996; Amason & Sapienza, 1997; Simons & Peterson, 2000). The relationship and task dimensions of the scale have also been further validated across six different samples to clearly establish their psychometric properties (Pearson, Ensley, & Amason, 2002). Furthermore, this conceptualization clearly captures the task versus relationship components of conflict that have considerable theoretical support in previous literature. What is also clear in previous literature, however, is that these are not the only potentially important dimensions of conflict that exist. As I argue, power conflict is another important dimension that has been overlooked in previous conceptualizations, but can provide further insight into group interactions and outcomes.

As discussed previously, I expect that power conflict will be related to some degree to all three types of intragroup conflict given that these different dimensions could coincide or even lead to one another. However, I argue that power conflict is distinct from the current factors and will be found as a separate fourth dimension of intragroup conflict. More specifically, I argue that a four factor model of intragroup conflict will better represent the data than either a single

factor model of power conflict or several three factor models of conflict in which power conflict is included as part of task, relationship or process conflict.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Power conflict is a separate and fourth type of intra-group conflict.

Additionally, a four factor model of intragroup conflict, including task, relationship, process, and power conflict will account for more variance in the data than a three factor or one factor model.

Dominating Conflict Management Strategies

Given the potential overlap between power conflict and a dominating conflict management style, it is also important to empirically examine the extent to which these two constructs are distinct. As discussed previously, although power conflict and dominating conflict management strategies are likely to be correlated, I argue that power conflict is distinct in that it is a type of conflict itself, not a means for managing conflicts that have already arisen. In other words, it is possible for individuals to use more dominating conflict management strategies, even if power conflict is absent, and it is possible for power conflict to exist within a group, without members using dominating conflict management strategies to resolve the disagreement or struggle. Thus, I argue that these two constructs are distinct.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): Power conflict is a separate and distinct construct from dominating conflict management strategies. A two factor model with each of these constructs on separate factors will account for more variance in the data than a one factor model.

Antecedents of Power Conflict

In order to further explore the construct of power conflict and begin to build a nomological network, it is important to examine how team members and the broader group context may influence the level of power conflict that exists within a group. This can help to

provide both theoretical and practical insight into how power conflict operates, as well as provide further evidence for construct validity. Therefore, I examine several key antecedents of power conflict that were discovered in Study 1, including personality and demographic composition and organizational climate.

Personality

One of the key antecedents that emerged in the qualitative data involved individuals engaging in power conflicts due to having a dominating personality. At the group level, it is therefore likely that the higher the mean level of dominating personalities among group members, the more likely power conflicts will ensue. Consistent with this, research on groups and teams has started looking at the importance of individual traits, especially personality among group members, focusing on how personality may affect group processes and outcomes (e.g. Barrick, Stewart, Neubert & Mount, 1998; Barry & Stewart, 1997; Humphrey, Hollenbeck, Meyer, & Ilgen, 2007; Mohammed & Angell, 2003, Neuman, Wagner, & Christiansen, 1999; Neuman & Wright, 1999). Based on the qualitative findings regarding dominating personalities, two personality traits that are likely of importance to the potential for power conflict to develop are extraversion and agreeableness.

Extraversion. Although the majority of research has found that extraversion is related to a variety of positive outcomes at the individual level, including greater life satisfaction and general well-being (e.g. Diener, Oishi, & Lucas, 2003; Myers & Diener, 1995; Scollon & Diener, 2006), given that extraverted individuals also tend to be more assertive and dominating (McCrae & John, 1992), I argue that the higher the mean level of extraversion among group members, the higher the level of power conflict that is likely to exist. Extraversion is defined as being assertive, dominant, sociable, gregarious, talkative, and active (Barrick & Mount, 1991; McCrae

& John, 1992). Several scholars have also argued that extraversion represents agency or a desire to get ahead (Hogan & Shelton, 1998; Wiggins & Trapnell, 1996) and can be characterized by a “desire to excel and obtain rewards” (Barrick, Stewart, & Piotrowski, 2002, p. 45) Consistent with this, Barrick and colleagues (2002) found that extraversion was significantly related to a measure of status striving and status striving was found to mediate the relationship between extraversion and performance for sales representatives. Thus, based on these findings, individuals high in extraversion are also more likely to engage in power conflicts with others. At the group level, having even only a couple of individuals high in extraversion is likely to increase the level of power conflict among all group members. Therefore, I argue that the higher the mean level of extraversion within the group, the more likely there will be power conflicts within the group.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): The higher the mean level of extraversion within the group, the higher the level of power conflict within the group.

Agreeableness. Individuals low in agreeableness are characterized as being competitive and less friendly, flexible, or tolerant (Barrick & Mount, 1991). As such, I hypothesize that the lower the mean level of agreeableness among group members, the more likely conflicts over power will develop. Previous research at the dyad level has found that individuals high in agreeableness try to maintain relationships and preserve social harmony, while those lower in agreeableness tend to be more competitive. In terms of conflict in particular, Graziano and colleagues (1996) found that individuals low in agreeableness were reported as eliciting more conflict by their partners, and observers saw more tension in low agreeable dyads than in dyads with higher levels of agreeableness. Previous research examining the effects of personality at the group level have found that mean group levels of agreeableness are associated with higher

performance, arguably because agreeable individuals are more cooperative and thus, function better in team settings (e.g. Neuman et al. 1999; Neuman & Wright, 1999). For example, Barrick et al. (1998) found that mean group levels of agreeableness had a significant negative correlation with general conflict within the group and were positively correlated with cohesion. Thus, based on these findings, individuals low in agreeableness should also be more likely to engage in power conflicts with others. At the group level, having even only a couple of individuals low in agreeableness is likely to increase the level of power conflict among all group members. Therefore, I argue that the lower the mean level of agreeableness within the group, the more likely there will be power conflicts within the group.

Hypothesis 4 (H4): The lower the mean level of agreeableness within the group, the higher the level of power conflict within the group.

Demographics

In addition to personality, demographics are also likely to be an important antecedent of power conflict. In particular, as indicated in the qualitative findings, the gender composition of team members is likely to influence the level of power conflict. Although the qualitative results seemed to indicate that work units with more women experienced higher levels of power conflict, there is some theoretical support to indicate that it may actually be men that engage in more power conflicts.

Research on the power motives of men and women shows that men and women have an equal interest and motivation toward power (e.g. Stewart & Winter, 1976). However, according to prominent power motive researcher Winter (1988), men tend to express power through *ego dominance*, “defined as physical and verbal aggression, rough play, and attention seeking,” while women tend to express power through *responsible nurturance*, defined as “giving help and

support, prosocial dominance, and physical contact” (p. 514). Furthermore, research on leadership provides evidence that women may be less likely to vie for power based on stereotypical gender roles and behaviors. Although women have come a long way in the workplace and in being accepted as leaders, aggressive behaviors that may be considered acceptable for men are often viewed negatively for women. According to social role theory (Eagly, 1987), individuals develop expectations for their own behavior as well as the behaviors of others based upon their views of what constitutes acceptable behavior for women and men. In general, men are ascribed agentic characteristics, while women are ascribed communal characteristics. The agentic qualities of men include such characteristics as ambitious, assertive, competitive, and dominant. In contrast, the communal qualities associated with women include such characteristics as friendly, unselfish, concerned with others, and a focus on maintaining harmony (Eagly & Karau, 1991). These different role expectations are assumed to have developed based upon traditional family and occupational roles held by each gender. According to social role theory, differences in social behavior are due to a tendency for individuals to behave in a manner consistent with their gender roles. Additionally, when individuals behave in inconsistent ways, these behaviors are viewed in a negative manner, even if they would have been acceptable if displayed by the opposite sex. As a result, these negative views of inconsistent role behavior serve to further reinforce gender roles. Moreover, support for the gender differences in terms of agentic and communal behaviors exists in a considerable amount of research that indicates individuals view these as socially appropriate characteristics not only for others, but also for their ideal selves (for a review see Eagly & Karau, 2002).

Based on social role theory (Eagly, 1987), groups or work units predominantly composed of men should be more likely to engage in power conflict. Being in positions of power, control,

and dominance have been traditionally viewed as male roles and involving more masculine characteristics. In support of this, meta-analyses have found that men are more likely to emerge as leaders compared to women (Eagly & Karau, 1991), while women in leadership roles tend to be evaluated less favorably than men in leadership roles (Eagly, Makhijani, & Klonsky, 1992; for a review see also Eagly & Karau, 2002). Similarly, in a discussion of issues facing women in advancing their careers, Ragins and Sundstrom (1989) argue that power is considered to be a male attribute. As a result, "...the incompatibility between the female stereotype and power in an organization may result in role-conflict for women" (Ragins & Sundstrom, 1989, p. 63). Thus, given that men are socialized to behave in more competitive and assertive ways, this research would suggest that a greater proportion of men is likely to result in higher levels of power conflict. Therefore, given the discrepancy between the qualitative findings indicating that the presence of more women is likely to lead to more power conflicts and the theoretical and empirical evidence that suggests it may be that the presence of more men is likely to lead to more power conflict, I present two competing hypotheses.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): The greater the proportion of males within the group, the greater the level of power conflict within the group.

Alternatively:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): The greater the proportion of females within the group, the greater the level of power conflict within the group.

Organizational Climate

The importance of the organizational context in understanding workplace behavior is well established within the literature (e.g. Brown & Leigh, 1996; Colquitt, Noe, & Jackson, 2002; Schneider, Ehrhart, Mayer, Saltz, & Niles-Jolly, 2005; Zohar & Luria, 2005). In particular,

research has indicated the importance of organizational or group level climates in shaping behavior (see Ostroff, Kinicki, & Tamkins, 2003). Therefore, it is important to explore how the organizational context may shape the conflict that takes place within a group. Consistent with this, the qualitative results indicated that the climate of the branch contributed to incidents of power conflict. In particular, respondents reported that the existence of a competitive climate often created by the threat of layoffs and competition for promotions led to increases of power conflict among employees. Therefore, I argue that one important contextual variable may be the goal orientation climate in terms of the extent to which the group promotes and values performance, leading to greater competition, versus learning, leading to greater cooperation.

Goal orientation was originally developed as a means of classifying the broader motivational goals of individuals and consists of two main classifications, learning goal orientation and performance goal orientation (Dweck, 1986; Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Learning goal orientation involves individuals seeking to “increase their competence, to understand or master something new” (Dweck, 1986). Performance goal orientation involves individuals seeking to “gain favorable judgments of their competence or avoid negative judgments of their competence” (Dweck, 1986). Traditionally, goal orientation has been measured at the individual level of analysis (VandeWalle, 1997). However, in recent work on goal orientation, Dragoni (2005) proposed that leaders can create a climate for goal orientation which shapes the state goal orientation of group members. Organizations with a learning goal orientation climate are characterized by leaders who value employee self-development. These leaders “model the importance of learning from mistakes, encourage experimentation with new work approaches, and provide constructive feedback on how to improve” (Dragoni, 2005, p. 1086). In contrast, organizations with a performance goal orientation climate are characterized by leaders who value

ability and performance. These leaders encourage competition and “explicitly and continuously evaluate employee performance relative to other group members and . . . group members are encouraged by their leader to promote their abilities” (Dragoni, 2005, p. 1087).

