

Research Group Occupational and Organizational
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None of my business?

Leaders as third parties in employee conflict

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Summary

Conflicts are ubiquitous in organizations and employees as well as organizational leaders need to deal with conflicts in order to prevent detrimental outcomes. In case of conflict between employees, an important societal question is, when and how the direct supervisor best intervenes. The team leader acts as an engaged third party in such conflicts. Academic research and theories on leader's third-party behavior in such conflicts, its antecedents, and consequences is, however, limited.

This thesis aims to contribute to our understanding of leaders' third party behavior. First, we give a general introduction to the subject (Chapter 1) by discussing the relevance of this issue, defining the key theoretical constructs, and formulating our research questions. In Chapter 2 we present the results of a systematic literature review. We analyze 29 published articles that examined leaders as third parties in employees' conflict. The articles show a wide plethora of descriptions of leader's third-party behaviors, as well as different measures of third party behavior. Moreover, little is known about contingency factors in the emergence and outcomes of these behaviors, underscoring the need for more systematic theory and research. In Chapter 3, we examine three types of leader's third-party behaviors: forcing, avoiding and problem solving. We developed a new measure to assess these behaviors. And we test the moderating effect of these behaviors on the relationship between three different conflict types and employee's stress experience. For this purpose we analyzed survey data of 145 employees of a Dutch insurance company. As expected, we find that leader's third-party behavior can amplify as well as suppress the relationship between specific conflict issues and employees' stress. In Chapter 4, we further explore employees' experiences, expectations, and evaluation of leaders' involvement in impactful conflicts they had been engaged in. We used a qualitative method, analyzing 20 conflict cases discussed in depth during 14 interviews. Employees do have varying expectations of leaders' third party behavior, depending on the extent to which their work is affected by the conflict. This study shows the essential role perceptions, expectations and evaluations of employees have in defining outcomes of leaders' third-party behavior.

We conclude in Chapter 5 with a summary of our main findings, the theoretical and practical implications, as well as discussing avenues for future research. We present a contingency model for leaders' third party behavior in conflicts of their employees. This model drives from contextual and cultural factors, parties' as well as conflict characteristics, determining the most effective third party interventions for leaders.

Samenvatting

Conflicten zijn alomtegenwoordig in organisaties. Medewerkers en leidinggevenden staan daarmee voor de uitdaging zo met conflicten om te gaan dat negatieve gevolgen vermeden worden. Een relevante maatschappelijke vraag bij conflicten tussen medewerkers is wanneer en op welke manier de direct leidinggevende als betrokken derde partij het beste kan optreden. Dit gedrag van leidinggevenden is opvallend weinig wetenschappelijk onderzocht. Zowel antecedenten van dit gedrag, het gedrag zelf, als de gevolgen van dit gedrag als betrokken derde partij, zijn relevante wetenschappelijke vragen.

Dit proefschrift beoogt bij te dragen aan de kennis omtrent leidinggevenden als betrokken derde partij. Ten eerste geven wij een algemeen inleiding op het onderwerp (hoofdstuk 1). Hierin komen de relevantie van het onderwerp, definities en de onderzoeksvragen aan de orde. Het tweede hoofdstuk bespreekt de bevindingen van een systematische literatuur review. 29 artikelen zijn hiervoor geraadpleegd. In de artikelen bestaat een grote variatie aan beschrijvingen van leidinggevenden als derde partijen en tevens een groot aantal verschillende manieren om dit gedrag te meten. Verder vinden wij dat er weinig bekend is over contingenties van het derde partij gedrag en diens uitkomsten. Deze resultaten onderstrepen de noodzaak van een meer systematische benadering van dit onderwerp vanuit theorie en in onderzoek. In het derde hoofdstuk onderzoeken wij drie gedragingen van de leider als derde partij: forceren, vermijden en probleem oplossen. Wij ontwikkelden hiertoe een meetinstrument en onderzochten in hoeverre deze gedragingen de relaties tussen drie verschillende soorten conflict en conflict stress modereren. De analyse van de data van 145 medewerkers laten zoals verwacht zien dat gedrag van de leidinggevende de relatie tussen conflict en stress zowel versterken als ook onderdrukken kan. In het vierde hoofdstuk verkennen wij ervaringen, verwachtingen en waarderingen die medewerkers hebben in een conflicten. Een kwalitatieve methode is toegepast en 20 conflicten zijn geanalyseerd. Medewerkers hebben verschillende verwachtingen van het gedrag van de leidinggevende, afhankelijk van de mate waarin het conflict schadelijk is voor de uitvoering van hun werk. Deze studie laat de relevantie van rolopvattingen, rolverwachtingen en waardering door medewerkers zien in het definiëren van uitkomsten van het gedrag van leidinggevenden als derde partij.

We sluiten af met een samenvatting van onze hoofdbevindingen, theoretische en praktische implicaties en relevante aspecten voor toekomstig onderzoek (hoofdstuk 5). Wij presenteren een contingentiemodel voor het gedrag van leidinggevenden als derde partij. Hierin zijn factoren zoals context en cultuur, kenmerken van het conflict en de conflict partijen opgenomen die mede bepalen welk gedrag het meest effectieve is.

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Life is what happens to you while you're busy making other plans.

- John Lennon

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Chapter 1

Introduction:
Leaders as third parties in employee conflicts

The phone rings, Joe takes the call: his manager, Jessica. Jessica starts to explain what tasks belong to his job. Joe is confused and asks about the reason of this explanation. Jessica tells him she was informed by Sue (Joe's colleague working in the same team as Joe) that Joe gives Sue tasks that are not belonging to Sue's job but to Joe's. Joe is getting angry 'what's happening here?' As far as he could remember he asked Sue to help him with a project. Apparently, Sue perceived this as an order. Moreover, Joe is angry with his manager since she solely explains to him what his duties are rather than asking what had happened between Sue and Joe. Joe tells his manager that he feels angry about the situation since he simply asked for help. If Sue's answer had been 'no', Joe had accepted it.

When Janna met her friend for a coffee, she told her that she has a dispute with Nicole (her colleague) about deadlines Nicole often fails to meet. Janna's friend asked why Janna did not involve her manager to solve the problem and Janna told her about her experience some years ago. 'I would rather quit my job than involve my boss, Dan, in this conflict between Nicole and me. Years ago Dan did nothing at all and left me alone with a conflict situation, despite my request to intervene. It costed me a lot of energy, time, and pride that time and I almost had to call in sick. So I will definitely try to avoid that to happen again'. Janna also told her friend that back then Dan did not intervene and stated that this type of problems between employees was something they should solve themselves. The conflict situation persisted for some time and was finally solved when Janna's colleague left the company.

The situations in these two cases may be representative for the daily life of a lot of employees and their managers. The content may be different, but the irritation, miscommunication, disagreement, or even clashes between employees and the involvement of managers is evident in organizations. Although exact numbers of how often leaders are involved in employees' conflict are missing, we assume that conflicts occupy a significant amount of leaders' time. For example,

Watson & Hoffman (1996) reported that managers are dealing with informal negotiations 42% of their time. Furthermore, these two cases also illustrate quite well at least three reasons that make leaders' third-party behavior in conflicts a highly relevant topic for practice and research. First, organizational leaders and conflicts between their employees are inextricably connected due to leaders' responsibility for (the well-functioning of) their employees. Secondly, leaders' third-party behavior in employees' interpersonal conflicts at work can cause severe or long-lasting consequences, such as Janna described in the second case. Even years after the conflict with the co-worker has finished, the consequences of that conflict affected the relationship with her manager as well as her well-being. The third reason is the complexity of the context in which the leader can act. This complexity comes, among other factors, from the different perspectives of the involved conflict parties and the leader; perspectives about aspects such as the precise conflict matter, the role perceptions of each of the parties, and about what would be the most effective behavior to solve the issue. These three reasons make third-party behavior a significant task for leaders, which is at the same time a difficult task to perform. The central aim of this thesis is to answer the question how leaders can effectively act as a third party in conflicts between employees. To answer this question we will indicate what possible third-party behaviors for leaders exist, what relevant antecedents and outcomes of this behavior are and how the leader can influence conflict outcomes. In this introduction, the leaders' role in conflicts between employees will be elaborated in more detail. In order to do so, leader and employee's perspectives of conflict situations between employees and the role of leaders in this situation will be discussed.

Definitions

This thesis is about leaders' third-party behavior in conflicts between employees. Conflicts are part of daily organizational life, and conflict management is a key task of leaders. A 'leader' is throughout this thesis defined as a person (e.g., supervisor, manager, director, executive etc.) who is formally

appointed by the organization to directly manage employees (without any other supervisory layer between the leader and employees). It is important to note that we focus on conflicts between employees who are both under the direct supervision of the same person, in other words we focus on intra-team conflicts.

Organizations exist of individuals who interact with each other to reach certain shared goals. In these interactions, conflict is likely to arise when resources are limited, when different beliefs or viewpoints exist, or simply when parties perceive differences in opinions (e.g., Rahim, 2015). Conflicts can have detrimental effects (e.g., De Wit, Greer & Jehn, 2012). In order to avoid or to minimize these, conflicts should be effectively managed (Tjosvold, 2008). Leaders have a central role in managing workplace conflict. They may be seen as a first lookout because they are in direct contact with employees and the work floor and may notice conflicts themselves or are involved via one or more conflicting employees. Moreover, Saundry, Jones, and Wibberley (2015), mention devolution of responsibilities concerning conflicts from HR towards organizational leaders. Furthermore, leaders have the responsibility to ensure team performance and to care for the well-being of the team members. Therefore, intervening in conflicts as a third party is often defined as an important leadership skill (e.g., Poitras, Hill, Hamel, & Pelletier, 2015).

Throughout this thesis, we define conflict as the process that unfolds between two individuals that arises when one party feels obstructed or irritated by the other (Van de Vliert, 1997). One aspect, which derives from this definition, is that conflict is a perception of an individual which is not necessarily shared by others. This implies that neither the colleague who is seen as the opposing party, nor the direct leader may be aware of the conflict experience of an employee. Pruitt and Kim (2004) defined a third party as 'one that is external to a dispute between two or more people and that tries to help them end their conflict' (Pruitt & Kim, 2004, p. 227). We further specify this concept of a third party in two ways. First, we assume that the leader as a third party may have other intentions than solely help them to end their conflict. For example, a leader may not feel capable to deal with a conflict between two subordinates and therefore tries to avoid

involvement in the conflict, which could be true in the second case at the beginning of this C. Also, a leader who is involved as a third party in a conflict between his or her employees is usually not regarded as an external party, as the direct supervisor has an interest in productive working relations between the conflicting parties. For that reason, most people within the organization (e.g., employees, HR etc.) see it as a responsibility of leaders to monitor conflicts among their direct employees and intervene when necessary (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Non-intervention by the leader may lead to frustrated and disappointed disputants. This stresses the importance of the perception of the employee, as he or she may see the leader as an additional conflict party rather than an external person. Conflict behavior of conflicting parties is defined as the 'intended or displayed outward reaction to the conflict issue experienced.' (Van de Vliert, 1997, p. 6). Pruitt and Kim (2004)'s definition of a third party, Van de Vliert (1997)'s definition of conflict behavior, and our remarks lead to the definition of leaders' third-party behavior in this thesis: *Leaders' third-party behavior is any outward reaction to a conflict between two employees he or she perceives or is informed about.* This definition implies any leader behavior, including not getting involved or decreasing one's own role in the conflict, can be considered as leaders' third-party behavior. According to this definition, one can differentiate between four aspects: 1) the conflict itself, 2) the awareness of the leader that the conflict is at stake, 3) his or her actual behavior and 4) effects of this behavior.

Despite the facts that conflict easily derives in organizations and that managers are quite often confronted with conflicts (De Reuver & Van Woerkom, 2010; Malingumu, 2017; Thomas & Schmidt, 1976; Watson & Hoffmann, 1996) the issue of leaders' third-party behavior received only limited attention of scholars so far (Goldman, Cropanzano, Stein, & Benson, 2008). Areas that received ample attention in the literature are the area of leadership and the area of conflict management. However, to explain the mechanisms in the specific situation of a leader as a third party in employees conflict more knowledge is needed in the specific combination of leaders as third parties. With this thesis we

want to reduce this gap by exploring and examining the role of leaders in managing conflict, focusing on two perspectives: the leader and employee.

Most of the questions addressed in this introduction concerning leaders' third-party behavior have hardly been object of academic study, and are mostly unanswered. This thesis aims to contribute to the knowledge about leaders' role in employee conflict. In the next section, the constructs are described that will be elaborated in this thesis. After that, the goals of this thesis are presented.

More specific, three questions will be addressed:

- 1) What is known about leaders' third-party behavior in employee' conflict, and the antecedents and consequences? (Study 1: systematic literature review)
- 2) What are the effects of specific leaders' third-party behavior on conflict stress by employees? (Study 2: quantitative method)
- 3) What are expectations of employees who are in conflict towards their leader in relation to leaders' third-party behavior? (Study 3: qualitative method).

Leaders' third-party behavior can be analyzed from different perspectives and this is important to consider in the discussion of how leaders should deal with employee conflict and what outcomes are of different third-party behaviors of the leader (e.g., Bollen, Euwema, & Munduate, 2016). In order to explore the aspect of perception in the conflict situation we take a closer look at the two cases we presented in the opening of this introductory C.

Case 1: the evaluative manager

As described above, Sue felt offended by Joe's request, which Sue perceived as an order. Sue felt powerless in the situation and asked Jessica for help. Jessica heard Sue's story and directly went to Joe to correct him by describing the tasks Joe has to perform. During the process Joe started to feel angry with Sue because she involved Jessica instead of talking directly to Joe about the situation. And he was angry with Jessica because she took Sue's words for granted and tried to correct. This escalation into a conflict between

three parties illustrates the importance of effective conflict management by the leader and the complexity to steer this process.

