

MST 514– Introduction to Organisation Behaviour

Lecture 17

August, 2015



Topics to be covered today

1. Conflict Management

Conflict Defined

- A process that begins when one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that the first party cares about
 - That point in an ongoing activity when an interaction “crosses over” to become an interparty conflict
- Includes a wide range of conflicts that people experience in organizations
 - Incompatibility of goals
 - Differences over interpretations of facts
 - Disagreements based on behavioral expectations

Transitions in Conflict Thought

- **Traditional View of Conflict**

- The belief that all conflict is harmful and must be avoided

- Prevalent view in the 1930s-1940s

- Conflict resulted from:

- Poor communication

- Lack of openness

- Failure to respond to employee needs

Continued Transitions in Conflict Thought

- **Resolution Focused View of Conflict**

- The belief that conflict is a natural and expected outcome in any group
- Focuses on productive conflict resolution

- **Interactionist View of Conflict**

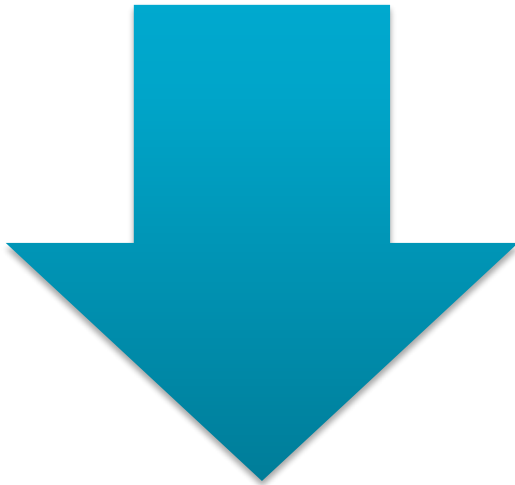
- The belief that conflict is not only a positive force in a group but that it is absolutely necessary for a group to perform effectively
- Current view

Forms of Interactionist Conflict



Functional Conflict

- Conflict that supports the goals of the group and improves its performance



Dysfunctional Conflict

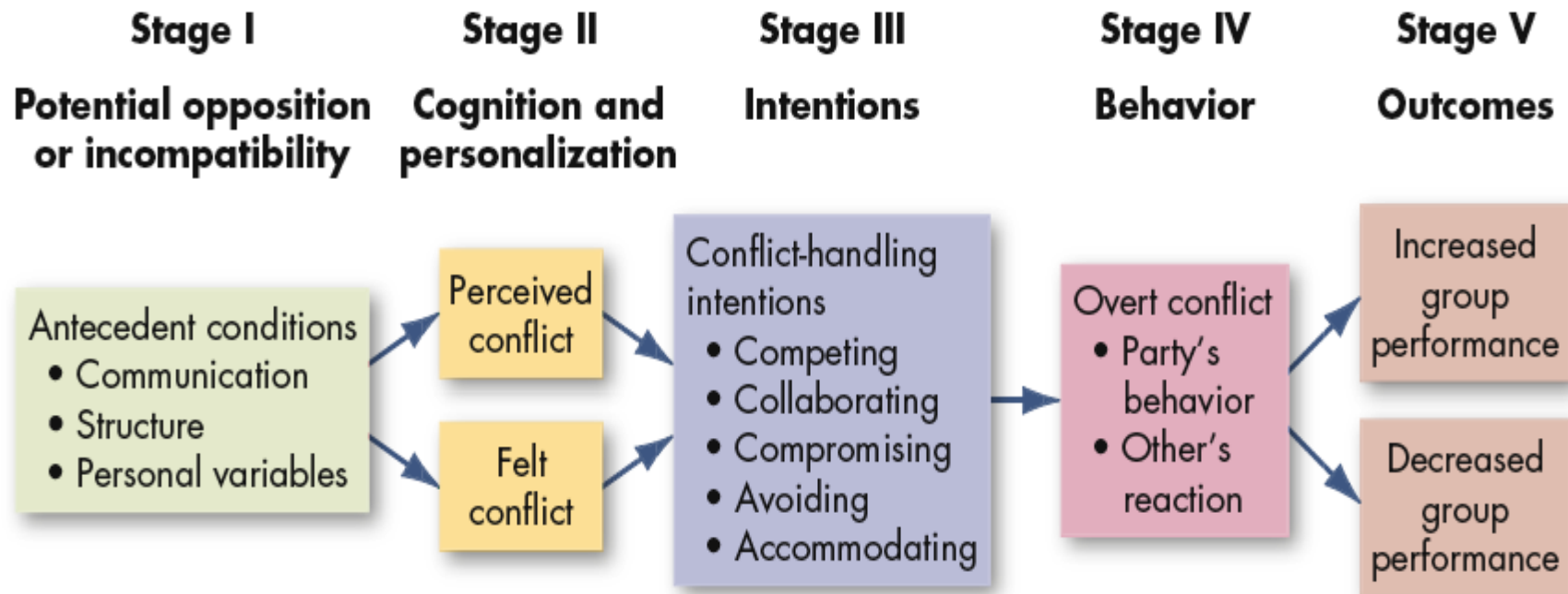
- Conflict that hinders group performance