Given that performance and competition are emphasized in performance goal orientation climates, individuals are likely to view positions of power and influence as very desirable. Being the individual in the power position of a group allows one to demonstrate their abilities and provides an opportunity to take a larger portion of credit for any outcomes. Furthermore, given that a performance goal orientation climate focus on competition, it is likely to further create an atmosphere conducive for struggles over status. In contrast, if self-development and creative experimentation are emphasized, individuals are less likely to see the need to dominate others. Furthermore, learning goal orientation is associated with individuals being more likely to see coworkers as a source of social support and feedback (Dragoni, 2005). Therefore, creating a climate in which coworkers are viewed as peers and true team members should lead to a lower likelihood of individuals wanting to gain status and control over others. Thus, learning goal orientation climate should lead to less power conflict.

Hypothesis 6a (H6a): The higher the learning goal orientation climate, the lower the level of power conflict.

Hypothesis 6b (H6b): The higher the performance goal orientation climate, the greater the level of power conflict.

Consequences of Power Conflict

Now that I have provided hypotheses concerning several potential antecedents of power conflict, it is equally important to examine the consequences of power conflict. Therefore, I examine the implications of power conflict for several group level outcomes that were identified

in Study 1. In particular, I examine the influence of power conflict on branch stress and branch turnover. In addition to helping build a nomological network, this will help to establish the criterion-related validity of the power conflict measure.

Branch Stress

Consistent with the qualitative findings, I argue that power conflict should be positively related to branch level stress. Although power conflict will have implications for the individuals immediately involved in the conflict, it is likely to also be an ambient stressor (Hackman, 1992) in which high levels of power conflict are likely to be uncomfortable and unsatisfying for both those involved in the power struggles and those that are witnessing members. At the individual level, there is a considerable amount of research that has found that conflict in general is associated with lower well-being and health (De Dreu, Dierendonck, & Dijkstra, 2004). As others in the group are aware of the existence of such conflict, it is also likely that the existence of conflicts over such strivings would have similar negative implications for all group members. As recent research has illustrated, groups can develop shared emotions in which there is a convergence of mood or a distinct affective tone within the group (e.g. Barsade, 2002; Bartel & Saavedra, 2000; Kelly & Barsade, 2001; George, 1990). Furthermore, Bliese and Halverson (1996) have shown that there are consistencies in how individuals perceive and respond to their work environments in terms of levels of job stress, specifically. Thus, I argue that higher levels of power conflict will be related to higher levels of branch stress.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): Power conflict will be positively related to branch stress.

Branch Turnover

Similar to stress, power conflict is also likely to be associated with higher levels of turnover within work units. This is also supported in the qualitative data, with respondents

reporting power conflicts as a contributing factor to individuals leaving the organization. Conflict in general has been found to be negatively related to job satisfaction (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1997; Jehn et al. 1999), and research on organizational politics indicates that perceptions of power striving behaviors in others is associated with job anxiety, lower satisfaction, and higher intentions to turnover (e.g. Ferris & Kacmar, 1992; Kacmar et al., 1999). Therefore, given that conflicts over power are likely to result in an unpleasant working atmosphere, including lower job satisfaction and higher levels of stress, it is equally likely that work units that experience power conflict will also have higher rates of turnover.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): Power conflict will be positively related to work unit turnover.

In order to further establish the construct validity of power conflict, it is important to demonstrate that power conflict accounts for additional variance in these outcomes, above and beyond task, relationship, and process conflict. This will help show that power conflict is distinct from the other three types of conflict as well as highlight the further insight it can provide in understanding group functioning and outcomes. Therefore, based on the above discussion and theoretical support for power conflict as a distinct construct, I argue that power conflict will account for additional variance in branch stress and turnover above and beyond the variance accounted for by task, relationship, and process conflict.

Method

To test the above hypotheses, I used data from a banking context similar to that in Study 1. This context complements the qualitative research, but also provides a loosely structured organization in which all employees have the same hierarchical structure and are involved in the same tasks, but are exposed to different social contexts due to the organization's separation into different branches. Therefore, in this study, all variables are represented at the group (branch)

level. In addition, I was able to prevent some common-method bias by having objective turnover data for each branch.

Participants

Employee sample. A total of 862 employees from 159 bank branches completed the workplace survey, with a mean of 5.37 employees within each branch (*Median* = 5, *SD* = 2.87). The overall response rate across branches was 59%. The mean response rate within branches was 62% (*Median* = .63%, *SD* = 26%). I eliminated any suspicious responses (e.g., large percentage of unanswered questions, using the same response for an entire scale), which reduced the sample size to 781 participants. I then limited the sample to branches for which at least three employees responded to the survey in order to have a sufficient response size to aggregate data to the branch level. The final total was 743 employees and 131 branches. This resulted in a final mean number of 5.67 respondents per branch (*Median* = 5, *SD* = 2.43).

The final sample was 51% Caucasian, 16% Asian American, 10% African American, 7% Hispanic, 5% International, 2% Native American, 2% Biracial, 5% other, and 5% who did not report ethnicity. In terms of gender, the sample was 79% female, 20% male, and 2% did not report gender. In terms of age, 17% of employees were between the ages of 18 and 22, 26% of employees were between the ages of 23 and 29, 18% of employees were between the ages of 30 and 39, and 35% of employees were 40 years or older. In terms of education, 28% of participants had a high school education, 26% completed community college, 36% completed college, 7% completed graduate school, and 2% did not report education. The sample contained 75% full time workers, 25% part time workers, and 1% of the sample did not report work status. In addition, 7% of employees reported belonging to the lower SES category, 81% reported belonging to the middle SES category, 6% reported belonging to the upper SES category, and

5% did not report SES. The mean tenure of employees was 37.54 months (*Median* = 15, *SD* = 61.12).

Procedure

Participants completed the survey during working hours and then mailed the survey back in a pre-paid envelope. Surveys were accompanied by a letter from the principal investigator as well as a letter from one of the bank's regional managers indicating that participation was voluntary, but highly encouraged. All survey participants were also eligible to enter a lottery with five chances of winning a \$60 cash prize. Following completion of the survey administration, reports of branch turnover were collected from administrative records. See Appendix C for a full list of the survey measures.

Employee Survey Measures

Power conflict. In order to match the length and breadth of the conflict scales composing Jehn's (1992, 1997) intragroup conflict measure, a shortened five-item scale for power conflict was developed. Power conflict was measured with the five following items. (1) How often are there power struggles among members of this branch? (2) How often are branch members domineering? (3) How often are branch members in a struggle over who is in control? (4) How often do branch members have trouble taking directions from someone else? (5) How often do branch members try to dominate others? Respondents used a five item response scale which ranged from 1= "none" to 5= "a lot." In developing the power conflict scale, a deductive approach was used in which three individuals independently generated items based on a working definition of the construct. Consistent with the recommendations of Chan (1998), the items were written using a referent-shift consensus model. In the case of power conflict, the focal referent is at the level of the group or work unit. Therefore, consistent with Chan's (1998) typology, all

items were written with the group (branch) as the referent. In terms of the psychometric properties, the alpha for the scale was very good at a value of .94. Since power conflict is conceptualized as a shared group level construct, I averaged the power conflict items to create the scale and aggregated the data to the branch level of analysis.

Intragroup conflict. Intragroup conflict was measured based on Jehn's (1992, 1997) three dimensions of task conflict, relationship conflict, and process conflict. Respondents used a five-point response scale, which ranged from 1= "none" to 5= "a lot." Task conflict was measured by three items (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Example items include, "How often do people in your branch have conflicting opinions about the project you are working on?" and "How frequently do you have disagreements within you branch about the task of the project you are working on?" ($\alpha = .81$). Relationship conflict was measured by three items (Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Example items include, "How much emotional conflict is there in your branch?" and "How much relationship conflict is there in your branch?" ($\alpha = .83$). Process conflict was measured by three items (Jehn et al. 1999; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Example items include "How frequently do members of your branch disagree about the way to complete a group task?" and "How much conflict is there in your branch about task responsibilities?" ($\alpha = .89$). Again, since conflict is conceptualized as a shared group level construct, I averaged the conflict items to create the three scales and aggregated the data to the branch level of analysis. A confirmatory factor analysis supported a three factor solution (see Hypothesis 1 results for full CFA).

Dominating conflict management strategies. Dominating conflict management strategies was measured with a five item scale developed based on previous conflict management scales (e.g. De Dreu et al. 2001). Respondents were instructed to rate the statements based on what happens when "conflicts arise in this branch." Respondents used a five item response scale

ranging from 1= “strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree” ($\alpha = .79$). Example items include “Branch members each search for gains only for themselves” and “Branch members do everything to win for themselves.” Items were averaged together to create a scale and then aggregated to the branch level of analysis. A confirmatory factor analysis supported the items as representing a single factor (see Hypothesis 2 results for full CFA).

Extraversion. Extraversion was measured with eight items from Goldberg’s (1999) measure of the Big Five personality dimensions. Respondents used a five item response scale ranging from 1= “very inaccurate” to 5= “very accurate” ($\alpha = .78$). Example items from the extraversion scale include, “I start conversations” and “I don’t mind being the center of attention.” For this study, group level extraversion was conceptualized as an additive model in which having at least some people high in extraversion in the work unit will result in a higher average level of extraversion, which is hypothesized to influence the level of conflict. Using an additive model (Steiner, 1972) is consistent with other studies that examine group personality composition (Halfhill et al. 2005) and is consistent with the theoretical basis for the study hypothesis.

Agreeableness. Agreeableness was measured with eight items from Goldberg’s (1999) measure of the Big Five personality dimensions. Respondents used a five item response scale ranging from 1= “very inaccurate” to 5= “very accurate” ($\alpha = .73$). Example items from the agreeableness scale include, “I sympathize with others’ feelings” and “I make people feel at ease.” Similar to extraversion, for this study, group level agreeableness is conceptualized as an additive model in which having at least some people high in agreeableness in the work unit will result in a higher average level of agreeableness, which is hypothesized to influence the level of conflict.

I conducted a CFA on the two personality variables. Although a two-factor solution did not produce an ideal fit ($X^2(103) = 889.31, p < .05$; SRMR = .09, RMSEA = .10, CFI = .73). This two-factor solution fit the data significantly better ($\Delta X^2(1) = 695.5, p < .001$) than a one-factor solution in which all items were loaded onto a single factor ($X^2(104) = 1240.77, p < .05$; SRMR = .10, RMSEA = .12, CFI = .61). Furthermore, these scales represent personality dimensions that have been well established within the literature. Therefore, I kept the scales separate, and the items were averaged together to create each scale and then aggregated to the branch level of analysis to represent the mean group level of extraversion and agreeableness.