Let us take a closer look at the role of the manager, Jessica. During the process, the manager makes several decisions. First, she decides to listen to Sue's frustration; second, she decides to directly confront Joe about his duties in his job, without the involvement of Sue. Moreover, she decides to speak to Joe on the phone. Next, Jessica decides to talk about the tasks Joe needs to perform and not about Sue's frustration. One can easily think of alternatives for each of these decisions. And each decision made by Jessica has consequences for the conflict process.

For example: Joe's feelings might have been different if Jessica had invited him for a meeting together with Sue wherein Sue could explain her complaints. On the other hand, Sue probably had felt different when Jessica decided not to act after all hearing Sue's story but to let Sue and Joe try to solve the issue. It is likely that Sue had felt frustrated about her manager because she expected help from Jessica but was left alone with the problem.

To sum up, the evolvement of conflicts at work are likely to be affected by leaders' behaviors. Moreover, employees may have certain expectations about the involvement of the leader and the leader has different behavioral choices to make when being confronted with the conflict. These choices affect the conflict process and its consequences. In this thesis we explore, among other aspects, the role of employee' expectations as a contingency factor on the relationship between leaders' third-party behavior and its consequences.

Case 2: the non-intervening manager

Janna is convinced that her manager Dan will not help her based on one previous experience and therefore Janna chooses to not involve him in any conflict she experiences. Apparently, a conflict that happened some years ago still influences Janna's current behavior towards Dan. Because years ago Dan did not act according to Janna's expectations, namely intervening in a conflict between Janna and a colleague, she still refuses to ask him for help in a conflict

today. She now accepts severe consequences of not involving Dan, as she stated 'I would rather quit than asking Dan for help'. We can only guess what reasons Dan had to not intervene some years ago. Perhaps he was convinced that the problem was quite small or that he indeed had no responsibility or mandate to solve the problem between the employees. Other reasons could be that he did not felt able to intervene. In any way, the consequence of his behavior as perceived by Janna – avoiding involvement – had severe consequences for Janna in terms of her well-being, for the relationship between Janna and Dan, and consequently for the team.

Case 2 illustrates the long-term consequences of a conflict and leaders' involvement in the conflict. In the past situation Janna perceived the conflict as severe and asked her manager Dan to intervene. Dan instead avoided any involvement and expected Janna to solve her own problems. Due to the avoidance of Dan the employee' conflict between Janna and her colleague evolved into a conflict between Janna and her manager Dan. Apparently, the relationship between Janna and Dan was negatively affected. The question is whether Dan is aware of this damaged relationship because of his inaction some years ago. Moreover, the question arises if Dan was aware of the situation and Janna's expectations at all?

The behavioral choices of the leaders in the two cases have far reaching influence on the (well-being of the) employees. However, how leaders make their choices regarding third-party behavior and how employees react to it is not clear. With this thesis we aim to unravel the process that underlies the behavior of the leader. We do this by using a combination of a systematic literature review, and quantitative as well as qualitative research methods. We start with a systematic literature review to define the state of the scientific knowledge about leaders as third parties in employees' conflict; we proceed by examining if and how leaders' third-party behavior influences the conflict-outcome relationship. A third step is to explore possible factors that have a role in the mechanisms of leaders' third-party behavior and its effects. We conclude with summarizing our findings and discuss the implications of these findings for theory and practice.

Leaders' perspective on own behavior

As our exemplary cases point out, the role of leaders in conflict among employees is a challenging one. Leaders have to perform several tasks to be effective in managing employee' conflict. Leaders are confronted with at least three issues in this regard. We illustrate these issues for leaders in Figure 1-1, which reflects a visualization of leaders' issues and the corresponding decision tree. This model is based on the assumption that leaders' behavior is preceded by the awareness of their conflict and the own role in this (e.g., Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). Furthermore, the model is also based on a combination of literature review and our understanding of possible behaviors that leader may employ.

1. Awareness of the conflict

First, leaders have to be aware that a conflict exists before being able to adequately act as a third party in this conflict. To fulfill this condition, leaders be alert to notice interactions between employees that may imply conflicts, (indirect) messages of employees about problems with others, and leaders create a relationship with employees to ensure employees feel free to inform the leader about potential conflicts or problems. A complicating factor is the possible hesitation of employees to inform their leader about conflicts. This could be for at least four reasons. First, in most teams implicit or even explicit norm exists of 'not telling the boss' about any problems (Gelfand, Leslie, & Keller, 2008; Kolb & Putnam, 1992). This can be enhanced due to leaders' refrain from dissent and strain for harmony and consensus (Gelfand et al., 2008). Secondly, and relatedly, employees may use the norm that problems should be solved among each other in order to satisfy the leader (Putnam, 1994). It may feel as a failure to inform others, and especially the manager. Thirdly, in Dutch organizations conflicts often have a negative connotation and leader involvement may negatively affect leaders' perception of employees' functioning. To save one's face, employees may be either hesitant to involve the leader in a conflict (Ting-Toomey, Gao, Trubisky, Yang, Kim, Liu, & Nishida, 1991) or they may actively inform the leader

about the conflict in a way that they feel it will protect themselves (Van Dyne, Ang, & Botero, 2003).

Consequently, employees may try to avoid leaders' involvement in their interpersonal conflicts. The fourth complicating factor may be the restricted skill of leaders to observe and notice hostile atmospheres. Often the signals about conflicts are not obvious but indirect and hard to notice. This is an issue that is probably related to the proximity between leader and followers. For example, if two nurses working the nightshifts have a conflict, it is unlikely they will inform the nurse manager, who works daytime only.

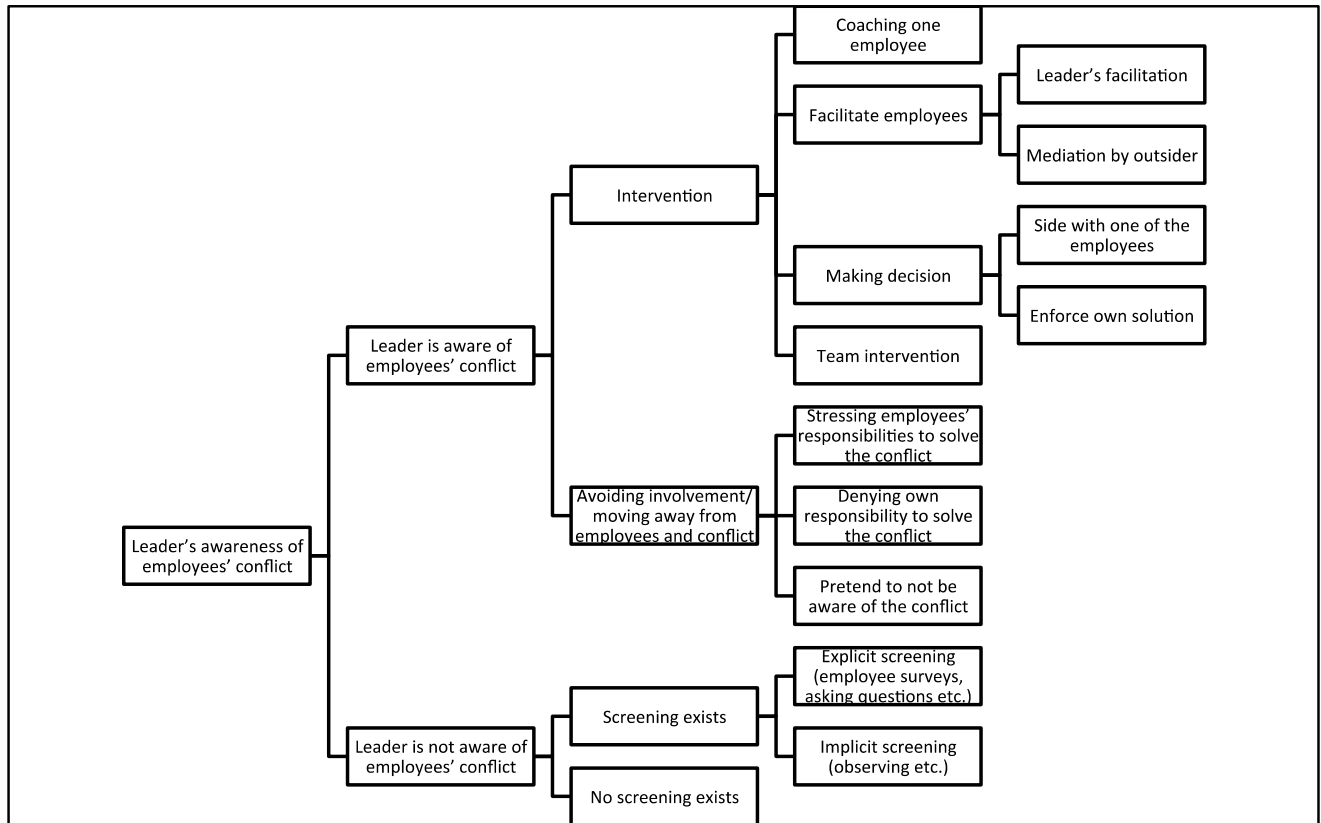
2. How to intervene as manager?

The second issue leaders have to deal with when it comes to conflict among their direct reports, is the way of intervening in the conflict. Organizational leaders do not necessarily have education or vocational training in conflict management and this lack of training may imply that managers lack the necessary skills and cannot act effectively in conflicts. This, together with the leader's intention to act and intervene due to their hierarchical position (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee, 2003), may lead to ineffective conflict interventions because not every conflict needs to be managed by the manager immediately (Peterson & Harvey, 2009).

Leaders are not neutral outsiders in conflicts between employees. They often have their own interests in the outcome of a conflict and/or the way conflicts are managed and solved. These interests might be related to preventing a distortion of the work process or preventing detrimental effects on the disputants' well-being. Leaders usually have ongoing relationships with both conflict parties. Depending on the nature of their relationship, each conflict party may have different expectation or perception of a leader's intentions to intervene, which can include a major risk of siding, or at least perceptions of siding (e.g., Conlon & Carnevale, 1994; Van de Vliert, 1981).

To sum up this second issue, the choice for an intervention depends on a great variety of factors.

Figure 1-1
Leader's perspective of own third-party behavior



3. How to assess possible consequences?

A third matter for leaders to consider is that the consequences of interventions are ambiguous. Depending on which aspect is considered; the consequences can be beneficial and detrimental at the same time. For example, imagine the conflict is about how to solve a certain work-related problem. When the leader intervenes by enforcing a solution that best serves the company's interests at that moment, this solution can - at the same time - harm employees' well-being or the relationship between them.

Summarizing the matters, we present the following questions that need to be answered:

a) Is the leader aware of conflicts and how actively is he/she looking out for conflicts between his/her employees? Are leaders oriented to signaling conflicts in their team, among their employees? How do they observe and assess potential conflicts? Do they only come into action if an employee complains about a co-

worker? Is the leader actively monitoring, or even pro-actively asking about the teamwork and interpersonal relations?

b) Once being aware of a conflict, the next matter is to intervene or not. Should the manager in our first case intervene actively? Or leave it to the conflicting employees, or to the dynamics of the group, where colleagues might help solving the issues? One criterion might be the impact on processes and quality issues related to the conflict. For example, a conflict between two doctors might negatively affect the health of patients, which is a strong reason to intervene. Baldwin and Daugherty (2008) found that medical staff that reported 'serious conflict' with other staff members also reported significantly more medical errors at the same time. This finding suggests that an involved leader should intervene to prevent harmful consequences for the patient.

When should a manager choose not to intervene, and when should the manager just monitor? Non-intervention evidently becomes theoretical 'impossible', when employees come with a complaint, such as in the case of Sue. 'Doing nothing' then will be perceived as an act. This is clearly illustrated in our second example, where Janna felt she was left alone, because her manager – in her perspective - did not act. On the other hand, one can imagine that employees perceive an intervening leader who was not requested to do so as meddlesome. This implies that managers need to be aware of the consequences of their choice for employees, the conflict, and in a broader sense the team or organization. Very few empirical studies have been conducted in relation to this.

c) If intervening, what intervention is used best in what type of conflict situation? Here, the manager has many options. As illustrated in our examples, from listening to both parties, to actively mediating between both parties, coaching one of the parties or even referring to a professional mediator. Also, the manager can use his or her authority to impose a decision. Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber (2002) noted that contingency elements, such as the power relation between two parties, more heavily influence the application of a specific conflict strategy than one's personality. The number of factors that may influence the choice of intervention is large and range from cultural factors to the potential impact of the conflict and

from the importance of the conflict issue to the commitment of disputants to an imposed solution by the leader. For a list of factors see the theoretical frameworks of Elangovan (1995) and Nugent (2002). These two frameworks aim to prescribe the behavior of leaders as third parties. The manager should accurately weigh the factor because interventions always have consequences.

Taking into account the aforementioned, we conclude that the perception of the leader and his and her choices for behavior that derive from this perceptions does influence the conflict process. However, this influence may depend on the perception of the employees about the conflict and about leaders' behavior. We will examine this aspect in the next section.