Types of Interactionist Conflict

- **Task Conflict**
 - Conflicts over content and goals of the work
 - Low-to-moderate levels of this type are **FUNCTIONAL**
- **Relationship Conflict**
 - Conflict based on interpersonal relationships
 - Almost always **DYSFUNCTIONAL**
- **Process Conflict**
 - Conflict over how work gets done
 - Low levels of this type are **FUNCTIONAL**

The Conflict Process

- We will focus on each step in a moment...



Stage I: Potential Opposition or Incompatibility

- **Communication**

- Semantic difficulties, misunderstandings, over communication and “noise”

- **Structure**

- Size and specialization of jobs
 - Jurisdictional clarity/ambiguity
 - Member/goal incompatibility
 - Leadership styles (close or participative)
 - Reward systems (win-lose)
 - Dependence/interdependence of groups

- **Personal Variables**

- Differing individual value systems
 - Personality types

Stage II: Cognition and Personalization

- Important stage for two reasons:
 - **Perceived Conflict**
 - Awareness by one or more parties of the existence of conditions that create opportunities for conflict to arise
 - **Felt Conflict**
 - Emotional involvement in a conflict creating anxiety, tenseness, frustration, or hostility

Stage III: Intentions

- **Intentions**

- Decisions to act in a given way
- Note: behavior does not always accurately reflect intent

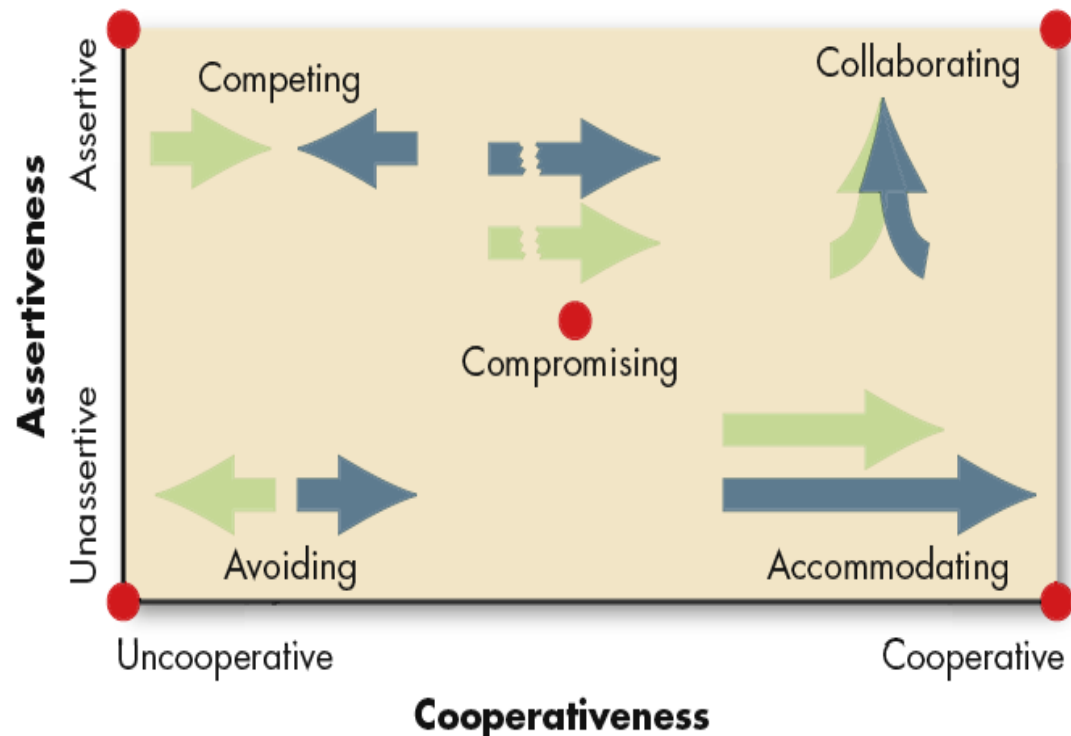
- Dimensions of conflict-handling intentions:

- Cooperativeness

- Attempting to satisfy the other party's concerns

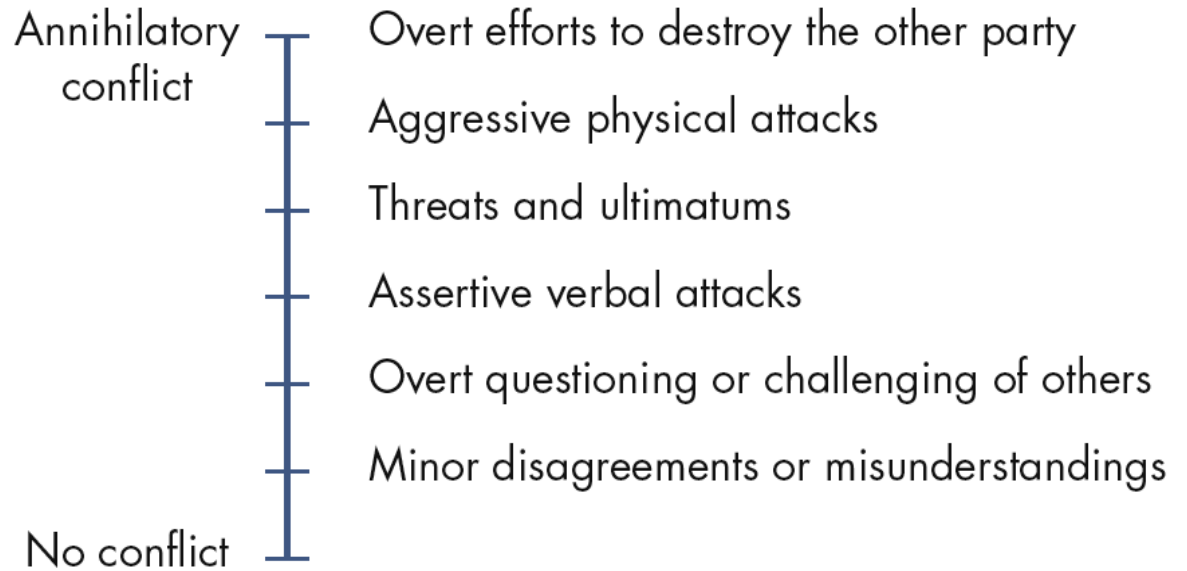
- Assertiveness

- Attempting to satisfy one's own concerns



Stage IV: Behavior

- **Conflict-Intensity Continuum**



- **Conflict Management**

- The use of resolution and stimulation techniques to achieve the desired level of conflict

Conflict Management Techniques

➤ Conflict Resolution Techniques

- Problem solving
- Superordinate goals
- Expansion of resources
- Avoidance(withdrawal)
- Smoothing(common int.)
- Compromise(give up)
- Authoritative command
- Altering the human variable
- Altering the structural variables

➤ Conflict Stimulation Techniques

- Bringing in outsiders
- Communication
- Restructuring the organization
- Appointing a devil's advocate

Stage V: Outcomes

• Functional

- Increased group performance
- Improved quality of decisions
- Stimulation of creativity and innovation
- Encouragement of interest and curiosity
- Provision of a medium for problem solving
- Creation of an environment for self-evaluation and change

• Dysfunctional

- Development of dissatisfaction
- Reduced group effectiveness
- Retarded communication
- Reduced group cohesiveness
- Infighting among group members overcomes group goals

• Managing Functional Conflict

- Reward disagreement and punish conflict avoiders

Thank you

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