Gender. Gender was measured by self-report from participants, who checked either female or male on the survey. Female was coded as a 0, and male was coded as a 1. Consistent with other research on gender composition (e.g. Ostroff & Atwater, 2003), gender composition was calculated as the percentage of males in the group.

Performance and learning goal orientation climate. Performance and learning goal orientation were each measured with a four item scale adapted from scales developed by Dragoni (2005). The items focused on the extent to which branch managers created climates focused on performance or learning goal orientation. Respondents used a response scale ranging from 1= “strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree.” For performance goal orientation climate, items included such statements as “My branch manager encourages members within my branch to compete with one another” and “My branch manager emphasizes the importance of outperforming others” ($\alpha = .72$). For learning goal orientation climate, items included such statements as “My branch manager facilitates the development of branch members” and “My branch manager treats mistakes as opportunities to learn something new” ($\alpha = .85$). I conducted a CFA on the two climate scales. A two factor model fit the data well ($X^2(19) = 46.05, p < .05$;

SRMR = .09, RMSEA = .10, CFI = .95). Furthermore, the two factor model fit the data significantly better ($\Delta X^2(1) = 138.19, p < .001$) than a one-factor model ($X^2(20) = 184.24, p < .05$; SRMR = .19, RMSEA = .25, CFI = .67). Since goal orientation climate is conceptualized as a shared group level construct, I then averaged the items to create each of the scales and then aggregated the data to the branch level of analysis.

Branch stress. Stress was measured with a three item scale developed for this survey. Respondents used a five item response scale ranging from 1= “strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree” ($\alpha = .81$). The items were “My job is very demanding,” “I feel constant pressure in my job,” and “Many aspects of my job are stressful.” An exploratory factor analysis using maximum likelihood extraction supported a one factor solution (60% variance explained; $\lambda_1 = 2.19, \lambda_{2-3} < 1.00$) in which all items loaded higher than .40 on a single factor. I averaged the items to create the scale and then aggregated the data to the branch level of analysis to represent the mean level of stress within the branch.

Control variables. Given that social interactions among group members can influence the strength of work unit effects (Klein, Conn, Smith, & Sorra, 2001), for all analyses, I controlled for group size, mean group tenure (mean number of months worked at the branch), and employee work status, measured as the percentage of full-time employees in the branch.

Aggregation statistics. All of the above constructs are conceptualized as group level constructs. Therefore, for each of the above, I averaged items to create the scale and aggregated the data to the branch level of analysis. I calculated aggregation statistics for power conflict, the three intragroup conflict scales (task, relationship, and process), dominating conflict management strategies, goal orientation climate (performance and learning), and stress to justify aggregation to the branch level (see Table 9; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). As discussed above,

although group level personality is measured as a mean group score, these constructs are conceptualized as additive models and are not expected to be shared constructs among group members. Therefore, it was not necessary to calculate aggregation statistics for these variables.

For all variables, the median $r_{wg(j)}$ value was above the recommended .70 (Cohen, Doveh, & Eick, 2001; Klein et al., 2000) across branches, indicating sufficient within-group agreement. The ICC(1) values were also statistically significant. However, the ICC(2) values failed to reach the recommended .70 cutoff (Klein et al., 2000). The ICC(2) value is a measure of the reliability of the group level means and has been shown to be influenced by group size (Bliese, 2000). Therefore, lower ICC(2) values are not uncommon when group size is small. Given that the ICC(2) values represent the reliability of the group mean, lower values will actually create a conservative test of the study hypotheses. Therefore, although the ICC(2) values are lower than desired, I concluded that aggregation was justified and aggregated the scales to the branch level of analysis.

Administrative Records

Branch turnover. Branch turnover was obtained from bank administrative records. Branch turnover was measured as the percentage of turnover during the quarter immediately following the administration of the survey. However, turnover data was only available for 42 of the branches resulting in a limited sample size for analyses involving branch turnover.

Results

Means, standard deviations, reliabilities, and correlations between the measures appear in Table 10. The first two hypotheses focus on the discriminant validity of power conflict from the other types of intragroup conflict (task, relationship, and process) and dominating conflict management strategies. Confirmatory factor analysis was used to test both of these hypotheses.

The remaining hypotheses are designed to begin testing a portion of the nomological network developed in Study 1 by examining several antecedents (personality and gender composition and goal orientation climate) and consequences (stress and turnover) of power conflict. All variables are represented at the group level. Therefore, hypotheses were tested using hierarchical ordinary least squares regression. Since the low ICC(2)s create a more conservative test of the hypotheses, I used one-tailed significance tests to increase power. I controlled for group size, work status (measured as the percentage of full time employees), and mean group tenure in all analyses.

Discriminant Validity

Intragroup conflict scale. Hypothesis 1 predicted that power conflict would be found as a separate fourth type of intra-group conflict and that this four factor model would fit the data significantly better than several alternative models. Therefore, in order to show that power conflict is a distinct construct from task, relationship, and process conflict, I conducted a group level confirmatory factor analysis on all of the intragroup conflict items. First, I compared the theorized four factor model to a series of different three-factor models in which the power conflict items were loaded onto either the task factor, the relationship factor, or the process factor. I then also compared the four-factor model to a one-factor model in which all the organizational conflict items loaded onto a single factor.

Following the cutoff criteria proposed by Hu and Bentler (1999), the proposed four-factor solution with task, relationship, process, and power conflict as distinct constructs fit the data well, despite a slightly high RMSEA value ($\chi^2(71) = 142.24, p < .001$; SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .09, CFI = .96). Furthermore, this four-factor solution fit the data significantly better ($\Delta\chi^2(3) = 58.73, p < .001$) than a three-factor solution in which the power conflict items loaded onto the task factor ($\chi^2(74) = 200.97, p < .001$; SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .11, CFI = .94) and was significantly

better ($\Delta X^2(3) = 54.22, p < .001$) than a three-factor solution in which the power conflict items loaded onto the relationship factor ($X^2(74) = 196.46, p < .001$; SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .11, CFI = .94). It was also significantly better ($\Delta X^2(3) = 138.59, p < .001$) than a three-factor solution in which the power conflict items loaded onto the process factor ($X^2(74) = 280.83, < .001$; SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .15, CFI = .90).. Finally, the four-factor model also fit the data significantly better ($\Delta X^2(6) = 186.93, p < .001$) than a one-factor model ($X^2(77) = 329.17, p < .001$; SRMR = .05, RMSEA = .16, CFI = .87). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported.¹

Dominating conflict management strategies. Hypothesis 2 predicted that power conflict was distinct from dominating conflict management strategies. I again conducted a group level confirmatory factor analysis on the items. The overall two-factor solution with power conflict and dominating conflict management strategies as distinct constructs fit the data well, despite a slightly high RMSEA value ($X^2(34) = 72.79, p < .001$; SRMR = .04, RMSEA = .09, CFI = .97). Furthermore, this two-factor solution fit the data significantly better ($\Delta X^2(1) = 104.19, p < .001$) than a one-factor solution in which the power conflict and dominating conflict management items were loaded onto a single factor ($X^2(35) = 176.98, p < .001$; SRMR = .09, RMSEA = .18, CFI = .88). Hypothesis 2, therefore, was also supported.

Antecedents

In Hypotheses 3-6, I proposed several group composition (personality and gender) and organizational climate variables (goal orientation climate) as antecedents of power conflict. I tested the antecedent variables in a hierarchical multiple regression. Control variables (i.e.

¹ I also conducted a multilevel confirmatory factor analysis for Hypotheses 1 and 2. However, although the structure of my hypothesized factors seemed to be supported when the multilevel CFA was conducted, M-plus had trouble estimating the between-level covariance matrix. Thus, the results of the multilevel CFA could not be trusted and were not reported in this document. This might be due to the low average group size.

branch size, work status, and tenure) were entered in step 1, and the proposed antecedents were entered in step 2. Results are presented in Table 11.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that the higher the group mean on extraversion, the higher the level of power conflict within the group. In support of this hypothesis, there was a significant positive relationship between mean employee extraversion and power conflict ($\beta = .30, t = 3.26, p \leq .01$).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that the lower the group mean on agreeableness, the higher the level of power conflict within the group. In support of this hypothesis, there was a significant negative relationship between mean employee agreeableness and power conflict ($\beta = -.16, t = -1.72, p \leq .05$).

Hypothesis 5 contained two competing hypotheses regarding whether a greater proportion of females or a greater proportion of males would be related to higher levels of power conflict within the group. Consistent with the qualitative results, the data indicated that the greater the percentage of females within a work unit, the greater the level of power conflict ($\beta = -.20, t = -2.36, p \leq .05$).²

Hypothesis 6a predicted that the higher the learning goal orientation climate within the work unit, the lower the level of power conflict. In support of this hypothesis, there was a significant negative relationship between learning goal climate and power conflict ($\beta = -.31, t = -3.50, p \leq .01$). Hypothesis 6b predicted that the higher the performance goal orientation climate within the work unit, the greater the level of power conflict. However, there was no significant main effect for performance goal climate on power conflict ($\beta = -.06, t = -.66, ns$). Thus, Hypothesis 6 was only partially supported.

² Given that this analysis involved competing hypotheses, the results of a two tailed significance test are presented in order to subject this analysis to a more stringent significance requirement than the other hypotheses.

In sum, the results indicate that the personality composition (extraversion and agreeableness), gender composition, and the learning goal orientation climate of the work unit are all significantly associated with the level of power conflict experienced within the group.

Consequences

In Hypotheses 7-8, I proposed that power conflict would be positively related to branch stress and turnover. For all hypotheses, the control variables were entered in step 1. The other intragroup conflict variables (task, relationship, and process conflict) were entered in step 2, and power conflict was entered in step 3. Results are presented in Table 12.

Hypothesis 7 predicted that power conflict would be positively related to branch stress above and beyond the other three types of intragroup conflict. In support of this hypothesis, power conflict had a significant positive relationship with branch stress after controlling for task, relationship, and process conflict ($\beta = .29, t = 1.83, p \leq .05$).

Hypothesis 8 predicted that power conflict would be positively related to branch turnover above and beyond the other three types of intragroup conflict. In support of this hypothesis, there was a positive relationship between power conflict and turnover after controlling for task, relationship, and process conflict ($\beta = .58, t = 1.66, p \leq .05$).

Given the possibility that the various types of intragroup conflict may influence or interact with each other, I also explored the extent to which power conflict may moderate the relationship between the other types of conflict and these outcomes. For example, it is possible that conflicts about the task or allocation of resources may have stronger negative consequences if individuals are also misattributing these disagreements to be status plays. However, there were no significant interactions with the other conflict types in predicting the outcomes included in this study.