Employees' perspective

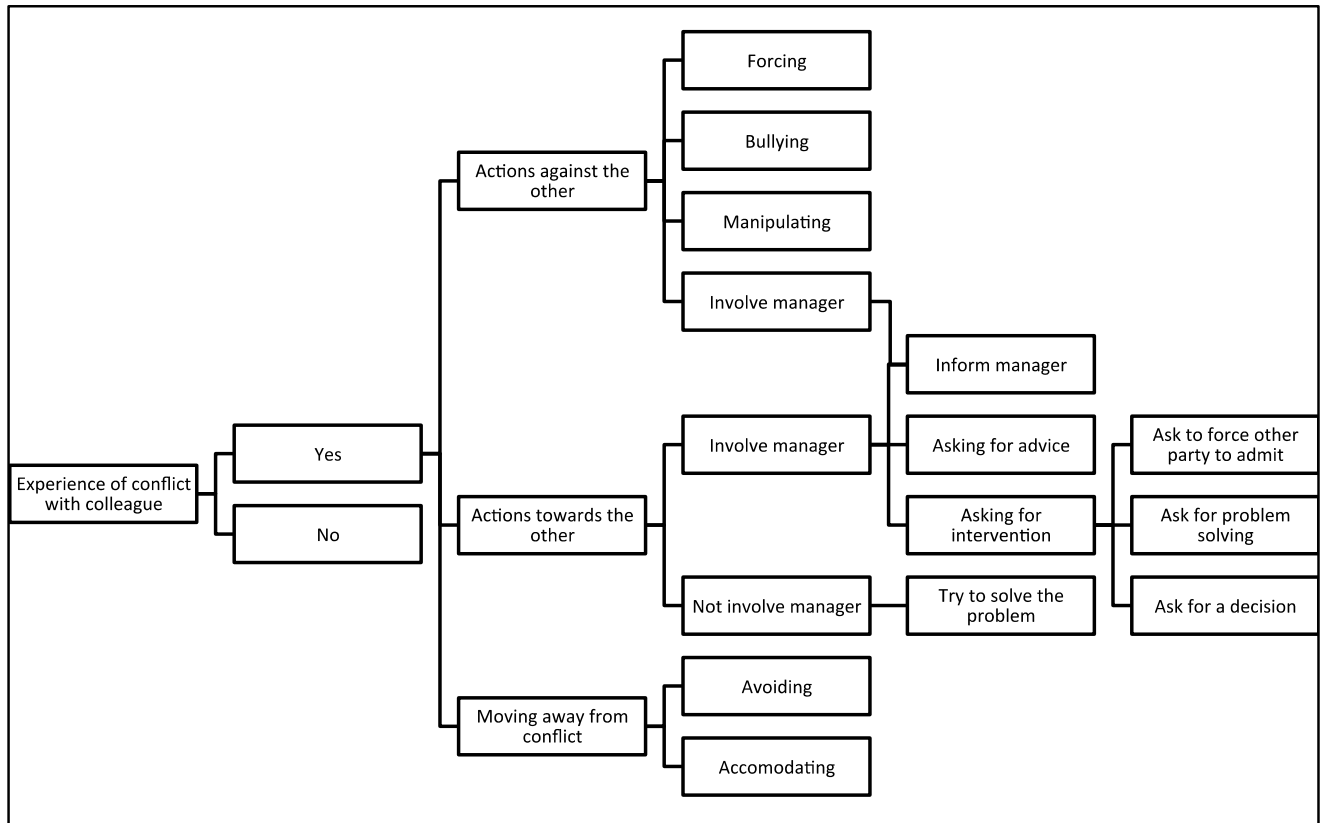
The conflict between employees and the role of their leaders may affect employees and their work to a great extent as was shown in case 2. By zooming in on the employees' perspective we argue that employees run through a process of awareness and decisions (see Figure 1-2).

1. Employee's conflict experience

The first stage is whether the employee experiences a conflict or not. If the employee does not experience a conflict, the likelihood that he or she involves the leader is arguably smaller than with a conflict experience. Moreover, imagine that the conflict between two employees is only perceived as a conflict by one party and not by the other party (e.g., Jehn, Rispens & Thatcher, 2010). Intervention by the leader, may lead to surprises or frustration by the party that is not aware of the conflict experience of the colleague. This was happening in case 1 when Joe was wondering why and frustrated that he was told what his tasks are.

Figure 1-2

Employee's perspective of leaders' third-party behavior



2. Attitude

If the employee experiences a conflict, the reaction to that situation is the second stage and most often this is referred to as the stage in which 'conflict behavior' occurs (e.g., Van de Vliert, 1997). Conflict behavior is based on three attitudes, namely moving towards, moving against or moving away from the other person (Horney, 1945; 1950). Karen Horney described these three types as attitudes to deal with confrontations and others. She described moving towards others as an attitude that is based on the need for recognition, friendship, and to be liked. At the same time aspects such as hostility and aggressiveness are taboo and consequently, behaviors such as demanding, forcing, and giving orders are inhibited. Actions derived from these underlying values are directed towards unity, oneness and wholeness. Horney describes the second attitude, moving against others, as based on the assumption that others are hostile. And this attitude leads to behavior that is directed towards own gains and looking for 'what's in it for me'. Horney described the last attitude, moving away from others,

as based on the need to create an emotional distance to others. This attitude leads to behavior that avoids getting involved with others.

3. Conflict behavior

As described above, the conflict attitude drives conflict behavior that is most often visible for others this instead of the invisible conflict perception and the underlying attitude or intention. The conflict behavior is described in ample research (e.g., De Dreu et al., 2001; De Reuver & Van Woerkom, 2010; Rahim, 1983; Van de Vliert, 1997). In the case of employee conflict we differentiate in three categories that are driven by the three conflict attitudes. The first category consists of forcing, manipulating, bullying (e.g., De Reuver & Van Woerkom, 2010), and involving a third party (Giebels & Jansen, 2005) (all driven by the attitude moving against the other). The second category consists of trying to solve the problem whether with the two parties, by involving the leader as a third-party, or by accommodating; all driven by the attitude of moving towards the other. The third category consists of avoiding, driven by the attitude of moving away from the other.

For example, in case 1 Sue decided to involve her manager in her dispute with Joe. Whether this action is moving against the other or moving towards the other depends on the intentional level and is probably not tangible for others. When Sue perceived the situation with Joe as a conflict, she decided to involve Jessica, the leader. However, as shown in Figure 1-2, she could have made other choices. She had the option to avoid the conflict, which means in this case, to help Joe without any complaint (accommodating) or by ignoring Joe's question for help without explicitly saying that she will not do anything (avoiding). The option of moving against the other would be directly confronting Joe with her feeling of frustration due to his request, by bullying Joe from now on as well as in other interactions than this particular case or manipulating Joe. The intentions of involving a leader can have various reasons (e.g. moving against or towards the other). When the intention was moving against Joe, she would have asked the leader to force Joe to stop the undesired way of ordering tasks, Sue could also

have asked for a problem solving meeting in which the leader helps Sue and Joe to solve the issue, or the question of Sue was whether the leader could make a decision who has to perform the task that was at hand. We do not exactly know what Sue's intention was or what she actually asked the leader to do. But one can reason that the intentions of Sue are of significant influence on the reaction of the leader and the reaction of the other party, Joe. In the description of the case we saw that Joe assumed some of the intentions of Sue and the leader (e.g. Sue asked the leader to force Joe to admit that the task belongs to his position), which makes clear that by not knowing the other's intention, parties may construe the intentions of others, which may not be the true intention of the other. However, people try to make sense of the situation they are confronted with in order to decide what actions are suitable (Weick, 1995).

Regarding sense making mechanisms, categories to interpret and evaluate different situations are important to consider. People make use of prescribed prototype categories in order to anticipate a certain situation. When it comes to interactions such as conflicts social role concepts help individuals to prepare what to expect from another (Kolb, 1986; Putnam, 1994). Especially organizations aim to coordinate interactions by introducing hierarchical levels and related role concepts. And these roles affect the perception of conflicts and its outcomes (Bollen, Ittner, & Euwema, 2012). Thus, we reason that in the case of an employee conflict the different actors (e.g., employees, leaders, and bystanders) have certain frames with regard to what is expected of the other. For example, the leader may expect to only be involved in conflicts or issues between employees when the issue is severe and the work may suffer, on the other hand, employees may expect a certain reaction of their leader when they inform him or her about the conflict they encountered. In this thesis, this will further be explored by examining the experience and expectations of employees in conflicts with co-workers.

Structure of the present thesis

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows. The Chapter 2 consists of a review of the relevant literature on leaders' third-party behavior in conflicts in the period between 1990 and 2016. In this chapter, we discuss antecedents of managers' third-party behavior, the variety of third-party behaviors, and consequences of this behavior. In Chapter 3, the moderating effects of leaders' behavior on the conflict-outcome relationship are studied. We elaborate on three different types of conflict, their consequences on employees feeling of stress and the moderating effect of three third-party behaviors. In Chapter 4, we explore the employee perspective of leaders' third-party behavior. More specifically, we explore how employees perceive third-party behavior of their leaders. Chapter 5 is an overall discussion to describe contribution of this thesis for theory and practice, the limitations, as well as to discuss a research agenda for the future.

Chapter 2

A review of leaders' behavior as third parties in
employees' conflict

Introduction

Conflicts, defined as the process that unfolds between two individuals that arises when one party feels obstructed or irritated by the other (Van de Vliert, 1997) are omnipresent in organizations. In the Netherlands, Euwema, Beetz, Driessen, and Menke (2007) found that on average an escalated labor conflict costs 27.094 euros. An international study revealed that employees spend on average 2.1 hours per week dealing with conflict (CCPInc., 2008). It has been argued that managers even spend more than 25% or 42% of their time on management of a variety of conflicts, including conflicts among their direct reports (Thomas & Schmidt, 1976; Watson & Hoffman, 1996). In fact, dealing with conflicts is one of the key-tasks of organizational leaders (such as managers or team leaders, etc.) (Mintzberg, 1975). As they engage in several roles to warrant the effective functioning of their organization, division, or team (Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, & McGrath, 1996), managers have to deal with conflict to avoid detrimental effects. In the Netherlands, as well as in many other countries around the globe, the employer is responsible for employees' experienced psychosocial stressors (The Dutch Working Conditions Act from 2017). Interpersonal conflicts, harassment and bullying are defined as such stressors and the employer is accountable for creating healthy working conditions. Normally, the direct manager holds the position to execute the employer's responsibilities and therefore should prevent and intervene when conflicts between employees arise. It has been argued that this specific role has increased over the years, as organizations have become more diverse and coworkers have become more interdependent (c.f. Elangovan, 2002).

Leaders' third-party behavior in employees conflict has been studied more in depth since the theoretical descriptions of Sheppard (1984) and Kolb (1986). However, a systematic review of the different studies has not yet been carried out (Goldman, Cropanzano, Stein, & Benson III, 2008). The current review helps to describe ample studied aspects and gaps that have not yet been explored extensively (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003). With this chapter we present a heuristic model to describe the process of leaders' third-party behavior. We aim

to further unravel potential benefits or detriments of this contingency factor in the conflict-outcome relationship.

Our first goal in this review is to get insight in how leaders' third-party behavior is described in empirical studies and how this is reflected in empirical data (**research question 1**). A second aim of this chapter is to review what antecedents of leaders' third-party behavior have been investigated (**research question 2**). The third goal is to describe outcomes of leaders' third-party behaviors that are found in the reviewed studies (**research question 3**). Related to research question 3, we describe what leaders' third-party behavior is related to which specific outcomes (**research question 3a**). We will conclude with identifying underexplored areas and an agenda for future research.

Conflict in organizations

Conflict at work is likely to negatively affect peoples' well-being (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005; Dijkstra, Van Dierendonck, & Evers, 2005; De Raeye et al., 2009). Health psychologists define conflict as a stressor (e.g., Smith & Sulsky, 1995). Employees may experience depressive feelings, strong negative emotions, somatic complaints (e.g., headaches), emotional exhaustion and burn out due to conflicts at work, which can eventually lead to extensive sick leave or job loss. According to social verification theory people may interpret conflicts with colleagues as a negative assessment of their own capabilities, competencies, and/or personalities (Swann et al., 2004). This might increase rumination, which not only interferes with performance but also negatively impacts commitment, cohesiveness, and job satisfaction (Carnevale & Probst, 1998).

In contrast, some studies found empirical evidence that under specific circumstances conflict can be a positive force in organizations, particularly at the group level. Specifically, task conflicts may be beneficial for performance of groups or teams or their innovativeness because they stimulate debate enhancing the understanding of various viewpoints related to the task (Jehn, 1995; c.f. Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Giebels, de Reuver, Rispens, & Ufkes, 2016). This beneficial effect of task conflict exist when task and relationship conflict are

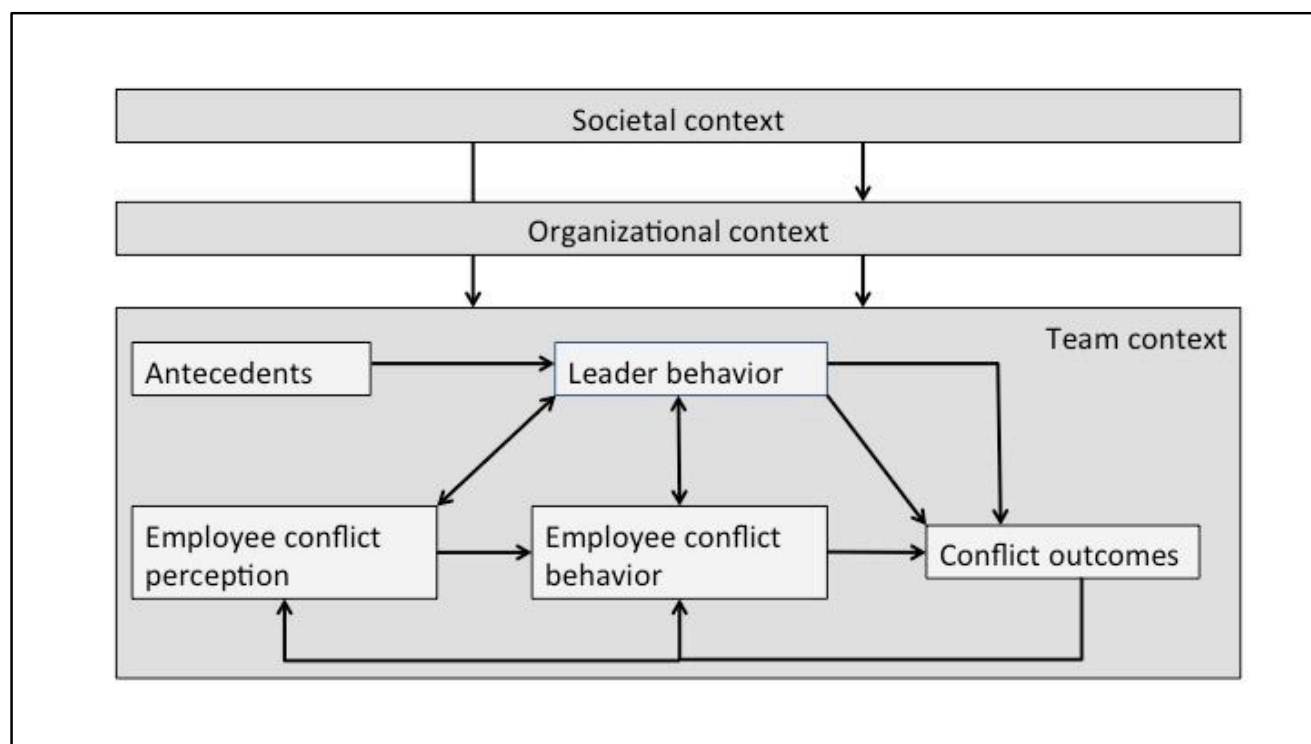
weakly correlated (De Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; Rispens, 2011). Others stress the importance of dealing with conflict as an essential aspect in determining the effects of conflict (De Dreu, 1997; Tjosvold, 2008; Van de Vliert, 1997). For example, skills to discuss different viewpoints effectively and open-mindedly prevent escalation into more severe problems. These findings imply that the type of conflict is not enough to predict beneficial or detrimental consequences of conflict but that it depends on contingent factors what the consequences of conflicts are. The field of organizational conflict needs to unravel the specific circumstances that qualify the relationship between conflict and outcomes (De Wit et al., 2012). In this study in particular, we describe the role organizational leaders may play in diminishing the detrimental effects of conflicts in organizations by identifying what research has revealed about factors that determine effectiveness of leaders' behavior in employee conflict.

In figure 2-1, we present our heuristic model that guides as structure for our literature review and which illustrates the process of leaders' third-party behavior in employees' conflict. Conflict exists within a specific context and this context determines conflict and roles perceptions (Kolb, 1986). The team in which two conflicting employees work is one context factor (team context) and is related to criteria such as the kind of work the team has to perform, the dependency within the team and between the team and other teams or departments. The organizational context regards aspects such as the existence or kind of a conflict management policy or system (often referred to as Alternative Dispute Resolution –ADR- system), the size of the organization, and the market of the organization (e.g., non-for profit organization or not, global player or local oriented). The third contextual variable is the society (country) the organization is settled in (Bollen et al., 2016). The societal context refers to (cultural norms, cultural attitudes, and legislation). In our model we focus on the conflict in a team context. Conflict can be about different issues (such as work-related issues or personal clashes), conflict can be escalating and long lasting or short and low in intensity. These aspects are likely to affect conflict outcomes and they desire different ways of conflict management in order to prevent detrimental outcomes and gain beneficial

outcomes (Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). In addition to these conflict aspects, the behavior of leaders in conflicts plays a similar role in the context of the conflict and affects outcomes. Team leaders and their team members can have different perceptions of the same conflict situation, which in turn will affect the functioning and performance of teams (Gibson, Cooper, & Conger, 2009). Employees have perceptions about the conflict such as involved parties, the conflict issues and the degree of escalation as well as about the leader, such as experience of the leader, capability of the leader in dealing with conflicts and actual behavior of the leader. These employee's perspectives can differ from that from the leader. Outcomes of the conflict between employees concern employee's well-being, work performance and quality, as well as the relationship between the three involved parties. These aspects are guiding our review of the research and are displayed in Figure 2-1.

Figure 2-1

The process of leaders' third-party behavior in employees' conflict



Leaders' third-party behavior

The focus in the current chapter is on the behavior of the direct leader, supervisor or manager. A reaction of the leader consists of various aspects such as the affective reaction and the behavioral reaction (Horney, 1945; Pondy,

1967). The affective reaction may be not tangible or visible for others, whereas the behavioral reaction is outward displayed and thus visible. For example, imagine two employees having a clash during a meeting and the manager does not show any reaction in this situation. One can imagine the manager may feel uncomfortable because she or he feels unable to handle others' emotions and at the same time feel the obligation to intervene as a manager. All this may not be expressed or visible for others. Behavioral reactions that are observable to others could be avoiding the situation (i.e., keeping aside of the conflict), fighting behavior (i.e., becoming a disputant in the conflict and/or attacking one or two conflict parties) or problem-solving behavior (e.g., facilitating the parties to find a solution; e.g., Bell & Blakeney, 1977; Horney, 1945; Fitzpatrick, 1988; Gelfand et al., 2012; Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Ross & DeWine, 1988; Weider-Hatfield, 1988; Wilson & Waltman, 1988). On the one hand, third parties can help the conflict parties to diminish detrimental consequences of conflict (e.g., Bollen & Euwema, 2013; Giebels & Janssen, 2005; Wall, Stark, & Standifer, 2001). At the other hand, third parties can be related to a potential escalation of the conflict and therefore to severe consequences and a decreased potential to solve the issue (Van de Vliert, 1981).

In the conflict management literature three paradigms about leaders' third-party behavior are very influential and briefly described below. These are the models by Sheppard (1984), Kolb (1986), and Putnam (1994).

Sheppard (1984) based his classification on Thibaut and Walker's (1975) work on procedural justice. Using dimensions of process control and decision control Sheppard (1984) distinguishes between four types of third-party behavior leaders can employ. These four behaviors are: inquisitor intervention, adversarial intervention, mediation, and providing impetus. The dimension of process control refers to the attempts of the third party to guide how disputing parties deal with the conflict. Decision control refers to the amount the third party directs what the subject is of the dispute and to the amount the manager enforces an outcome. Inquisitorial intervention is high on both dimensions and is characterized by controlling the discussion between conflicting employees, inventing solutions that

are believed to meet both parties' interest, and eventually enforcing the outcome on both parties (Lewicki & Sheppard, 1985). Adversarial intervention is similar to inquisitorial intervention in that the manager decides which solution is preferable. However, the manager has no process control, but passively listens to the parties. Providing impetus (low process and low outcome control) after quickly determining what the dispute is about, the managers would leave the parties to solve the problem themselves. Mediation behavior is characterized by a low outcome control and a high process control, which means that the manager asks questions and is directing the process of the discussion but the manager does not invent a solution nor enforces a solution on the parties. The leader motivates the conflicting parties to think of a solution themselves.

Kolb (1986) described third parties in organizations and their behavior. According to her, 'to complement the technique-based typologies of organizational third parties (Sheppard, 1984), one might also begin with the variety of roles these parties play, and with more prominent attention given to categories of meaning that organizational incumbents use to account for their own behavior...'. Kolb (1986, p. 222) furthermore described three roles leaders occupy in employee conflict: advisor, investigator, and restructurer. In the advisor role, the third party tries to facilitate communication between the disputing parties. In the investigator role, the third party searches for the facts underlying the conflict and in the restructurer role the third party uses its authority to reshape the organization or work-process to deal with the conflict (e.g., Pinkley et al., 1995).

In a review of leaders' conflict behavior as third parties, Putnam (1994) advocated a more political view of leaders as third parties. She mentioned that the literature overlooked that 'conflict intervention is enmeshed in a complex set of ongoing work relationships' (Putnam, 1994, p. 31). She stressed that the process of conflict definition should be examined in the context of leaders' third-party behavior. Moreover, she found in her review that managers rarely employ mediating or arbitrating behavior, but foremost inquisitorial and decisive behavior.

As a possible explanation Putnam (1994) mentioned ‘vested interests in both the enactment and the outcomes of disputes’ (p. 31).

Kolb (1986) argued that the third-party roles of legal settings may not be transformable into the organizational setting of leaders in employee conflict and therefore defined the behaviors of organizational third parties less formal and lower on power than Sheppard (1983), although they overlap to some extent. Moreover, it is needed to come to a more comprehensive categorization than previously offered by Sheppard and Kolb (Pinkley et al., 1995).

Regarding the notion that leaders in employees’ conflict being a third party with own concerns (Kolb, 1986, Pinkley et al., 1995; Putnam, 1994), one can argue a model for conflict management behavior of conflict parties is preferable. Following this reasoning, a model is needed to describe the tendencies or underlying dimensions of leaders’ third-party behavior rather than concrete behaviors. Such models do exist for the behavior of individuals in conflict (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964; Horney 1945; 1950; Van de Vliert, 1997) and for mediators and other third parties in general (Bollen et al., 2016), however not for managers as third parties. A next step in the theory development of leaders’ third-party behavior would be a model to describe effects of certain behaviors and possibly prescribing certain behaviors when certain outcomes are preferred. In determining effects of leaders’ third-party behavior, it is important to take note of dimensions that are perceived similar by all involved parties. That is, not only the perception or intention of the leader determines the effects, but also, especially when it comes to personal outcomes such as well-being, the perception of employees about the situation (e.g., what kind of conflict or what the leader is actual acting like) is crucial (Gibson et al., 2009). To compensate for this lack of existing typologies and models, this review proposes a model, which explicitly pays attention to the (different) perceptions of all involved parties.

Summarizing, based on the theoretical attempts by Sheppard (1984), Kolb (1986), and Putnam (1994) to describe leaders’ third-party behavior as, we conclude a need for incorporating the context of conflict in the elaboration of leaders’ third-party behavior. In the current review we therefore focus on the

contingency factors such as contextual aspects, antecedents, conflict's and disputants' characteristics, and relevant outcomes of leaders' third-party behavior.

Method

We conducted a systematic review of the relevant published literature from 1990 to 2016 to summarize and synthesize the empirical as well as theoretical work about leaders' third-party behavior, including clear descriptions of third-party behaviors, their antecedents, and their effects. The last and only review on this issue is that from Putnam (1994) and therefore serves as a reference point for the current review, assuming that Putnam's work includes all relevant work published before her review. To make sure not to miss any work that is published around the publishing date of Putnam's review, we included the four years before Putnam as well.

Description of the selection process

We searched the databases Web of Science, EBSCO business source premier en PsycInfo by using LIMO to extract as many relevant articles as possible (e.g., Vangrieken, Dochy, Raes, & Kyndt, 2015). LIMO is a search platform that enables to search different databases. Additionally, relevant key (topic) journals were selected for an in depth analysis: Negotiation and Conflict Management Research, Negotiation Journal and the International Journal of Conflict Management. The key journals were included in the databases we used, however once we had our list of articles derived from the web search, we checked if any additional article emerged in the key journals to ensure we did not miss relevant work. Additionally we conducted a 'snow ball' method by screening the references used in the found articles to find additional relevant material. The first author conducted the search in July 2016 using the abovementioned method. The literature search in the database was conducted using (combinations of) the following keywords.

- conflict management OR conflict behavior OR conflict intervention OR conflict style OR managerial dispute resolution;

AND

- leader OR supervisor OR manager;

AND

- conflict OR dispute OR mediation OR arbitration OR inquisitor.

AND

- third party OR third parties OR 3rd party OR 3rd parties.

Furthermore, cited references in the articles were included. Following the citations of the articles (snow ball method) brought up the work of Karambayya and Brett from 1989. This article was cited by a significant number of articles. We decided to include this in the current review unless it was published before 1989. An overview of our search is depicted in Table 2-1.

Selection criteria

We considered published (English) articles in peer-reviewed journals between 1990 and 2016. In the initial search in Web of Science we found 2858 articles based on the categories manager or leader or supervisor together with conflict or dispute and behavior. After adding third party or 3rd party, 289 articles left. We decided to search other sources with adding third party since the factor is essential in our review. That searches revealed 456 hits. After reviewing titles, 107 articles remain and after reviewing the abstracts 32 articles were found relevant. It appeared some were duplicates (i.e., we found same article in more than one database) and most others were discarded because they did not match the criteria of the third-party role of leaders in employee conflict. Ultimately 29 empirical articles were eligible for our review.

Table 2-1
Search results

	Web Science	of PsycINFO	EBSCO business source premier	Snow ball method	Total
Initial search	2,858				
After adding third party	289	152	15		456
After title selection	46	56	5		107
After abstract selection	13	18	1		32
Total non- unique results					32
Total unique results				1	29

Results

We summarized the 29 articles selected in Table 2-2, offering a list in first author alphabetical order. The summary includes authors, main research questions, sample information and key findings.