Discussion

Given the omission of conflicts over power from the organizational conflict literature, the goal of this study was to build upon the qualitative results presented in Study 1 and provide empirical evidence for the existence of power conflict as a new and valid construct. In support of power conflict as a potential fourth factor of intragroup conflict, a confirmatory factor analysis found that a four-factor model of intragroup conflict fit the data significantly better than several three-factor models or a single factor model. A second confirmatory factor analysis also indicates that power conflict is distinct from dominating conflict management strategies, which provides support for the assertion that power conflict is a type of conflict itself and not simply a means for resolving conflicts that have already arisen. Thus, these results provide further evidence that conflicts over power exist in organizations, can be measured, and are distinct from both other types of intragroup conflict and dominating conflict management strategies.

It should be noted, however, that despite the promising confirmatory factor analysis results, there was a fairly high correlation among the conflict types, ranging from .78 to .82. Although the conflict types are expected to be related, these values are much higher than those found in other research such as the meta-analysis by De Dreu and Weingart (2003), in which they found an average correlation between relationship and task conflict across 24 studies to be .54. Thus, it will be important to further examine the divergent validity of these intragroup conflict types in future studies. Nevertheless, in this study, power conflict had unique predictive validity when controlling for the other conflict types.

The examination of antecedents and consequences of power conflict in this study provides support for a portion of the nomological network developed in Study 1. With the exception of performance goal orientation climate, all the other predicted antecedents were

significantly related to power conflict indicating that the personality composition of individual characteristics (extraversion and agreeableness), the gender composition, and the learning goal orientation climate are associated with the level of power conflict that takes place.

In regards to the findings relating gender composition to power conflict, however, it is important to note that it is possible that this result is again due to a low base rate of work units with a high percentage of males. Over 70% of the branches were composed of more than 70% female, with over 30% of the branches being completely female, and no branches with greater than 80% men. Therefore, future research using samples with greater variation in terms of gender composition should continue to explore this hypothesis. Additionally, given these results and the sample limitations, it may also be that the level of gender homogeneity is a more important predictor, with greater homogeneity of either gender leading to greater levels of power conflict. In other words, individuals may feel more status competition with members of their same sex compared to members of the opposite sex.

Finally, in terms of consequences, these results indicate that power conflict has important implications for branch stress and turnover, even above and beyond the other intragroup conflict types. Thus, these findings suggest that previous conceptualizations which failed to account for status conflicts may be overlooking important implications conflict has for group functioning and effectiveness.

Limitations

Despite the strengths of this research, there were also several limitations. First, although a broad range of antecedents and consequences of power conflict were identified in Study 1, I was only able to test a limited portion of the nomological network. Certainly, the other variables identified in the qualitative study deserve further exploration. Therefore, it will be important for

future research to continue to test other portions of the nomological network surrounding power conflict.

Second, the ICC(1) and $r_{wg(j)}$ values indicated aggregation of the variables to the branch level was justified. However, the ICC(2) values failed to reach the recommended .70 cutoff (Klein et al., 2000), indicating poor reliability of the group level means. This creates a more conservative test of the study hypotheses in general. However, it should also be noted that the measures of the other three types of intragroup conflict (task, relationship, and process) had ICC(2) values considerably lower than the measure of power conflict. Therefore, there is also a possibility that power conflict was able to account for additional variance in the outcomes above and beyond the other three types due to a higher reliability of the group level means. While it is possible to test whether reliability accounted for the predictive ability of power conflict over the other three types of intragroup conflict, the sample size within each group was too low to allow stable estimates of the corrected variance-covariance matrix. When I attempted to increase the cutoff for within group sample size, the number of branches that met this new requirement was severely restricted leading to limited statistical power. Therefore, it will be important for future research to continue to examine the aggregation properties of these conflict types and their predictive validity relative to one another with larger sample sizes.

Finally, this study used a cross-sectional design. Therefore, it is not possible to draw any causal conclusions concerning the direction of the relationships proposed in the hypotheses. For example, it is possible that instead of power conflict leading to increased levels of branch stress, increased levels of stress may actually lead to higher levels of power conflict within the group. Therefore, future research should continue to examine these relationships especially using experimental and longitudinal methods to examine issues of causality.

Conclusion

Overall, Study 2 provides strong support for power conflict as a new construct. This study helps establish power conflict as an important fourth factor of intragroup conflict and provides support for its divergence from the other three conflict types as well as from dominating conflict management strategies. In addition, it built upon the qualitative findings in Study 1 by testing a portion of the nomological network around power conflict, finding that both the group composition and climate are important antecedents. This also provided evidence for the negative implications of power conflict for group functioning, particularly in terms of increased group level stress and turnover. Thus, these findings build upon previous conceptualizations of conflict that have failed to capture the potential for struggles over power and status.

Chapter 6: General Discussion

As organizations have long been thought of as political systems (e.g. March, 1962; Mintzberg, 1983; Morgan, 1986; Pfeffer, 1981), there is a considerable amount of work examining individual level strivings for status and power. However, research has largely yet to examine how these individual motives and behaviors designed to garner power may translate to processes at the interpersonal and group level, and in particular, the extent to which they may result in conflicts or power struggles between individuals. Therefore, the goal of this dissertation was to explore and develop a construct of power conflict using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

In Study 1, I used a qualitative approach to explore power conflicts in-depth. Specifically, I examined how power conflicts are enacted, including the different types of actions and motivations that are involved as well as further explored potential antecedents and consequences of power conflict. I discovered that power conflicts exist across levels of formal authority and involve struggles not only over formal power but over informal power and status as well. Five main types of power conflict emerged from the qualitative data. Power conflicts between peers focused on (1) individuals overstepping their authority and attempting to dominate others and (2) displays of superiority in which peers competed for higher informal status within the group. The power conflicts between supervisors and subordinates focused on (3) supervisors asserting their formal authority in the face of status threats and (4) acts of insubordination. Finally, a type of power conflict that existed across both peer and supervisor-subordinate relationships was (5) territoriality behaviors. These conflicts went beyond simple actions involving power, however. Key to the descriptions of power conflict were that these conflicts also involved motives focused on power and status, including individuals feeling threatened by others, simple desires to gain

more formal power, and feelings that someone overstepped the informal status hierarchy. Thus, power conflicts stem not only from actions, but motives and involve both the formal and informal power hierarchy.

In an effort to begin building a nomological network, I also explored antecedents and consequences of power conflict. Respondents identified a broad array of antecedents, ranging from the group composition, to leadership and the existence of unclear hierarchies. In terms of consequences, power conflicts were reported to have a severe and negative impact on both individual and organizational functioning, including creating a stressful climate and leading to greater conflict escalation. Finally, this qualitative exploration also attempted to explore the extent to which incidents of power conflict overlap with other potentially related constructs such as the other three types of intragroup conflict and dominating conflict management strategies. Although some of the incident descriptions included elements of task, relationship, and process conflict, the majority of incidents were distinct. Furthermore, those incidents that were coded as including other types of intragroup conflict were ultimately focused around a conflict over power or status as evident in both the actions and motivations of the individuals involved. Thus, Study 1 provided considerable insight into the types of power conflict that occur in an organizational context, began to develop a nomological network for future testing, and provided initial support for the distinction between power conflict and other potentially related constructs.

Study 2 was designed to build upon these initial qualitative findings and provide empirical evidence that conflicts over power do exist, can be measured, and have implications for group functioning and effectiveness. In the first step of this process, I attempted to empirically establish power conflict as a new type of intragroup conflict as well as provide evidence of its discriminant validity from related constructs such as the currently accepted types

of intragroup conflict (task, relationship, and process) and dominating conflict management strategies. In support of the study hypotheses, the confirmatory factor analysis results provide evidence that power conflict is a distinct and separate fourth factor of intragroup conflict as well as is distinct from dominating conflict management strategies. I also tested a portion of the nomological network developed in Study 1 by examining several antecedents and consequences of power conflict. The findings indicated that both the learning climate and the personality and gender composition of the group significantly influenced the level of power conflict in the branch. I also found that power conflict was related to branch stress and turnover above and beyond the three other types of intragroup conflict. Thus, these combined studies provide strong support for power conflict as a new and important construct and provide an initial framework with which to conduct future research. As illustrated in Figure 1, the qualitative findings identified several different types of power conflict as well as began to develop a nomological network of which a portion was empirically supported in Study 2. Further exploration of these different conflict types as well as the nomological network will continue to help broaden our understanding of power conflict.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Although the potential for conflicts over power and status is acknowledged within the literature (e.g. Barry, 1991; Bass, 1990, Hornstein, 1965; Mannix & Sauer, 2006; Owens, 1998; Owens & Sutton, 2001; Wall & Callister, 1995), there has been no systematic study of power conflicts and no published measure with which to conduct research. The findings presented here now provide some initial support for the construct of power conflict, including the theoretical and practical insight it may provide.

From a theoretical standpoint, these two studies provide support for the inclusion of power conflict as a key type of intragroup conflict, broadening former theories of conflict that neglected to incorporate the importance of struggles for power and status. As this research indicates, conflicts over power are likely as prevalent in organizations as conflicts over the task or personality differences. Thus, power conflict provides further insight into both the motives and sources of disagreements that occur in the workplace. Additionally, individual strivings for power and status are well documented within the literature (e.g. Adler, 1966; Frieze & Boneva, 2001; Kipnis, 1976; McClelland, 1975, 1987; Pfeffer, 1981; Winter, 1973). However, previous research has largely failed to explore how such strivings may translate into processes at the group and organizational level. Power conflict, thus, also provides further insight into the role of power within organizations and the potential influence it has on group dynamics.

Overall, these results highlight the insight power conflict may provide in gaining a greater understanding of the role of power within the workplace and the impact of conflict on group functioning. As the nomological network developed in Study 1 and then tested in Study 2 reveals, there is a broad range of antecedents and consequences of power conflict. Furthermore, power conflict may provide additional insight into the effects of conflict on group functioning beyond the currently examined types of conflict. Thus, exploring the nomological network of power conflict can provide a greater understanding of not only the role of power and status in an organizational context, but our understanding of group dynamics in general.

The findings presented here also provide practical insight for managers and organizations. Given the negative outcomes associated across the different types of power conflict, being aware of the existence of such conflicts, including the ones managers themselves may be involved in is essential. Furthermore, not only do such conflicts impact the immediate

individuals involved, but as the results presented here indicate, the consequences also impact group functioning and effectiveness as a whole. In addition, managers may want to pay particular attention for the potential of power conflicts to arise during times of change, such as layoffs or mergers in the organization. Data also indicated that power conflicts often arise when a promotion is available. If managers are aware that certain situations are likely to incite power struggles among employees, they can be better prepared to handle such conflicts and work to mitigate their effects. Finally, based on the findings of these studies, there are also several steps managers can take to help curb the potential for power conflicts to take place. For example, in Study 2, data indicated that fostering a learning climate in which self development is valued and coworkers are seen as sources of support was significantly associated with lower levels of power conflict. In addition, ensuring that there is a clearly delineated hierarchy, clear and consistent communication, and a present and aware manager are likely to attenuate the existence of power conflicts within organizations.