Table 2-2*Overview articles*

	Authors	Research question	Variables and Design	Sample	Findings
1	Arnold (2007)	How does need for closure influence leaders' choice for intervention as a third party in a conflict?	Independent: need for closure Dependent: choice of leaders' third-party strategy. Method: Scenario-based questionnaire. Quantitative analysis.	61 undergraduate business students with managerial experience in the US.	Individuals with a high need for closure were more likely to choose an autocratic procedure and less likely to choose mediation than individuals with a low need for closure. The option of letting disputants solve the conflict themselves was somewhat unattractive to those with a high need for closure.
2	Benhar da, Brett, & Lemper eur (2013)	What are the differences between outcomes facilitated by men and by women in third-party roles in dispute resolution in organizations?	Independent: 2 (male-female) x 2 (supervisor-peer). Dependent: 1. About who the decision made. 2. About what the decision was. 3. Perceived influence and power of the third party. 4. Agentive and expressive behavior of third party. Method: Scenario-based experimental approach.	97 three-person teams of French MBA students with limited supervisory experience.	Results suggest that women may be particularly effective in the role of peer third parties in organizations. Women facilitated agreements that disputants' perceived to be group agreements, not agreements imposed by the third party. They facilitated agreements that did not compromise organizational reputation in the cause of acquiring disputants' compliance, and they did so without being viewed as strongly agentive or relying on power or influence. Put women in a role where they recognize that they will not be successful using agentive, powerful behavior, and they may instead rely on their traditionally strong interpersonal skills. Where those traditionally female skills are highly effective, like the dispute resolution situation we studied, these women should be particularly successful.
3	Boboce	What are the	Independent:	135	Results showed that in

	I, Agar, Meyer, & Irving (1998)	effects of responsibility and justification on perceptions of fairness within the context of third- party conflict resolution?	responsibility, justification. Dependent: Adequacy and sincerity, procedural, interactional, and distributive fairness, reactions to the manager (endorsement of the manager, power, friendliness). Method: Scenario-based experimental approach.	undergraduates from a Canadian University.	conditions in which the manager offered a justification for the unfavorable resolution, there were positive effects on respondents' perceptions of procedural, interactional, and distributive fairness. In contrast, minimizing responsibility had trade-off effects: Whereas this tactic had a positive effect on interactional fairness perceptions, it had adverse side effects (reducing perceptions of the manager's power and leadership ability).
4	Brett, Tinsley, Shapiro, & Okumura (2007)	Does culture influence the choice of third-party behavior?	Independent: Third party status (superior vs. peer as third party). Third parties' cultural background (traditional, hierarchical, egalitarian, open to change, Japanese, Chinese, and American). Dependent: Third-party behavior or decision outcome. Method: Correlational design with simulated role-play and questionnaire.	519 fulltime managers in groups of three from US (58 groups), Japan (82 groups), and China (33 groups). All managers started to follow negotiation training. Groups participated in a within-culture classroom exercise.	Disputants behaved autocratically and/or decided on conservative (e.g., contract adhering) outcomes; but managers who were peers (especially in China and the USA), generally involved disputants in decision-making and obtained integrative outcomes that went beyond initial contract related mandates.
5	Chao & Tian (2013)	What differences in conflict management strategies exist between Taiwanese female leaders and their American counterparts in	Conflict management strategies of leaders. Factors that influence leader's choice of strategy (face, relationship/guanxi, role of third party). Method: Field	14 Taiwanese and 11 American female presidents of Rotary.	This study revealed that the female presidents in both cultures applied obliging and integrating strategies to handle management conflicts. Yet, due to the interference of past presidents, the Taiwanese women leaders are more likely to

		Rotary Clubs?	observations.		follow the traditional norms whereas women leaders in the United States tend to employ new approaches and adopt new conflict management strategies in different situations.
6	Chi, Friedman, & Yang (2009)	What qualities must a supervisor possess to be perceived by subordinates as someone who will be a fair mediator and does supervisor's age matter?	Independent: supervisor extraversion, supervisor agreeableness, supervisor mediation self-efficacy. Moderating: age difference between supervisor and subordinated. Dependent: expected fairness of supervisor as mediator. Method: Scenario-based questionnaires.	122 subordinate-supervisor dyads in Taiwan. College-level students with a fulltime job. Subordinates completed questionnaire in class and their supervisor filled in the questionnaire independently. Afterwards the supervisors were matched with their subordinates.	Supervisors' mediation self-efficacy did not predict subordinates' expectations of supervisors as mediators. Subordinates expected extraverted supervisors to be fairer mediators than introverted mediators. The level of supervisor agreeableness, on the other hand, in itself did not impact on subordinates' expected mediation fairness. Rather, the data indicated that the effect of agreeableness appeared only when the supervisor was much older than the subordinate.
7	Conlon, Carnevale, & Murnighan (1994)	Comparing empirical observations of mediation behavior and intravention behavior in similar situations.	Independent: third-party role (Intravention vs. Mediator), third party's believe about the disputant reaching agreement, third party's self-interest, third party's concern about disputants' outcome. Dependent: third-party behavior. Method: Scenario-based experimental approach.	222 undergraduate students in US.	Intravention spawns a distinctive pattern of third-party behavior: intravenors imposed a settlement in 66% of the cases. Intravenors were more likely to use forceful, pressure tactics than mediators.
8	Conlon	Examine how	Independent:	235 business	Both manipulation of the

	& Ross (1997)	structural and social aspects of outcomes can influence disputants' perception of fairness.	outcome and explanation (apology, excuse, justification). Dependent: distributive justice, procedural justice, and perceived fairness of supervisor's actions. Dependent variables were measured before and after explanation of supervisor. Method: Scenario-based experimental approach.	administration and industrial relations undergraduates.	structural as well as of the social aspects of the outcome produced significant effects on justice evaluation of disputants. The number of issues the negotiator did well on, controlling for total value of the issue, appears to be a significant determinant of affective reactions. Justification was seen as more acceptable than either excuse or apologies in the way that justification elevated distributive justice and supervisory evaluation.
9	Elango van (1998)	Testing the prescriptive model proposed by Elangovan (1995).	Independent: dispute attributes and third-party strategy Dependent: success of intervention (effective, timely, high disputants' commitment). Method: field test by means of questionnaire.	92 managers employed by different organizations in the US.	The Elangovan (1995) model was successful in identifying appropriate intervention strategy.
10	Elango van (2005)	What is the role of framing and the third-party's need for consistency in intervention strategy selection in managerial dispute intervention?	Independent: risk elimination/reduction frames, contingent/non-contingent decision frames, and gain/loss frames. Dependent: choice of third-party intervention (high or low on outcome control). Method: Scenario-based experimental approach.	318 intervention cases, 106 students	Framing does influence the selection of intervention strategies to some extent, but the third-party's need for consistency between his/her preferred settlement and the actual final settlement plays a bigger role in influencing strategy selection.

11	Irving & Meyer (1997)	Investigate the underlying dimensional structure of 21 third-party strategies derived from the literature.	21 conflict intervention strategies. Two underlying dimensions. Method multidimensional scaling by means of questionnaires.	356 students in Canada.	Two dimensions that were labeled Avoid versus Approach Conflict and Participative versus Autocratic.
12	Jameson (2001)	What conflict management strategies and third parties organizational members perceive as being available, as well as to compare the strategies that employees consider to be ideal with those they actually see used in the workplace?	12 Conflict management strategies in three categories: interest based, power based or rights based. A question about which parties may intervene in organizational conflict. Method: Field test by means of questionnaires.	571 survey participants of MBA programs and fulltime employees (268 managers and 303 non-managers)	76,4% of the respondents reported the direct supervisor (as a third party) as an available conflict management strategy to them. 66,5% reported to go to a peer for advice. Moreover, 95% says the most available third party is the immediate supervisor. Lack of trust in available third parties was the most common barrier selected, suggesting that employees may be unlikely to use third parties to manage conflict regardless of their availability. The strategy selected as most realistic was direct discussion between the parties (interest-based), followed by having a supervisor listen to both sides and determine the most appropriate course of action (right-based), and finally, having someone with authority reassign people or restructure responsibilities to minimize inter-dependence between the parties (power-based).
13	Karambaya & Brett (1989)	What is the relationship among leaders' third-party behavior, the type of resolution achieved, and disputants'	Independent: Type of resolution, third-party role Dependent: procedural justice, distributive justice. Method:	69 MBA students in a simulating study	Third-party role have influence on both for the resolution of the dispute and disputants' perception of procedural and distributive justice.

		perceptions of procedural and distributive justice?	Scenario-based experimental approach.		
14	Karamb ayya, Brett, & Lytle (1992)	What is the influence of formal authority and supervisory experience on the methods they use to resolve disputes? Furthermore what are implications of leaders' third-party behavior for the outcomes of disputes and disputants' perceptions of fairness?	Independent: third-party status (peer vs. supervisor) and supervisory experience. Dependent (as well independent for outcome variables): third-party intervention. Dependent: fairness perception (distributive, procedural, third-party), outcome, who made the decision. Method: Scenario-based experimental approach.	Students in MBA and executive seminars with fulltime work experience and supervisory experience.	Third parties who are supervisors are likely to use both autocratic and mediational behaviors to resolve disputes. Third parties who are peers, on the other hand, generally refrain from using autocratic behaviors; they rely instead on mediational behaviors and involve the disputants in constructing a resolution of the dispute. When peers do use autocratic behaviors and try to impose their own ideas for settlement on disputants, an impasse is likely. Third parties who have much supervisory experience refrain from using autocratic role behaviors, regardless of their formal authority. Experienced supervisors are particularly likely to use mediational behaviors to resolve disputes when they have the authority to resolve the dispute.
15	Kim, Sohn, & Wall (1999)	How do Korean leaders manage conflicts within their organization?	Independent: conflict situation (employee-employee vs. employee-outsider). Dependent: conflict management techniques of leaders. Assertiveness of conflict management techniques. Method: field test	Study 1: 310 leaders in South Korea. Study 2: 50 employees.	Leaders were more assertive in managing subordinate-subordinate conflicts. Leaders pressed their subordinates in subordinates-outsider conflicts.

			by means of interview.		
16	Keashly & Newberry (1995)	What is the influence of third-party outcome control and third-party process control on disputants' procedural judgment? Furthermore, what are effects of status and the conflict setting on the procedural judgment?	Independent: conflict setting (home vs. work), status third party (peer vs. high status), third party's outcome control, process control, and content control. Dependent: fairness perception, satisfaction, efficiency perception, and relationship impact. Method: Scenario-based experimental approach.	85 first years' psychology students in Canada.	In the workplace conflict, disputants showed greater preference for methods where the third party made the final decision when the third party was the supervisor than when the third party was a co-worker. When disputants made the final decision, methods with the co-worker as the third party were preferred. By not intervening, the supervisor may be seen as inappropriate or as ineffective as intervener. Disputants' procedural judgments appear to be influenced by expectations of what each type of person has the position or authority to do (i.e., legitimate power).
17	Kozan & Ilter (1994)	What third-party roles do Turkish managers employ and how are they related to conflict management styles used by their subordinates?	Independent: third-party role of the manager. Dependent: Conflict management of subordinates. Method: Field test by means of questionnaires.	295 Turkish managers in seven firms. 86% male, average 37 year, 10-year tenure. 66% from supervisory level, 32% from middle management, 2% from top level.	Mediation and facilitation were reported more frequent than autocratic and laissez faire. Subordinates reported increased use of collaboration and compromise when leader was seen as using more facilitation and mediation. Competitive behavior increased when managers using autocratic behavior in a third-party role.
18	Kozan & Ergin (1999)	What are third-party roles in conflict management in Turkey?	Independent: other party (peer, supervisor, subordinate, higher-up), scope of conflict, third-party involvement, position of third party, how third party got	435 employees of 40 public and private organizations in Turkey.	Peers were as active as supervisors in managing co-workers conflict. Conflicts are seen as complex and occurring within a network of relations. Peers were involved in the conflict from the beginning. Supervisors were asked to intervene when

			involved, when involved. Dependent: Third-party intervention, perception of procedural justice, distributive justice. Method: field test by means of questionnaire.		conflicts escalated or got out of control. Supervisor used more incentives and used autocratic strategies. Peer listened more and gave advice. Satisfaction with process and outcome was low when autocratic tactics were used. When peers and supervisors mediated the disputants saw process and outcome as fair.
19	Kozan, Ergin, & Varoglu (2007)	What strategies are used by managers when intervening in subordinates' conflicts and the factors affecting choice of strategy in Turkish organizations?	Independent: organizational impact, conflict stage, conflict issue, harmony emphasis, and delegation of authority. Dependent: leaders' intervention strategy. Method: field test by means of questionnaires.	Critical Incident Technique and questionnaires from 392 employees of a convenience sample of 59 organizations, most of which were located in Ankara. Respondents answered questions about their supervisor's third-party intervention.	Factor analysis results showed that managers utilize as many as five strategies: mediation, inquisitorial (similar to arbitration), motivational tactics, conflict reduction through restructuring, and educating the parties.
20	Kozan, Ergin, & Varoglu (2014)	Developing an influence perspective for leaders' intervention in employees' conflict.	Independent: Power: Reward, Coercive, Legitimate, Expert, and Referent. Dependent: third-party roles: mediation; arbitration; educative; restructuring; distancing. Method: field test by means of questionnaires.	39 supervisors and their 165 subordinates in Turkey	Referent power of superior led to mediation in subordinates' conflicts. However, mediation decreased while restructuring, arbitration, and educative strategies increased with increased anchoring of subordinates' positions. These latter strategies mostly relied on reward power of manager. Subordinate satisfaction was highest with mediation and lowest when supervisors distanced themselves

					from the conflict.
21	Morges on & DeRue (2006)	What is the relationship between event criticality, urgency, and duration and event disruptiveness as well as the amount of time leaders spends managing different types of events?	Independent: event criticality, event urgency, event duration. Dependent: team disruption and time leader spends intervening in the team. Method: field test by means of interview and questionnaire.	42 different teams with the same supervisor	The study revealed that event criticality, urgency, and duration were positively related to team disruption, but only urgency was related to the amount of time leaders spent managing the event. A qualitative analysis of the events revealed that the impact of events on team functioning and leader intervention varied according to the type of event encountered.
22	Pinkley, Brittain, Neale, & Northcraft (1995)	What conflict intervention strategies do managers in the role of third party recall?	Leaders' third-party intervention. Determinants of intervention selection: efficiency, effectiveness, fairness, disputant moral, and solution acceptability. Method: different steps based on data derived of a field test.	Step 1: 40 managers (alumni and advisory board members of 4 business schools, US). Step 2: 100 practicing managers (different respondents than step 1, but same pool).	Analysis revealed 5 dimensions of leaders' third-party intervention: attention given to stated versus underlying problem, disputant commitment forced versus encouraged, manager versus disputant decision control, manager approaches conflict versus manager avoids conflict, and dispute is handled publicly versus privately.
23	Poitras, Hill, Hamel, & Pelletier (2015)	How can leaders' mediation skills be defined and how to measure leaders' mediation competency? Through a mixed-method approach, a competency framework and associated measurement instrument is developed.	Method: study 1 field test by means of interviews, and study 2 field test by means of questionnaire.	76 alumni from a graduate management school in Canada filled in the survey. 22 of them were interviewed in the second step.	Results of both studies suggest that the mediation skills typically associated with neutral third parties in general are similar to those employed by managers who mediate conflicts occurring between employees. Employees in this sample reported that mediating managers should have a firm understanding of the organizational context of the conflict, a factor that has been rarely mentioned in the mediation literature. Furthermore, it was found