Future Research

These study results point to several avenues for future research. First, given the evidence for the existence of power conflict and its ability to explain additional variance above and beyond the other three types of conflict, it will be important to explore many of the relationships that have already been examined in terms of task, relationship, and process conflict. In other words, to what extent do certain antecedents lead to certain types of power conflict over others? Similarly, does power conflict have similar consequences for group functioning as the other types of conflict, and what additional consequences may it have that are not accounted for by the other types? By failing to account for the existence of power conflicts, previous studies examining only task, relationship, and process conflict may be missing important information.

In addition, from a theoretical standpoint, I only tested a limited number of antecedents and consequences in Study 2. As the results from the qualitative analyses revealed, however, there is a much broader range of antecedents and consequences. Therefore, future research should continue to test the nomological network around power conflict by examining such antecedents as leadership, levels of hierarchy, and the effect of organizational changes such as layoffs and mergers. Additionally, future research should examine other outcomes, including communication, conflict escalation, and negative emotions, which were found to be particularly important in the qualitative findings.

Although this research provided support for power conflict as a distinct type of intragroup conflict, the qualitative findings indicated that in some instances, power conflict occurred along with other types of conflict or may have also been caused by or led to the other types of conflict. As discussed previously, research on intragroup conflict does acknowledge that the others types often occur together or lead to each other in various ways (e.g. De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Greer et al., 2008; Jehn, 1997; Simons & Peterson, 2000). However, there is still little known about these processes. Therefore, in order to provide further support for the discriminant validity of power conflict and to gain insight into how these various types of conflict are interrelated, future research would benefit from examining the dynamics of these conflict types at the process level or through more longitudinal studies (e.g. Jehn & Mannix, 2001). In particular, research would benefit from exploring the different mechanisms through which the various conflict types are related as well as the contextual circumstances that may exacerbate or suppress such associations. Additionally, it may be helpful to explore the extent to which individuals actually perceive these types of conflict as distinct from one another such as could be done through a multi-dimensional scaling study.

As the qualitative exploration of power conflict revealed, there are also several different types or manifestations of power conflict. Although the scale developed in Study 2 was shortened and designed to represent power conflicts broadly in order to correspond with the current intragroup conflict measures developed by Jehn (1992, 1997), it would be interesting to empirically explore the existence of different types or dimensions of power conflict within organizations. It may be that certain types of power struggles are more likely to exist in certain contexts compared to others depending on the level of hierarchy and interdependence of work units, for example. Furthermore, although the majority of consequences extended across the different power conflict types, certain types did seem to have unique outcomes. Therefore, a more detailed picture of the effects of these different types may be illuminated through a finer examination.

Additionally, the qualitative examination of power conflict highlights a connection between the leadership and conflict literatures that has not been previously explored. One category of power conflict I discovered focused specifically on conflicts between supervisors and subordinates with power conflicts involving actions of insubordination and displays of formal authority in which supervisors over asserted or abused their formal power similar to descriptions of abusive supervision (Tepper, 2000) and petty tyranny (Ashforth, 1994) in the leadership literature. However, the current literature on intragroup conflict largely focuses on conflicts within work groups, neglecting conflicts between supervisors and subordinates and their effect on group processes and outcomes. Similarly, although there has been some discussion of abusive supervision being associated with subordinate's resistance (e.g. Tepper, Duffy, & Shaw, 2001), the leadership literature has largely failed to explore how different leadership styles may engender conflict, focusing instead primarily on outcomes such as work attitudes, negative

emotions, and counterproductive workplace behaviors (e.g. Ashforth, 1999; Tepper, 2007).

Therefore, future research would benefit from exploring how conflict, and in particular power conflict, may be related to various leadership styles or may even mediate the relationship between leadership styles and individual and group level outcomes.

Finally, it is also important to note that this research was conducted entirely on the Eastern Coast of the United States. Therefore, it is unclear the extent to which these results are generalizable across cultures. For example, it is likely that the prevalence of power conflicts and the types of power conflict that take place within organizations would be highly dependent on the level of power distance within a culture (Hofstede, 1980). Power distance refers to “the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally” (p. 45). Therefore, in high power distance cultures where there is a strong hierarchy that is not challenged, such as most East Asian cultures, more direct power conflicts between supervisors and subordinates, such as acts of insubordination are less likely to occur. This is not to say of course that there would be no power conflicts, as Hofstede (1980) acknowledges that conflicts are likely to exist but at more of a latent level between those with power and those without. Instead, it may be that additional types of power conflict exist beyond those found in this research. Likewise, there may be fewer displays of superiority or competitions for informal status between peers in more collectivistic societies which value harmony and focus on the group as a whole (Hofstede, 1980). Thus, exploring the prevalence of the different types of power conflict as well as exploring what additional types of power conflict may exist in other organizational and societal contexts can further expand our understanding of conflict and power within organizations and differences that may exist across cultural contexts.

Conclusion

Despite an awareness of the potential for conflicts over power and status, previous research has failed to incorporate this phenomenon into conceptualizations of conflict or our understandings of power dynamics at higher levels. This dissertation provides support for the existence of power conflict as a new and important fourth type of intragroup conflict and highlights the insight it can provide into group functioning and effectiveness. As these results reveal, power conflicts seem as prevalent in organizations as disagreements over the task or personal incompatibilities, and its inclusion helps to broaden both our theoretical and practical understanding of conflict in the workplace.

Table 1

Overall Qualitative Coding Results

Code	Total Number of Critical Incidents Coded	Percentage of Critical Incidents Coded
Actions		
Overstepping Authority	17	26%
Displays of Superiority	14	22%
Displays of Formal Authority	8	12%
Insubordination	11	17%
Territoriality Behaviors	7	11%
Motives		
Desire for Advancement/ Power	10	15%
Job Insecurity	6	9%
Recognition	4	6%
Better Qualifications	20	31%
Advancement Opportunities	17	26%
Threatened by Others	6	9%
Contextual Antecedents		
Layoffs	3	5%
Climate	4	6%
Merger	4	6%
Leadership	11	17%
Gender Composition	5	8%
Branch Size	3	5%
Personality Composition	10	15%
Unclear Hierarchy	6	9%
Communication Issues	2	3%

Table 1 (cont.)

Overall Qualitative Coding Results

Code	Total Number of Critical Incidents Coded	Percentage of Critical Incidents Coded
Consequences		
Conflict Escalation	18	28%
Negative Emotions	17	26%
Stressful Climate	22	34%
Turnover	11	17%
Performance	6	9%
Group Divisions / Coalitions	3	5%
Communication	13	20%
Distrust	1	2%
Teamwork	3	5%
Relationship Damage	1	2%
Job Satisfaction	4	6%
Management of Conflict Episode		
Forcing/Dominating	6	9%
Avoiding	16	25%
Yielding	5	8%
Problem Solving	4	6%
Compromising	0	0%
Manager Intervention	16	25%

Note. N= 65 total critical incidents.

Table 2

Qualitative Coding Results for Overstepping Authority

Code	Total Number of Critical Incidents Coded	Percentage of Critical Incidents Coded
Motives		
Desire for Advancement/ Power	3	18%
Job Insecurity	0	0%
Recognition	1	6%
Better Qualifications	7	41%
Advancement Opportunities	3	18%
Threatened by Others	2	12%
Consequences		
Conflict Escalation	6	35%
Negative Emotions	4	24%
Stressful Climate	5	29%
Turnover	4	24%
Performance	2	12%
Group Divisions / Coalitions	0	0%
Communication	0	0%
Distrust	0	0%
Teamwork	0	0%
Relationship Damage	0	0%
Job Satisfaction	1	6%
Management of Conflict Episode		
Forcing/Dominating	3	18%
Avoiding	7	41%
Yielding	2	12%
Problem Solving	1	6%
Compromising	0	0%
Manager Intervention	3	18%

Note. N= 17 total critical incidents.

Table 3

Qualitative Coding Results for Displays of Superiority

Code	Total Number of Critical Incidents Coded	Percentage of Critical Incidents Coded
Motives		
Desire for Advancement/ Power	4	29%
Job Insecurity	1	7%
Recognition	2	14%
Better Qualifications	2	14%
Advancement Opportunities	3	21%
Threatened by Others	0	0%
Consequences		
Conflict Escalation	7	50%
Negative Emotions	5	36%
Stressful Climate	5	36%
Turnover	3	21%
Performance	2	21%
Group Divisions / Coalitions	2	14%
Communication	4	29%
Distrust	1	7%
Teamwork	1	7%
Relationship Damage	1	7%
Job Satisfaction	1	7%
Management of Conflict Episode		
Forcing/Dominating	0	0%
Avoiding	2	14%
Yielding	2	14%
Problem Solving	2	14%
Compromising	0	0%
Manager Intervention	3	21%

Note. N= 14 total critical incidents.

Table 4

Qualitative Coding Results for Displays of Formal Authority

Code	Total Number of Critical Incidents Coded	Percentage of Critical Incidents Coded
Motives		
Desire for Advancement/ Power	0	0%
Job Insecurity	2	25%
Recognition	0	0%
Better Qualifications	3	38%
Advancement Opportunities	2	25%
Threatened by Others	1	13%
Consequences		
Conflict Escalation	0	0%
Negative Emotions	1	13%
Stressful Climate	3	38%
Turnover	1	13%
Performance	0	0%
Group Divisions / Coalitions	0	0%
Communication	1	13%
Distrust	0	0%
Teamwork	1	13%
Relationship Damage	0	0%
Job Satisfaction	0	0%
Management of Conflict Episode		
Forcing/Dominating	1	13%
Avoiding	0	0%
Yielding	1	13%
Problem Solving	0	0%
Compromising	0	0%
Manager Intervention	3	38%

Note. N= 8 total critical incidents.

Table 5

Qualitative Coding Results for Insubordination

Code	Total Number of Critical Incidents Coded	Percentage of Critical Incidents Coded
Motives		
Desire for Advancement/ Power	1	9%
Job Insecurity	1	9%
Recognition	0	0%
Better Qualifications	6	55%
Advancement Opportunities	5	45%
Threatened by Others	1	9%
Consequences		
Conflict Escalation	3	27%
Negative Emotions	3	27%
Stressful Climate	4	36%
Turnover	2	18%
Performance	1	9%
Group Divisions / Coalitions	1	9%
Communication	3	27%
Distrust	0	0%
Teamwork	1	9%
Relationship Damage	0	0%
Job Satisfaction	1	9%
Management of Conflict Episode		
Forcing/Dominating	0	0%
Avoiding	3	27%
Yielding	0	0%
Problem Solving	2	18%
Compromising	0	0%
Manager Intervention	1	9%

Note. N= 11 total critical incidents.