					that leaders' mediation competency exhibited theoretically consistent relationships with related constructs, namely, with organizational conflict and job satisfaction, providing encouraging evidence as to its nomological validity.
24	Römer, Rispen s, Giebels , & Euwem a (2012)	How do employees perceive conflict management behaviors (e.g., problem solving, forcing, and avoiding) displayed by leaders and how this affected their own conflict–stress relationship?	Independent: relationship, task and process conflict. Moderating: Leader's problem solving, forcing, and avoiding third-party. Dependent: Conflict stress. Method: field test by means of questionnaires.	145 respondents of an insurance company in the Netherlands.	Conflict management behavior characterized as forcing was found to increase employees' stress experience for all three kinds of conflict (task, relationship, and process). A conflict-avoiding leader, however, only amplified employees' stress when the conflicts in question were task-oriented. Leaders' problem-solving behavior decreased employees' stress levels when the conflicts were relationship-oriented.
25	Schoor man & Champ agne (1994)	What is the interaction between a manager and a subordinate in the context of resolving a dispute between subordinates, while experimentally manipulating the affective response of the manager to the subordinate immediately prior to the intervention?	Independent: information about subordinate (negative vs. neutral). Dependent: atmosphere of the meeting, level of trust between the two parties, own satisfaction with outcome. Supervisory assessment of subordinate. Method: Scenario-based experimental approach.	62 undergraduate students from the US.	Managers in the experimental condition (with information about the subordinate) rated the subordinate's performance as lower, the atmosphere as less and the level of trust as lower than managers without the information. The results clearly support the contention that the role of the manager in third-party interventions is complicated by the fact that the manager frequently has an ongoing relationship with each of the disputants that will have significant effects on the intervention, and the intervention itself will have effects on the relationship. Because of

					the ongoing relationship, prior knowledge about the disputants, evaluations of their ability and performance, and attitudes and opinions about their character will influence the intervention process.
26	Shapiro & Rosen (1994)	What is the managers' choice of intervention strategies across numerous employee disputes? Second, what is the extent to which managers' decisions to mediate are influenced by feelings of mediation self-efficacy?	Independent: issue of conflict, seriousness of conflict, mediation self-efficacy. Dependent: Four interventions: overlooking, offering incentives, arbitrating and mediating. Method: field test by means of questionnaire.	74 managers at a southeastern University in the US.	Managers preferred overlooking if the issue was not serious. Managers were most likely to use mediation when the conflict was highly serious. Managers were more likely to use mediation when the issue was about scarce resources rather than personality conflicts. Higher mediation self-efficacy let managers do more mediate than overlooking. Managers with low mediation self-efficacy tend to overlook.
27	Siira (2012)	Broaden the understanding of leaders' conflict influence by suggesting a social complexity perspective on organizational conflict.	Topics in the interviews were: typical conflict situations, procedures to manage conflicts, managers' role in conflict, conflict culture, and consequences of conflicts. Method: field test by means of interviews.	12 women, 18 men. All from Finland. Graduates and students in management positions in 22 organizations .	Leaders' conflict influence can be conceptualized according to two theoretical dimensions, directness and communicative influence, including five sub dimensions: direct, indirect, distant, constraining, and enabling.
28	Way, Jimmie son, & Bordia (2014).	To test a multilevel model of the main and mediating effects of supervisor conflict management style climate and procedural	Independent: Supervisor Climate: Collaborating, Yielding, Forcing, Avoiding. Mediating: Procedural Justice climate. Dependent: anxiety, sleep disturbance, job	420 employees in 61 workgroups in Australia	Findings revealed that workgroups that reported a high supervisor collaborating climate also reported lower levels of sleep disturbance, job dissatisfaction, and cognitions related to taking action for a stress-related problem at work, as well as higher levels of procedural justice

		justice climate on employee strain.	dissatisfaction, action-taking cognitions. Method: field test by means of questionnaire.		climate. Workgroups that perceived a high supervisor yielding and forcing climate had higher experience of all four indicators of employee strain and lower procedural justice climate. High procedural justice climate constituted the mechanism that lower levels of sleep experienced disturbance and job dissatisfaction when supervisors collaborated in response to conflict. Similarly, low procedural justice climate mediated the positive relationships between a supervisor yielding climate and sleep disturbance, job dissatisfaction, and action-taking cognitions. Theoretically, these results support the importance of group justice perceptions and apply it to a new context, that of SCMS climate and its influence on employee strain.
29	Way, Jimmie son, & Bordia (2016).	To what extent are employees' outcomes (anxiety/depression, bullying and workers' compensation claims thoughts) affect by shared perceptions of supervisor conflict management style (CMS)? Further, what are cross-level moderating effects of supervisor	Independent: Relationship conflict Dependent: bullying, claim thoughts and anxiety/depression. Moderator: Supervisor Conflict management Climate: collaborating, forcing and yielding. Method: field test by means of questionnaire.	401 employees in 69 workgroups of an Australian government department	Workgroups with a high supervisor collaborating climate reported lower levels of anxiety/depression; bullying; and claims thoughts. Supervisor yielding climate was positively related to bullying and claims thoughts, but not significantly related to anxiety/depression. Supervisor forcing climate was positively related to anxiety/depression, and bullying, but not significantly related to claims thoughts. At low relationship conflict, high collaborating and low

CMS climate
on the positive
association
between
relationship
conflict and
these
outcomes?

yielding climates appear to be effective in anxiety/depression reduction, but at high relationship conflict, there is little discernible difference in these employee outcomes in a high versus low climate. In contrast to the findings for anxiety/depression and bullying, it was at low relationship conflict, not high, that supervisor CMS had little differential effect on employee claims thoughts. When relationship conflict was high, however, the climate represented by low collaborating, high yielding and high forcing was associated with a significantly higher incidence of claims thoughts.

Note: We left the used instruments out of this table because there were such a great variety of used instruments that no pattern emerged.

General findings

The reviewed articles reveal that the role of leaders as third parties in employees' conflict has been predominantly studied in North American samples (see Table 2-3: 16 articles had North American respondents, 4 Turkish samples, 3 European samples, 2 Asian samples, 2 Australian samples, and 2 samples consisted of both North American and Asian respondents). Furthermore, the data of 19 studies came from the field; the data of the remaining 10 came from laboratory methods.

Table 2-3

Descriptive information of reviewed articles

		Amount	Percentage
Origin of samples	North America	16	55,17
	Turkey	4	13,79
	Europe	3	10,34

	Asia	2	6,9
	Australia	2	6,9
	North America and Asia	2	6,9
	<i>Total</i>	29	100%
Year of publication	1990-1994	5	17,24
	1995-1999	7	28
	2000-2004	2	6,9
	2005-2009	6	20,69
	2010-2014	6	20,69
	2015-2016	2	6,9
	<i>Total</i>	29	100%
Method of research	Field	19	65,52
	Experiment	10	34,48
	<i>Total</i>	29	100%
Sample	Students	11	37,93
	Organizational leaders	8	27,59
	Employees	5	17,24
	Org. leader and employees	5	17,24
	<i>Total</i>	29	100%

We categorized the articles according to our research questions. The articles that give insight in the corresponding research questions are as follows:

1) Description of leaders' third-party behavior (16 papers: Chao & Tian, 2013; Elangovan, 1998; Irving & Meyer, 1997; Jameson 2001; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Kozan et al., 1994; 2007; 2014; Kozan & Ergin, 1999; Kim et al., 1999; Pinkley et al., 1995; Poitras et al., 2015; Römer et al., 2012; Shapiro & Rosen, 1994; Siira, 2012; Way et al., 2014);

2) Antecedents of leaders' third-party behavior (mostly aspects that influence choice of intervention) (15 articles: Arnold 2007; Benharda et al., 2013; Brett et al., 2007; Chao & Tian, 2013; Conlon et al., 1994; Conlon & Ross, 1997; Elangovan, 2005; Karambayya et al., 1992; Keashly and Newberry, 1995; Kozan & Ergin, 1999; Kozan et al., 2007; Morgeson & DeRue, 2006; Kim et al., 1999; Schoorman & Champagne, 1994; Shaprio & Rosen, 1994);

3) Outcomes of leaders' third-party behavior (13 articles: Bobocel et al., 1998; Conlon & Ross, 1997; Elangovan, 2005; Karambayya & Brett, 1989; Karambayya et al., 1992; Keashley & Newberry, 1995; Kozan et al., 1994; Kozan & Ergin, 1999; Poitras et al., 2015; Römer et al., 2012; Schoorman & Champagne, 1994; Way et al., 2014; Way et al., 2016).

3a) Relationship between leaders' third-party behavior and outcomes (9 articles out of the 13 mentioned in research question 3: Bobocel et al., 1998; Conlon & Ross, 1997; Elangovan, 1998; Elangovan, 2005; Karambayya et al., 1992; Keashley & Newberry, 1995; Kozan et al., 1994; Römer et al., 2012; Way et al., 2014, Way et al., 2016).

We present the results regarding for each of our research questions hereafter in a table (Table 2-4) previous to a more detailed discussion of the results.

Table 2-4*Overview of the findings*

Research question	Findings
1. How is leaders' third-party behavior described in empirical studies and how this is reflected in empirical data?	<p>Variety of descriptions of leaders' third party behavior: using typologies, dimensions, or strategies.</p> <p>Despite the same purposes, no consensus about how to describe leaders' third party behavior.</p> <p>Leaders' third-party behavior is rather complex (to describe) and consists of many different facets.</p> <p>A significant amount of the reviewed articles (9 of 29) based their description of leaders' third-party behavior in conflict on the role of legal frameworks and third parties such as mediators and judges</p>
2. What antecedents of leaders' third-party behavior have been investigated?	<p>Antecedents in three categories: leader attributes, disputant attributes, and context.</p> <p>Leader characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Status (differences) between third party and disputants - Gender of the leader - Differences within the high status group (e.g., organizational leaders) are hardly empirically studied - Cultural context and cultural background of leaders <p>Disputants' characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disputants' expectations of the leader - Disputants' procedural judgments <p>Organizational and societal context:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Negative affective information - The (quality of the) relationship of the leader with disputant - Context: work vs. home - Antecedents such as relative status and culture of the leader
3. What outcomes of leaders' third-party behaviors were examined?	<p>Effects were measured in terms of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Disputants' fairness and justice perceptions - Conflict outcome such as success of the intervention, efficiency perception, decision outcome, efficiency perception, effectiveness, and degree to which the dispute was completely resolved and commitment of disputants to the resolution - (Changed) relationships such as impact on the relationship between disputants - Well-being such as anxieties, sleep disturbance, job

	dissatisfaction, action-taking cognitions
	- Aspects of (behavior within) the team such as subordinates' conflict management
	Seven of the reviewed studies examined effects of leaders' third-party behavior in terms of employees' perception of fairness and justice.
3a. What leaders' third-party behavior is related to which specific outcomes?	<p>Leaders' mediational or problem solving behavior is associated more with employee perception of fairness, employee well-being.</p> <p>Interventions that are directed towards one party or a particular solution in the conflict are perceived are less fair and are associated with decreased employees' well-being.</p>

Results regarding research question 1: Description of leaders' third-party behavior.

A significant amount of the articles contain the aim to describe leaders' third-party behavior (16 out of 29 articles). Parts of these articles aimed to describe the behaviors leaders demonstrate when confronted with a conflict situation. Some of these used dimensions to describe leaders' third-party behavior (Elangovan 1998; Irving & Meyer, 1997; Pinkley et al., 1995; Siira, 2012), others defined typologies of strategies (e.g., Chao & Tian, 2013; Jameson, 2001; Kozan et al., 2007), or techniques and skills (e.g., Kim, 1999; Poitras et al., 2015). Dimensions refer here to a scale underlying the behavior (i.e., the amount on power someone expresses). For example, leaders can express different levels of power, so the dimension is a continuum. Typologies describe one particular category of behavior that means for example behavior of the leader such as deciding whether one of the parties is right and the other should accept that. Skills as a third way to define leaders' role is used to indicate the ability of a leader to deal with a conflict between employees effectively (Poitras et al., 2015). Skills are different to behavior descriptions and dimensions due to the fact that skills refer to the ability to do something well, and therefore have an evaluative character. Another difference between skills and typologies is that skills refer as well as to cognitive and emotional skills that are not outward behavior but crucial to employ the effective behavior.

Another observation is that articles that had similar purposes (e.g., defining a description) resulted in different models. For example, Siira (2012) found two dimensions of leaders' third-party behavior whereas Pinkley and colleagues (1995) found five dimensions. Both studies used qualitative data of (interviews with) managers who are students and alumni from business schools. Moreover, there is little overlap between the two studies. Siira (2012) found one dimension about the directness of the manager and a second dimension about the communicative influence. Pinkley and colleagues (1995) instead found dimensions about the motivation of the disputants, the managers' tendency to approach or avoid, about the way of dealing with the conflict, the issue of the conflict and who is in control of the decision. Additionally, the model used in the study of Elangovan (2005) is based on the dimensions 'process control' and 'decision control'. To summarize, one can conclude that there is no consensus about the dimensions underlying leaders' third-party behavior. A second conclusion is that leaders' third-party behavior is rather complex and consists of many different facets as it could be caught with the mentioned models. As stated by Pinkley and colleagues (1995): 'Managers [compared to formal third parties], on the other hand, are free to select any one (or a combination) of these [formal] intervention strategies' (p. 386). Siira (2012), in the same vain, suggested a social complexity perspective of organizational conflict to understand leaders' third-party behavior because of the complex nature of leaders as third parties.