Table 6

Qualitative Coding Results for Territoriality Behaviors

Code	Total Number of Critical Incidents Coded	Percentage of Critical Incidents Coded
Motives		
Desire for Advancement/ Power	2	29%
Job Insecurity	2	29%
Recognition	0	0%
Better Qualifications	1	14%
Advancement Opportunities	0	0%
Threatened by Others	2	29%
Consequences		
Conflict Escalation	2	29%
Negative Emotions	3	43%
Stressful Climate	3	43%
Turnover	0	0%
Performance	0	0%
Group Divisions / Coalitions	0	0%
Communication	4	57%
Distrust	0	0%
Teamwork	0	0%
Relationship Damage	0	0%
Job Satisfaction	0	0%
Management of Conflict Episode		
Forcing/Dominating	0	0%
Avoiding	2	29%
Yielding	1	14%
Problem Solving	0	0%
Compromising	0	0%
Manager Intervention	2	29%

Note. $N=7$ total critical incidents.

Table 7

Results for Discriminant Validity Coding

Code	Total Number of Critical Incidents Coded	Percentage of Critical Incidents Coded
Overall (<i>N</i> =65)		
Task Conflict	10	15%
Relationship Conflict	7	11%
Process Conflict	11	17%
Dominating Conflict Management	3	5%
Overstepping Authority (<i>N</i> =17)		
Task Conflict	3	18%
Relationship Conflict	3	18%
Process Conflict	3	18%
Dominating Conflict Management	1	6%
Displays of Superiority (<i>N</i> =14)		
Task Conflict	2	14%
Relationship Conflict	1	7%
Process Conflict	1	7%
Dominating Conflict Management	0	0%
Displays of Formal Authority (<i>N</i> =8)		
Task Conflict	1	11%
Relationship Conflict	1	11%
Process Conflict	1	11%
Dominating Conflict Management	0	0%
Insubordination (<i>N</i> =11)		
Task Conflict	1	9%
Relationship Conflict	1	9%
Process Conflict	2	18%
Dominating Conflict Management	0	0%
Territoriality Behaviors (<i>N</i> =7)		
Task Conflict	1	14%
Relationship Conflict	1	14%
Process Conflict	3	43%
Dominating Conflict Management	0	0%

Table 8

Intragroup Conflict Scale

Source	Conflict Type	Items
Jehn (1995)	Relationship Conflict	How much friction is there among members in your work unit?
		How much are personality conflicts evident in your work group?
		How much tension is there among members of your work unit?
		How much emotional conflict is there among members in your work unit?
	Task Conflict	To what extent are there differences of opinion in your work unit?
		How frequently are there conflicts about ideas in your work unit?
Jehn et al. (1999)	Relationship Conflict	How much friction is there among members in your work unit?
		How much are personality conflicts evident in your work group?
		How much tension is there among members of your work unit?
		How much emotional conflict is there among members in your work unit?
	Task Conflict	To what extent are there differences of opinion in your work unit?
		How frequently are there conflicts about ideas in your work unit?
	Process Conflict	How often do members of your work unit disagree about who should do what?
		How frequently do members of your work unit disagree about the way to complete a group task?
		How much conflict is there about delegation of tasks within your work unit?

Table 8 (cont.)

Intragroup Conflict Scale

Source	Conflict Type	Items
Jehn & Mannix (2001)	Relationship Conflict	How much relationship tension is there in your work group?
		How much emotional conflict is there in your work group?
		How often do people get angry while working in your group?
	Task Conflict	How often do people in your work group have conflicting opinions about the project you are working on?
		How much conflict of ideas is there in your work group?
		How frequently do you have disagreements within your work group about the task of the project you are working on?
	Process Conflict	How often are there disagreements about who should do what in your work group?
		How much conflict is there in your group about task responsibilities?
		How often do you disagree about resource allocation in your work group?

Table 9

Aggregation Statistics

Variables	Mean $r_{wg(i)}$	Median $r_{wg(i)}$	ICC(1)	ICC(2)
Power conflict	.73	.88	.19*	.57
Task conflict	.72	.79	.07*	.30
Relationship conflict	.75	.85	.15*	.51
Process conflict	.68	.80	.17*	.53
Performance goal orientation climate	.77	.83	.13*	.46
Learning goal orientation climate	.83	.89	.09*	.36
Dominating conflict management strategies	.81	.87	.15*	.51
Branch Stress	.64	.73	.07*	.30

Note. * $p \leq .05$.

Table 10

Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations among Variables

	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1 Branch Size	131	5.67	2.43								
2 Percent Full-time	131	.75	.20	.02							
3 Mean Branch Tenure	131	35.60	31.14	.15	.22						
4 Task Conflict	131	2.02	.39	.03	-.02	-.08	(.81)				
5 Relationship Conflict	131	2.19	.49	.02	.10	.04	.79	(.83)			
6 Process Conflict	131	2.05	.51	-.07	.06	.05	.82	.78	(.89)		
7 Power Conflict	131	2.06	.59	-.03	.03	.02	.78	.82	.78	(.94)	
8 Branch Agreeableness	131	4.09	.27	.12	.10	.11	-.15	-.15	-.13	-.05	(.73)
9 Branch Extraversion	131	3.33	.32	-.06	-.07	-.10	.15	.08	.10	.22	.40
10 Percentage Male	131	.20	.20	-.07	.03	-.22	-.08	-.16	-.15	-.22	-.23
11 Performance Goal Climate	131	3.06	.43	.11	.02	-.20	-.03	-.12	-.04	-.10	-.08
12 Learning Goal Climate	131	3.77	.40	.18	-.11	-.22	-.33	-.37	-.38	-.34	.19
13 Branch Turnover	42	.03	.05	-.06	-.05	-.10	.11	.29	.06	.27	-.12
14 Branch Stress	131	3.27	.49	.10	.29	.22	.21	.29	.22	.30	.19
15 Dominating Conflict Management Strategies	131	2.76	.44	.05	.01	.15	.61	.72	.66	.69	-.08

Note. Scale reliabilities are on the diagonal. Significant two-tailed correlations ($p \leq .05$) are in bold.

Table 10 (ctd.)

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1 Branch Size							
2 Percent Full Time							
3 Mean Branch Tenure							
4 Task Conflict							
5 Relationship Conflict							
6 Process Conflict							
7 Power Conflict							
8 Branch Agreeableness							
9 Branch Extraversion	(.78)						
10 Percentage Male	-.07						
11 Performance Goal Climate	.14	.23	(.72)				
12 Learning Goal Climate	.07	.10	.24	(.85)			
13 Branch Turnover	.20	.05	-.11	-.40			
14 Branch Stress	.07	-.15	.04	-.20	.28	(.81)	
15 Dominating Conflict Management Strategies	.12	-.14	-.13	-.44	.29	.29	(.79)

Note. Scale reliabilities are on the diagonal. Significant two-tailed correlations ($p \leq .05$) are in bold.

Table 11

Antecedents of Power Conflict (Hypotheses 3-6)

Variables	Power Conflict	
	β	t
Step 1		
Group Size	-.04	-.40
Percent Full Time	.03	.31
Mean Branch Tenure	.02	.25
R^2	.00	
Step 2		
Branch Extraversion	.30	3.26 **
Branch Agreeableness	-.16	-1.72 *
Percent Male	-.20	-2.36 **
Learning Goal Climate	-.31	-3.50 **
Performance Goal Climate	-.06	-.66
R^2	.22**	
ΔR^2	.22**	

Note. $N = 131$; One-tailed significance tests, ** $p \leq .01$, * $p \leq .05$, † $p \leq .10$.

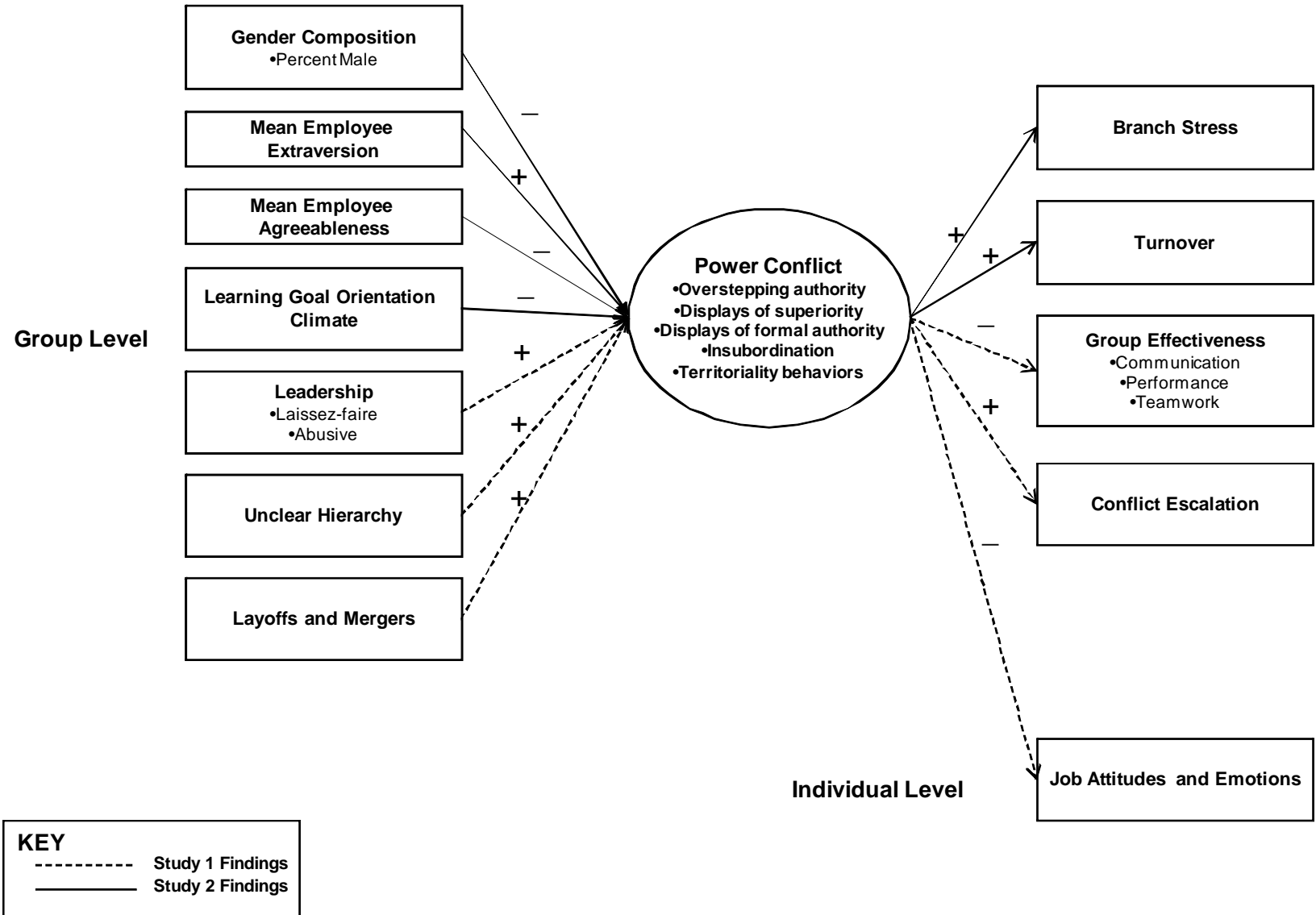
Table 12

Consequences of Power Conflict (Hypotheses 7-8)

	Branch Stress (N= 131)		Branch Turnover (N= 42)	
	β	t	β	t
Step 1				
Group Size	.07	.87	-.07	-.43
Percent Full Time	.25	2.95 **	-.01	-.06
Mean Branch Tenure	.16	1.82 *	-.10	-.58
R^2	.12**		.02	
Step 2				
Task Conflict	.08	.51	-.23	-.59
Relationship Conflict	.22	1.52 †	.76	2.67 **
Process Conflict	-.03	-.22	-.37	-1.07
R^2	.18**		.19	
ΔR^2	.06**		.17*	
Step 3				
Power Conflict	.29	1.83 *	.58	1.66 *
R^2	.20**		.25†	
ΔR^2	.02*		.06*	

Note. One-tailed significance tests, ** $p \leq .01$ * $p \leq .05$; † $p \leq .10$.