Another finding regarding the description of leaders' third-party behavior concerns the underlying paradigm. A significant amount of the reviewed articles (9 of 29) based their description of leaders' third-party behavior in conflict on the role of legal frameworks and third parties such as mediators and judges (Arnold, 2007; Chi et al., 2009; Elangovan, 1998; Karambayya et al., 1992; Keashly & Newberry, 1995; Kozan et al., 1994; Kozan et al., 2007; Kozan et al., 2014; Kozan & Ergin, 1999). These studies were based on the framework described by Thibaut & Walker (1975) (see also Lewicki & Sheppard, 1985; Sheppard, 1983; 1984). This is surprising given the assumed differences between legal third

parties (e.g., mediators, arbiters, and judges) and organizational leaders (e.g., managers and supervisors) (e.g., Pinkley et al, 1995; Pruitt & Kim, 2004).

Results regarding research question 2: Antecedents of leaders' third-party behavior

15 articles investigated antecedents of leaders' third-party behavior. Antecedents for leaders' third-party behavior that were studied fall in three categories: leader attributes (i.e., power, agreeableness, self-efficacy, gender, age, and supervisory experience), disputant attributes, and context (i.e., the size of organization, type of conflict).

Leader characteristics

In the reviewed articles antecedents of leaders' third-party behavior were studied such as status, culture, gender, need for consistency, which we will describe next. In six articles (Benharda et al., 2013; Brett et al., 2007; Conlon et al., 1994; Karambayya et al., 1992; Keashly and Newberry, 1995; Kozan & Ergin, 1999), researchers investigated whether leader versus subordinates differ in how they would intervene in a conflict situation. These conflict situations ranged from a role-play in an exercise to real experienced conflicts that were recalled by the respondents. The results of these studies indicate that supervisors as third parties in conflict between subordinates tend to use more autocratic, assertive, forceful tactics than third parties without higher status (i.e., peers) (Conlon et al., 1994; Karambayya et al., 1992; Kim et al., 1999). These studies used disputants' perception and objective observations to determine strategies. In Turkey, Kozan and Ilter (1994) found that managers reported their use of mediation and facilitation behaviors more frequently than their autocratic and laissez-faire behaviors. Together, these findings suggest that perceptions of interventions differ between employees and leaders. Moreover, leaders may overestimate their own mediational and facilitative behavior that is often seen as more effective and more socially desirable. A connotation should be made about the cultural background; the study of Kozan and Ilter is conducted in Turkey, managers in

North America and Asia may self-report their own third-party behavior differently (e.g., Ting-Toomey, Gao, Trubisky, Yang, Kim, Liu, & Nishida, 1991). Benharda and colleagues (2013) found that female in the role of a leader as a third party were more agentic (taking the decision in the conflict and being perceived as more authoritarian) in their behavior than female without the higher status and males with or without higher status. Concluding that gender as an antecedent affects leaders' behavior as a third party.

Another finding of the review was that supervisors used more incentives and used autocratic strategies more than colleagues. Peers listened more and gave advice. Satisfaction with process and outcome was low when autocratic tactics were used. When both peers and supervisors mediated in the conflict, the disputants saw process and outcome as fair (Kozan & Ergin, 1999). These findings are similar to the findings of Karambayya and colleagues (1992) who found that mediating supervisors were perceived as more procedural just than supervisor who were imposing a decision.

Surprisingly, the differences within the high status group (e.g., organizational leaders) are hardly empirically studied (with an exception of Karambayya et al., 1992). It would be interesting to what extent leaders with the same status varying in their third-party behavior. In other words, what does explain that one leader acts more effectively than another leader in employees' conflicts.

Disputants' characteristics

As an antecedent, we found one attribute of disputants in the reviewed articles. That is disputants expect more decisions made by the third party when the third party is a supervisor than when the third party is a peer or co-worker. Findings by Kozan and colleagues (2014) show that referent power of leaders led to more mediational behavior in subordinates' conflicts. That means employees' rating on how they respect, admire or identify with their leader is related to mediation behavior of this leader in conflicts. However, the same study reported that mediation decreased while restructuring, arbitration, and educative strategies

increased with increased anchoring of subordinates' positions. These latter strategies mostly relied on reward power of manager.

Organizational and societal context

In the study of Keashly and Newberry (1995) they found respondents in the work setting showed greater preference for methods where the third party made the decision when the third party was the supervisor versus a co-worker. Kozan and colleagues (2007) took conflict stage and conflict impact as factors affecting intervention selection. They found that the motivational tactics (e.g., providing incentives for the disputants, threatening the disputants) increased with the escalation of conflict.

National culture as a context variable is examined by two studies in comparing cultures. Taiwanese female supervisors (Rotary presidents) tended to follow more traditional norms compared to US female Rotary presidents (Chao & Tian, 2013). Japanese and Chinese organizational leaders as third parties were more likely to act as preserving the status as well as making more decisions in the dispute between employees compared to leaders as third parties in the US (Brett et al., 2007). Based on these findings one can argue that the cultural context and cultural background of leaders have an influence on the intervention leaders choose. On the other hand, there seem to exist similarities between cultures in terms of responsibility and proneness to act for leaders in conflicts between their employees.

Elangovan (2005) found that leaders choose an intervention that increases the chance to end up with the preferred settlement of the leader, and that this tendency was stronger than the effect of framing. Framing refers in the context of conflict management to 'how the issues and options in the dispute are perceived and portrayed by the third party' (Elangovan, 2005; p. 545).

Furthermore, Schoorman and Champagne (1994) found managers who were provided with negative affective information about the subordinate rated the subordinate's performance lower, the atmosphere less positive and the level of trust lower than managers without this information. These results support the

assumption that the (quality of the) relationship of the leader with disputant influences the conflict process. However, in this study leaders' behavior in the conflict was not measured. And it supports the contention of our current chapter that the role of the manager in third-party interventions is complicated compared to external third parties (i.e., mediators) by the fact that the manager has an ongoing relationship with each of the disputants that will have significant effects on the intervention, and the intervention itself will have effects on the relationship in the long term.

In workplace conflict, disputants showed a greater preference for methods where the third party made the final decision when the third party was the supervisor than when the third party was a co-worker. When disputants made the final decision, methods with the co-worker as the third party were preferred. By not intervening, the supervisor may be seen as inappropriate or as ineffective as intervener. Disputants' procedural judgments appear to be influenced by expectations of what each type of person has the position or authority to do (i.e., legitimate power) (Keashly & Newberry, 1995).

Taken together, antecedents such as relative status and culture of the leader in the reviewed articles are influencing the preference (and choice) for intervention. On the other hand disputants perceive and expect certain behavior of the leader and these perceptions and expectations may differ from those of the intervening leader.

Results regarding research question 3: Outcomes of leaders' third-party behavior

A total of twelve studies examined outcomes of leaders' third-party behavior. We present the aspects of outcomes in categories here.

Fairness perception. Effects were measured in terms of disputants' fairness and justice perceptions by Bobocel and colleagues (1998), Conlon and Ross (1997), Karambayya and Brett (1989), Karambayya and colleagues (1992), Keashly and Newberry (1995), Kozan and Ergin (1999), and Way and colleagues (2014),

Outcome of the conflict. Effects were measured in terms of the conflict outcome such as success of the intervention (timely, effective, high disputants' commitment) (Elangovan, 1998), efficiency perception (Keashly & Newberry (1995), decision outcome (Brett et al., 2007), efficiency perception (Bobocel et al., 1998), effectiveness and degree to which the dispute was completely resolved and commitment of disputants to the resolution (Elangovan, 1998)

Relationships. Effects were measured in terms of (changed) relationships such as impact on the relationship between disputants (Keashey & Newberry, 1995) conflict management of subordinates (Kozan et al., 1994), relationship impact (Bobocel et al., 1998), endorsement of the manager (Bobocel et al., 1998), quality of the relationship between leader and employee (Bobocel et al., 1998; Keashly & Newberry, 1995), and bullying (Way et al., 2016)

Well-being. Outcomes in terms of well-being such as anxieties, sleep disturbance, job dissatisfaction, action-taking cognitions (Way et al., 2014), conflict stress (Römer et al., 2012), depression/anxiety, and claim thoughts (Way et al., 2016), friendliness (Bobocel et al., 1998).

Team characteristics. Aspects of (behavior within) the team were measured such as subordinates' conflict management (Kozan et al., 1994), collaborative, avoiding, yielding or forcing supervisory climate (Way et al., 2014; Way et al., 2016), and preference for leaders' strategy (Keashey & Newberry, 1995).

A notable finding is that seven of the reviewed studies examined effects of leaders' third-party behavior in terms of employees' perception of fairness and justice. This is remarkable when the number of other possible outcomes of conflict is taken into account (see for example Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). The reason for this emphasis on may lay in the assumed correlation between the fairness perception and satisfaction with the resolution (Karambayya & Brett, 1989). Perceptions that were studied concern different aspect. The first is procedural fairness that is about the applied procedure by the third party. A second is interactional fairness that taps into constructs of truthfulness, courtesy, respect, and trust- worthiness. A third perception concerns fairness of leaders'

actions, for example to what extent the disputant perceived the third party as considering his or her emotions and opinions. A last perception is distributive justice fairness and outcome fairness. These are the employees' perceptions of fair conclusions and settlement of the conflict.

In sum, concerning outcomes we conclude that studies predominantly focused on perceptions of the disputants and that leaders' perspectives as well as more objective measures of outcomes are absent. In terms of employee' well-being and perceived relationship with the leader this seems reasonable. However, in terms of performances, objective measures would add value. We will discuss this more extensively in the discussion section.

Results regarding research question 3a: Relationships between leaders' third-party behavior and outcomes

Nine out of 12 studies that examined effects of leaders' third-party behavior report relationships between leader behavior and outcomes. A problem solving style (e.g., meditational or collaboration) of leaders as third parties is related to high collaborative supervisory climate and this – in turn - is related to lower levels of sleep disturbance, job dissatisfaction, and cognitions related to taking action for a stress-related problem at work, as well as higher levels of procedural justice climate (Way et al., 2014). Furthermore, a positive supervisor conflict management climate (high collaborating, low yielding and forcing) buffers the relationship of conflict with bullying, anxiety/depression, and claim thoughts when relationship conflict is low (Way et al., 2016). Another study found leaders' problem-solving behavior decreased employees' stress levels when the conflicts were relationship-oriented (Römer et al., 2012). On the other hand, conflict management behavior characterized as forcing was found to increase employees' stress experience for all three kinds of conflict (task, relationship, and process) (Römer et al., 2012). A conflict-avoiding leader, however, only amplified employees' stress when the conflicts in question were task-oriented (Römer et al., 2012). Similarly, employee satisfaction seemed higher with mediation and lower when supervisors did take distance from the conflict (Kozan et al., 2014).

Mediational tactics of the third party were related to more perceived procedural justice than motivational tactics and compromise resolutions were more likely to be reached, which in turn leads to higher distributive justice (Karambayya & Brett, 1989). Employees reported increased use of collaboration and compromise when their leader was seen as using more facilitation and mediation. Competitive behavior increased when managers using autocratic behavior in a third-party role (Kozan & Ilter, 1994).

Ross and Conlon (1997) found that justice perception of the outcome and the procedure as well as supervisor evaluation being affected by the outcome managers imposed in a dispute between employees. Employees favored outcomes in which they won a number of issues compared to outcomes such as a compromise or winning the most important issue.

However, Putnam (1994: pg. 33) pointed out in her review that '*... leaders rarely adopt the roles of mediators and arbitrators as employed in labor and judicial settings. Instead, managers intervene in disputes by acting as inquisitors or decision makers who treat conflicts as problems to be solved. Managers may mediate when the paramount issue in the dispute is maintaining the participants' relationships. In most instances, however, managers intervene by exercising authority.*'

Overall, the results suggest that problem solving intervention (e.g., mediation) is associated more with outcomes such as employee perception of fairness, employee well-being, and employees' perceptions that favor the relationship with the leader. Interventions that are directed towards one party or a particular solution in the conflict are perceived are less fair and are associated with decreased employees' well-being.

Disputants' procedural judgments appear to be influenced by expectations of what the leader has to do according to his position or authority (i.e., legitimate power) (Keashly & Newberry, 1995). Chi and colleagues' (2009) findings suggest that subordinates expected extraverted supervisors to be fairer mediators than introverted mediators. The level of leader agreeableness seems to have no effect on employees' expected mediation fairness. Rather, Chi and colleagues (2009)

indicated that agreeableness only affects employee' expectations when the leader is much older than the employee.

Summarizing, the studied factors that influence employee' expectations are foremost leaders' attributes (e.g., the authority of the leader, the intra- or extraversion of the leader and age difference between disputant and leader). Factors about employee's or the conflict (e.g., type, intensity or escalation) are less studied. However, one can assume an employee have a different expectation when he/she deals with a severe personal conflict than with a little frustration.

Bobocel and colleagues (1998) found managers' justification for an unfavorable resolution having positive effect on respondents' perception of procedural, interactional, and distributive fairness. In contrast, minimizing managers' responsibility had trade-off effects: Whereas this tactic had a positive effect on interactional fairness perceptions, it had adverse side effects (reducing perceptions of the manager's power and leadership ability) (Bobocel et al., 1998). Ross and Conlon (1997) found similar results. They found that justification of the leader for his/her behavior was seen as more acceptable than either excuses or apologies. Apparently, justification of the manager for his behavior is positive related to perceived fairness and supervisory evaluation.