Figure 1. Power conflict framework.



Appendix A: Interview Protocol

General Background Questions

1. How long have you worked at the bank?
2. What is your current position?
3. How long have you worked in your current position?
4. To what extent do you work with others in the branch?

Conflict Questions

1. One of the obstacles or challenges employees often face when they are required to work together involves disagreements or conflicts for various reasons. How would a typical employee describe the disagreements or conflicts in your workplace? (i.e. what do you fight about?)

Now I am going to ask you about some more specific types of conflict:

2. Tell me about a time when you witnessed or experienced a conflict about power or status (i.e. power struggles)?
 - a. What was the trigger or source of the conflict (probe with below)?
 - i. Tell me about the conditions in the organization when the conflict occurred (i.e. task, management style, resources, time pressure, group composition)?
 - b. How did this affect you (emotionally, physically, job attitudes)?
 - c. How did this affect the other individuals involved (emotionally, physically, job attitudes)?
 - d. How did this affect the functioning of the work group?
 - i. Atmosphere, communication, coordination, performance
 - e. Describe how the conflict played itself out?
 - i. Did it escalate? Describe what happened?
 - ii. How was the conflict handled or resolved in the end?

3. Tell me about a time when you witnessed or experienced a conflict involving disagreements over a particular task or work related issues (i.e. a correct decision, opinion, etc.)?
 - a. Were conflicts over power, such as those you just described, ever involved in these types of conflict incidents?
 - i. Which type of conflict tended to come first?
 - ii. What was different in what was going on in the organization or who was involved when these types occurred together?
4. Tell me about a time when you witnessed or experienced a conflict involving personal incompatibilities or people engaging in conflict due to differences in personalities, or conflict not work related (more emotional tension)?
 - a. Were conflicts over power, such as those you just described, ever involved in these types of conflict incidents?
 - i. Which type of conflict tended to come first?
 - ii. What was different in what was going on in the organization or who was involved when these types occurred together?
5. Tell me about a time when you witnessed or experienced a conflict involving disagreements over how to complete or proceed with a task (i.e. resource allocation, responsibilities, etc.)?
 - a. Were conflicts over power, such as those you just described, ever involved in these types of conflict incidents?
 - i. Which type of conflict tended to come first?
 - ii. What was different in what was going on in the organization or who was involved when these types occurred together?
6. What could the organization do to prevent conflicts involving power or status or power struggles?

Appendix B: Qualitative Coding Guides and Instructions

Instructions for Initial Open Coding of Transcripts

1. Read through each transcript line by line and make notes of key concepts and themes
2. Focus on critical incident of power struggles
 - a. What are the key concept and themes in how people describe power struggles in their workplace?
 - b. What are the triggers or antecedents of these power struggles?
 - c. What are the consequences of the power struggles?
 - d. How are the power struggles managed or resolved?
3. When discussing how power struggles may be involved with other types of conflict, what key concepts and themes are described?

Final Coding Instructions

1. Read through all the category definitions and examples until you feel familiar with the coding scheme (You will also want to keep the coding guide with you while you go through the transcripts).
2. Notice that there are several broader categories of codes, which should help focus your thinking.
 - a. **Actions**: these codes should be applied when respondents are describing examples of experiences they have had with power struggles, specifically what behaviors or actions were involved in the power struggles
 - b. **Motives**: these codes should be applied when respondents are describing what led to or what triggered the power struggle incident (i.e. why did people behave that way)
 - c. **Contextual Antecedents**: these codes should be applied when respondents are describing what was taking place in the organization at the time of the conflict incident or what broader factors they think contribute to the existence of the power struggle
 - d. **Consequences**: these codes should be applied when respondents are describing how the particular power struggle incident affected them, others they work with, and the organization
 - e. **Management of Conflict**: these codes should be applied when respondents are describing how the particular incident or power struggle was ultimately resolved or managed
3. Going line by line, read each quote or response (i.e. thought unit) within the transcripts and using the coding guide and the provided definitions and examples, assign the codes that best match the data.
 - a. A code can be assigned even if it only applies to part of the quote or thought unit.
 - b. You may assign more than one code to each quote or thought unit, but try to assign no more than 4 codes per quote. If you feel the need to assign more than 4 codes per quote, make a note of the transcript so we can discuss that particular instance.
 - c. There may also be times when no codes match the quote or thought unit and no codes are assigned.

Final Coding Guide

ACTIONS		
Category / Code	Definition	Examples
Bossy/ Controlling Behavior (Relabeled Overstepping Authority)	<p>Descriptions of someone trying to control or boss the other person around (e.g. acts like they are in charge)</p> <p>*Notice that this is different than “Desire for Advancement or Power” in that it focuses on individual(s) <u>actions or behaviors as bossy / controlling</u>, not desires to move up.</p>	<p>“When the manager is gone, the CSR is like I’m your boss, you better listen to me, which is not at all true.”</p> <p>“We refer to her as the sheriff because she tries to monitor everyone and tell them how to do their jobs.”</p>
Resisting Orders (Relabeled Insubordination)	<p>Descriptions of defying or ignoring orders / directions from a supervisor; not wanting to take orders from a formal authority figure</p>	<p>“She would just ignore anything the supervisor told her to do and do it her own way.”</p>
Protecting Turf (Relabeled Territoriality Behaviors)	<p>Descriptions of individuals not willing to give up or share their responsibilities or particular jobs / protective of work territory such as specific assignments or responsibilities (e.g. turf war)</p>	<p>“We have had people, where they won’t let go of what they’re doing, even if they need help.”</p>
Taking Credit for Ideas (Relabeled to be part of Displays of Superiority)	<p>References to people taking credit for other’s ideas</p>	<p>“You have to watch out sometimes, because people will take your idea and run with it”</p>

ACTIONS (continued)		
Category / Code	Definition	Examples
Displays of Superiority	<p>Descriptions of persons behaving in ways to show they are better than others (e.g., have more knowledge or experience)</p> <p>*Notice that this is different than “Better Qualifications” in that it focuses on <u>behaviors to demonstrate or gain status</u>, not cognitions about being better. In addition, this is different than “Displays of Formal Authority” in that it focuses on people trying to demonstrate or gain informal status, not on individuals reinforcing their position as the manager or supervisor.</p>	<p>“She always comes across acting like she knows more than everyone else, and does it especially when the supervisor is around.”</p> <p>“It’s a lot of people trying to make themselves look like they’re more important than other people.”</p>
Displays of Formal Authority	<p>Descriptions of individuals demonstrating that they have formal authority or are the manager/supervisor (e.g., ability to punish, higher title, make decisions, etc.). This focuses on actions to establish or reinforce that the individual is in charge or has formal authority over others.</p> <p>*Notice that this is different from “Displays of Superiority” in that it focuses purely on demonstrating one’s formal authority over another.</p>	<p>“She would always come down on us, just to remind us that she was the one in charge.”</p> <p>“She wanted us all to know she was in charge so she would throw her credentials at us.”</p>

MOTIVES		
Category / Code	Definition	Examples
Desire for Advancement / Power	<p>References to wanting to be in charge or wanting to move up as leading to the conflict</p> <p>*Notice, this is different than “Bossy/ Controlling Behavior” in that it focuses on people’s desires, not behaviors.</p>	<p>“She always wanted to be on top, no matter what.”</p> <p>“He always thought he should be in my position as supervisor.”</p>
Job Insecurity	<p>References to fears that one wants the other’s job or will take over the other’s job</p> <p>*Notice that this is different from “Layoffs” in that it focuses on another individual wanting to take over the person’s job, not on losing the job due to overall organizational layoffs or cuts.</p>	<p>“I think she behaved that way because she thought my supervisor wanted her job, even though it wasn’t true.”</p>
Recognition	<p>References to the conflict occurring because people were trying to gain recognition or attention</p> <p>*Notice that this is different than “Displays of Superiority” in that it focuses on people’s motives, not behaviors.</p>	<p>“It’s all about them wanting to make sure they receive all the recognition from the boss.”</p>
Better Qualifications	<p>References to thinking one has better qualifications (e.g. experience, tenure, knowledge, age, etc.) as leading to the conflict</p> <p>*Notice that this is different than “Displays of Superiority” in that it focuses on cognitions about being better than others, not on behaviors to demonstrate or gain status.</p>	<p>“He thought he should be in my position because he had been with the organization longer.”</p> <p>“I thought, I’m older and know more than you, so I don’t need to listen to what you say.”</p>

MOTIVES (continued)		
Category / Code	Definition	Examples
Advancement Issues	References to competition for a job or promotion or the opportunity to advance as leading to conflict	<p>“I don’t think she wanted the position, but she didn’t want anyone else to have it either.”</p> <p>“I think when you have a promotion, people will often get pitted against each other.”</p>
Threatened by Others	<p>References to people being scared or threatened by others’ knowledge, experience, skills, etc. as leading to the conflict</p> <p>*Notice that this is different than “Job Insecurity” in that it focuses on people being threatened by other’s characteristics, while “Job Insecurity” focuses on fears that someone wants the other’s job, specifically.</p>	<p>“I think she was threatened by him because you could tell that he knew more than she did.”</p>
Personality	<p>References to something about the individual or his/her personality as being a cause of the conflict</p> <p>*If a specific aspect of personality is described, please note that along with the code (e.g. bossy, power hungry, etc.).</p>	<p>“It was really just how she was as a person.”</p> <p>“It was just her personality to behave like that.”</p>

CONTEXTUAL ANTECEDENTS		
Category / Code	Definition	Examples
Layoffs	<p>Descriptions of fears of losing jobs / layoffs or previous job losses within the organization as causing conflict incidents</p> <p>*Notice that this is different than “Job Insecurity” in that it focuses on fears of overall organizational layoffs or cuts, not on fears of a specific person taking over one’s job.</p>	<p>“There has been an awful lot of rumors and backroom talk and what not that someone is going to lose his job and this and that.”</p>
Climate	<p>References to aspects of the organizational atmosphere, climate, or environment influencing the level of conflict</p> <p>*If a specific type of climate is described, please note that along with the code (e.g. tense, competitive, etc.).</p>	<p>“We have a very friendly, non-competitive environment here, so I think people just have fewer conflicts.”</p>
Merger	<p>References the influence of a merger on the level of conflict</p>	<p>“We just had a merger with ‘X’ bank, so there was a lot of uncertainty.”</p>
Leadership	<p>References management or leader behaviors influencing the level of conflict</p> <p>*If a specific type of leader behavior is described, please note that along with the code (e.g. absent, aggressive, etc.).</p>	<p>“Sometimes you just have managers that just don’t care and let people figure it out themselves.”</p>
Gender Composition	<p>Descriptions of the gender composition of people in the organization influencing the level of conflict</p>	<p>“I think anytime you get a group of women together you are going to have some sort of power struggles that go on.”</p>

CONTEXTUAL ANTECEDENTS (continued)		
Category / Code	Definition	Examples
Communication Issues	References to poor communication or a lack of communication within the organization as influencing the level of conflict	“Nothing ever gets communicated so that leads to people jockeying for status.”
Branch Size	Descriptions of the number of employees in the organization influencing the level of conflict	“I think you have more power struggles when there are more people. We only have a few people and are close, so we have less of that.”
Unclear Hierarchy	References to the degree of hierarchy or the clarity of the hierarchy or authority influencing the level of conflict	“It’s very clear who is senior and who makes the decisions, so people don’t try to overstep that.”

CONSEQUENCES		
Category / Code	Definition	Examples
Conflict Escalation	Descriptions of the conflict resulting in other conflicts	“It just leads to people biting each other’s heads off and not getting along the entire day.”
Negative Emotions	<p>Descriptions of individuals having negative emotions following the conflict (e.g. getting angry, frustrated, grumpy, stressed)</p> <p>*If a specific type of negative emotion is described, please note that along with the code (e.g. angry, stressed, etc.).</p>	“I think people get very frustrated and stressed with the situation.”
Stressful Climate	Descriptions of there being a tense or stressful environment following the conflict	“There is just a very quiet, tense atmosphere when that is going on.”
Turnover	Individuals leaving the organization or changing positions as a result of the conflict	“She finally ended up quitting because she just couldn’t take it anymore.”
Performance	References the influence of the conflict on productivity or performance	“I think when anything like that happens it affects a person’s work. You just aren’t as focused at what you’re doing.”
Group Divisions / Coalitions	Descriptions of the conflict resulting in group divisions or coalitions	“People end up taking sides and not being as close anymore.”
Communication	References of the conflict negatively influencing communication within the group	“People usually just don’t talk very much after incidents like that.”
Distrust	Descriptions of the conflict leading to distrust within the group or workplace	“You just start to distrust everyone else and their motives.”
Teamwork	References to the conflict negatively affecting cohesion and teamwork within the group	“He really undermined the whole team effort, the whole event of the team.”

CONSEQUENCES (continued)		
Category / Code	Definition	Examples
Relationship Damage	Descriptions of the conflict negatively affecting the relationships of individuals	“I think it ruined a friendship that had started between them.”
Job Satisfaction	References to how the conflict has negatively affected their attitudes about their job	“It just made me not want to come to work anymore. I wasn’t happy with what I was doing.”

MANAGEMENT OF CONFLICT		
Category / Code	Definition	Examples
Forcing/Dominating	Describes individuals involved in the conflict as focused on imposing each one's will on the other (e.g. forcing their view, focus on winning)	"Neither of them was willing to give in on whether there should be a fee and just kept fighting about it."
Avoiding	Describes individuals involved in the conflict trying to ignore or suppress thinking about the issues (e.g. withdrawal, sidestepping situations)	"Even though it bothered me, I would usually just ignore it and let it go."
Yielding	Describes individuals involved in the conflict as giving in and accepting and incorporating others will	"I would just let her have her way because I knew I couldn't win anyway."
Problem Solving	Describes individuals involved in the conflict as focusing on an agreement that satisfies both individuals (involves exchange of information, looking for alternatives, and examining differences)	"We discussed what the problem was and were able to find a solution that we were both happy with."
Compromising	Describes individuals involved in the conflict as resolving it by splitting everything down the middle or trying to find a middle ground (e.g. both parties give up something to make a mutually acceptable decision)	"I agreed to cover her Monday shift, if she would agree to cover my Wednesday shift."
Manager Intervention	Describes individuals involved in the conflict trying to resolve it by taking the issue to the manager or having the manager intervene in the conflict incident	"We didn't know what to do to stop it, so we went to the manager, and she was able to put an end to his behavior."

Discriminant Validity Coding Instructions

1. Read through all the category definitions and examples until you feel familiar with the coding scheme (You will also want to keep the coding guide with you while you go through the transcripts).
2. This part of the coding focuses specifically on the critical incident question. Going line by line, read through the highlighted portion of the transcript and using the coding guide and the provided definitions and examples, indicate whether the description of the power conflict matches any of the codes.
3. First, give a code indicating whether the critical incident focuses on power conflict between peers of equal rank or between supervisors and subordinates.
4. Next, go through the critical incidents again, reading line by line, and indicate whether the descriptions of power conflict match any of the conflict codes.
 - a. A code can be assigned even if it only applies to part of the quote.
 - b. You may assign more than one code to each quote, but try to assign no more than 4 codes per quote. If you feel the need to assign more than 4 codes per quote, make a note of the transcript so we can discuss the particular instance.
 - c. There may be times when no codes match and no code is assigned.

Discriminant Validity Coding Guide

PARTIES INVOLVED		
Category / Code	Definition	Examples
Equal Status	Descriptions of the conflict taking place between two individuals that are the same rank or position	“None of them are any kind of authority at all and that might be the problem right now ‘cause they’re all equal pretty much.”
Supervisor/ Subordinate	Descriptions of the conflict taking place between a subordinate and a supervisor or two individuals of different formal rank in the organization	“I had a situation where a subordinate felt that they could tell me what I was going to be doing for the day”

CONFLICT CODES		
Category / Code	Definition	Examples
Task Conflict	Describes the conflict as an awareness of differences in viewpoints and opinions pertaining to the group task	“We usually fight about work things—interpreting our reports, disagreeing about government regulations.”
Relationship Conflict	Describes the conflict as an awareness of interpersonal incompatibilities, including personality conflicts and emotional tension within the group (e.g. people not getting along; non-work related differences)	“Like any situation, there are some of us that don’t get along, and so we don’t talk at all.”
Process Conflict	Describes the conflict as an awareness of controversies about aspects of how task accomplishment will proceed, including who’s responsible for what, how things should be delegated, and resource allocation	“And the net work is divided and there has been sometimes conflict on how that work is divided and who’s responsible for what.”

<p>Dominating Conflict Management Strategies</p>	<p>Describes power struggles in terms of <u>how individuals handled or resolved the conflict</u> (e.g. focused on imposing each one's will or winning)</p> <p>*Only assign this code if the main critical incident of power conflict focuses on this. Do not assign this code if it only pertains to how the main critical incident of power conflict was resolved or handled by participants.</p>	<p>"Neither of them was willing to give in on whether there should be a fee and just kept fighting about it."</p>
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Appendix C: Study 2 Questionnaire Measures

Conflict Measures

Power Conflict

The following questions ask you about experiences with co-workers in your branch. Please read each item carefully and circle the response that best reflects your opinion (1= “none” to 5= “a lot”).

1. How often are there power struggles among members of this branch?
2. How often are branch members domineering?
3. How often are branch members in a struggle over who is in control?
4. How often do branch members have trouble taking directions from someone else?
5. How often do branch members try to dominate others?

Intragroup Conflict (Jehn & Mannix, 2001; Jehn et al., 1999)

The following questions ask you about experiences with co-workers in your branch. Please read each item carefully and circle the response that best reflects your opinion (1= “none” to 5= “a lot”).

1. How much relationship tension is there in your branch? (Relationship)
2. How much emotional conflict is there in your branch? (Relationship)
3. How much conflict of ideas is there in your branch? (Task)
4. How often do people in your branch have conflicting opinions about the project you are working on? (Task)
5. How often do people get angry while working in your branch? (Relationship)
6. How frequently do you have disagreements within you branch about the task of the project you are working on? (Task)
7. How often are there disagreements about who should do what in your branch? (Process)
8. How frequently do members of your branch disagree about the way to complete a group task? (Process)
9. How much conflict is there in your branch about task responsibilities? (Process)

Dominating Conflict Management Strategies (Gelfand, Leslie, & Keller)

Please read each statement carefully and circle the number that best reflects your opinion. When conflicts arise in this branch... (1= “strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree”).

1. Branch members push their own points of view.
2. Branch members each search for gains for only themselves.
3. Branch members fight for what they want personally.
4. Branch members do everything to win for themselves.
5. Branch members try to force others to accept their own points of view.

Antecedents

Gender

What is your gender? (please check one) _____ Female _____ Male

Personality (Goldberg, 1999)

Please use the rating scale below to describe how accurately each statement describes you. Please describe yourself as you generally are now, not as you wish to be in the future. Describe yourself as you honestly see yourself, in relation to other people you know of the same sex as you are, and roughly your same age. So that you can describe yourself in an honest manner, your responses will be kept in absolute confidence (1= “very inaccurate” to 5= “very accurate”).

Extraversion

1. I don't talk a lot. (R)
2. I feel comfortable around people.
3. I start conversations.
4. I have little to say. (R)
5. I talk to a lot of different people at parties.
6. I don't like to draw attention to myself. (R)
7. I don't mind being the center of attention.
8. I am quiet around strangers. (R)

Agreeableness

1. I feel little concern for others. (R)
2. I am interested in people.
3. I sympathize with others' feelings.
4. I am not interested in other people's problems. (R)
5. I am not really interested in others. (R)
6. I take time out for others.
7. I feel others' emotions.
8. I make people feel at ease.

Goal Orientation Climate (Dragoni, 2005)

Using the scale provided, please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. My branch manager... (1= “strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree”).

1. Emphasizes the importance of outperforming others. (Perform)
2. Openly ranks branch members’ performance on an ongoing basis. (Perform)
3. Encourages branch members to participate in learning and development programs. (Learn)
4. Praises branch members when they take the initiative to learn something new. (Learn)
5. Rewards branch members when they outperform others within our branch. (Perform)
6. Encourages members within my branch to compete with one another. (Perform)
7. Facilitates the development of branch members. (Learn)
8. Treats mistakes as opportunities to learn something new. (Learn)

Consequences

Stress (developed for this study)

Please rate the extent to which you disagree or agree with each statement (1= “strongly disagree” to 5= “strongly agree”).

1. My job is very demanding.
2. I feel constant pressure in my job.
3. Many aspects of my job are stressful.

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