The findings about information regarding leaders' intervention can be seen as an additional factor that lead to the complexity of leaders' third-party behavior and its effects. Apparently, not only the behavior of the leader determines the effects of his or her intervention, but also the underlying motives of the leader. As discussed before, leaders' choice of intervention depends as well from information he or she has about the disputants and the conflict (Schoorman & Champagne, 1994).

Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this review was to identify what is known about leaders' third-party behavior and to define remaining questions about this issue. We found leaders' third-party behaviors; its antecedents and its outcomes were subject in

29 articles between 1990 and 2016. We gathered insight on each of our research questions, those concerning leaders' third-party behavior descriptions, as well as the antecedents and outcomes of these behaviors. We conclude that empirical findings in the literature seems to be fragmented and missing an overarching framework.

In most of the studies we found differences in the descriptions of leaders' third-party behavior, which indicates that there is not one way to describe leaders' third-party behavior that receives broad support within the academic world. Another remark is that researchers seem to pay less attention to the antecedents and outcomes of the behavior than to the description of the behavior itself. We also concluded that the majority of the articles we reviewed and that were studying antecedents addressed the question if organizational leaders (higher status than disputants) employ other third-party behaviors than co-workers as third parties (no status difference with disputants). Indeed, the studies are uniform in their conclusion that high status third parties employ different third-party behavior than co-workers. However, this does not help us to answer the question what behaviors are most effective given specific circumstances.

Most of the studies in our review focused on linear relationships between variables, however this does not reflect the complexity of leaders' third-party behavior. The relationship of leaders' third-party behavior on outcomes, for example, without regarding the type of conflict, its escalation or the way the leader was involved leads to little added value to the question of which behavior is advisable to leaders. Behavior and its outcomes occur in a context, this context often is essential in determine if the behavior is effective or not. For example, if a colleague asks if his colleague will get the deadline for his input can be perceived as an attack by this colleague when this colleague experiencing a tension, distrust, or conflict with the other. On the other hand, if there is mutual trust between the two, the question could be perceived as solely informative. Indeed, from research about dyadic conflicts we know that the same conflict management behavior can cause different effects, dependently on circumstances (cf., Jehn & Bendersky, 2003).

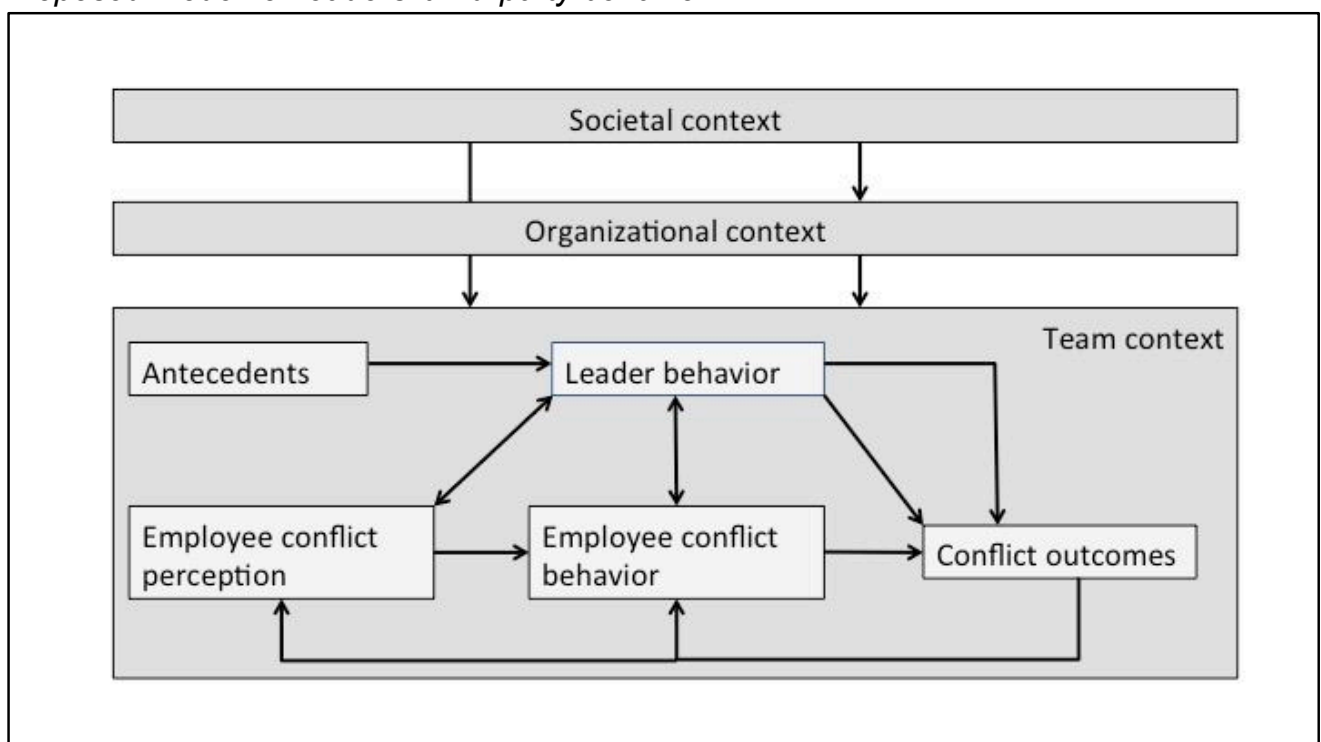
A notable finding is that we found no study that paid attention to different perspectives in employees' conflict with leader involvement. However, as outlined in the introduction of this thesis the perceptual difference about the conflict as well as about leaders' behavior may have important implications for outcomes (Gibson et al., 2009; Jehn et al., 2010). These works show differences in perceptions are even more important than the actual situation of leader behavior in terms of determining outcomes (Gibson et al., 2009). Especially in a conflict with three parties the chance of significant differences in perception about what is happening and what the other is doing may be large. For example when one employee is talking to the leader about the conflict situation, it is likely that the perception and description of this employee does vary from the perception of the other party that is absent. Future research should examine more deeply what differences in perceptions between the three parties may exist and how these influence the conflict process, leaders' third party behavior, and conflict outcomes.

Compared to the period we searched in, we found just a few studies about leaders' third-party behavior. A majority of the articles in our review pays attention to the way leaders' third-party behavior occurs. Only few studies use frameworks developed earlier and those who did use earlier developed frameworks did not find support for the frameworks proposed earlier. One can conclude that the scientific research is still searching for a description that fits to all requirements. In our view, these requirements are: 1) the framework that is able to describe the whole spectrum of third-party behavior by the leader. That means it should include any reaction to the conflict by the leader – including non-action. And 2) the framework should take into account that involved parties could perceive (and evaluate) leaders' third-party behavior differently. A framework that fulfills these requirements helps to answer the question about what leader third-party behavior should be employed in which situation and with which consequences.

We propose a holistic view on leaders' third-party behavior that incorporates different aspects in the conflict process (Figure 2-2). In this model, the effectiveness of leaders' third-party behavior is described as an outcome of a

process between essential elements such as the context in which the behavior occurs, the antecedents, the conflict characteristics, different perspectives etc. This model is similar to the 3-R model of Bollen, Euwema, and Munduate (2016), which describes mediators, their behavior and outcomes as a third in workplace conflicts and argues that effectiveness of mediators' behavior depends on the specific circumstances of the conflict. The current model is somewhat different and describes leaders as a third party but is based on the same idea that defining what behavior is most effective depends on the specific situation. Our proposed model differentiates between the conflict, the involved parties, and the outcome. Moreover, we think the separation of employees' view and the leaders' view is very essential when determining the choice of third-party intervention and the outcomes of this (non-) intervention. The outcomes (e.g., well-being, satisfaction) are subjective and therefore an individual approach of the conflict (management) perception is necessary. Another reason to take different perspectives into account is that the difference between managers' perception and employee' perception does influence relevant outcomes (Gibson et al., 2009).

Figure 2-2
Proposed model for leaders' third-party behavior



Future research

According to our results we have implications for future research. We presented a model of leaders' third-party behavior that is able to serve as a base for future research. Foremost the perspective of the employee about his or her expectations about leaders involvement (e.g., in what situations is what behavior preferable) and correlations between the kind of conflict, leaders' third-party behavior, and outcomes is interesting to examine in more detail. Knowledge on these aspects would help to identify effective leaders' third-party behavior. This knowledge could help to broaden our insight in the contingency factor leaders' third-party behavior to prevent negative consequences of work conflicts and strengthen beneficial consequences of conflict at work. Organizational leaders would be helped by a more sophisticated guideline for how to deal with the daily emerging conflicts between their employees. Another meaningful avenue for future research is the kind of solution that is reached in employees' conflict. The fairness perception and satisfaction of employees is studied in ample prior research. But the quality of solution of the conflict is absent in these articles. However, for organizations and their leaders to know how they could reach best solutions for (the performance of) the organization it would be very interesting. The work we reviewed has important implications, however it may be worth to be able to combine the different articles in a general model. In that sense, the aspects we know and the aspects that have to be further examined can be defined. A last avenue we identify for future research is take into account the perceptual difference between the three parties about the conflict and leaders' third-party behavior. To examine what differences in perceptions exist and how does this affect the conflict process, leaders' third-party behavior and conflict outcomes would contribute to the discussion about leaders as third party in employees' conflict.

Conclusion

We proposed a model about leaders' third-party behavior with explicitly adding contextual factors and outcomes, and highlighting the relationships

between contextual factors, third-party behaviors and outcomes. In this chapter we established that a wide range of ways to describe leaders' third-party behavior is used in the literature. Our review did not reveal one dominant description of leaders' third-party behavior. We further found that status and culture as antecedents influence leaders' choice for third-party behaviors. Consequences of leaders' third-party behavior were studied mostly in terms of perceived justice. And problem-solving (e.g., meditational) behavior seems to be most appreciated by employees in terms of outcomes (e.g., well-being and fairness perception). In each of these three areas (description, antecedents and outcomes of leaders' third-party behavior) we identified gaps for future research.

Chapter 3

The moderating role of leaders' third-party behavior on the conflict-outcome relationship¹

¹ This chapter is based on:

Römer, M., Rispens, S., Giebels, E., & Euwema, M. C. (2012). A helping hand? The moderating role of leaders' conflict management behavior on the conflict – stress relationship of employees. *Negotiation Journal*, 28, 253-277.

Introduction

Conflict, which is defined as a process between two individuals that arises when one party feels obstructed or irritated by the other (Van de Vliert, 1997), occurs frequently among employees (e.g., Bollen & Euwema, 2013; Wall & Callister, 1995). Individuals experiencing conflict often feel anxiety, frustration, and tension (Spector, Chen, & O'Connell, 2000; Spector & Bruk-Lee, 2008), and conflict has been found to negatively affect employees' job satisfaction and performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Obviously, organizations need to manage employee conflict effectively to minimize these negative consequences. The importance of conflict management for well-being, including employee satisfaction (Behfar, Peterson, Mannix, & Trochim, 2008) or employee stress (Friedman et al., 2000), supports this notion.

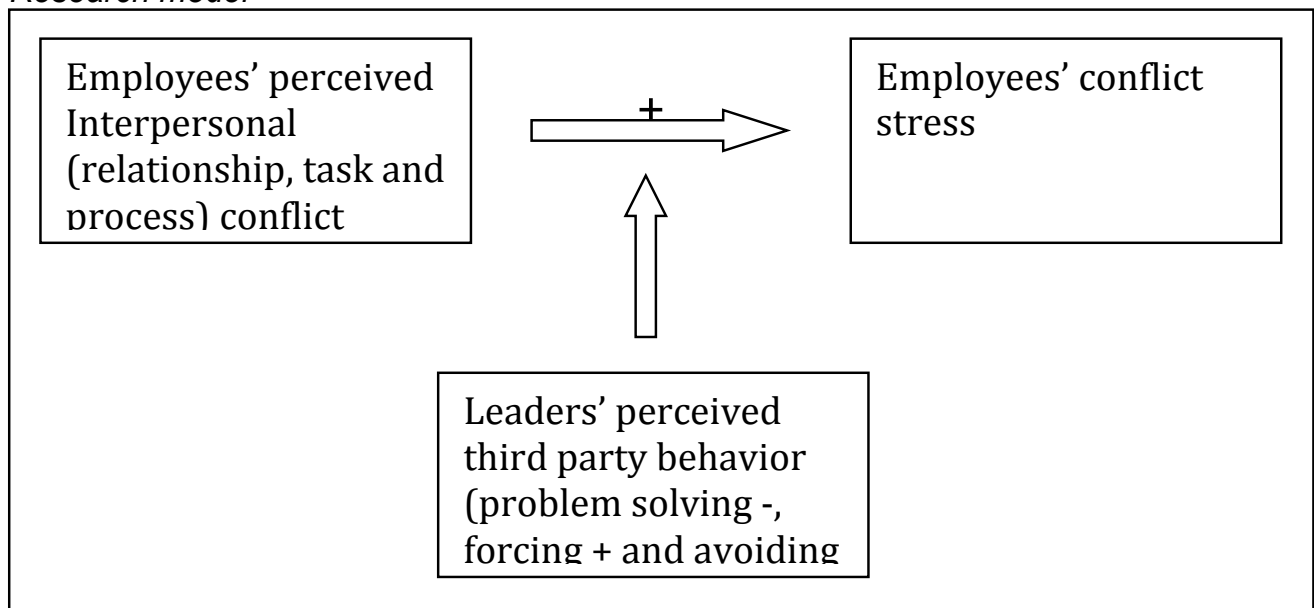
Generally, leaders' third-party behavior refers to how that leader reacts to conflicts between two or more employees under his or her supervision. Past research on conflict management has predominantly focused on determining the best practices for managers, department leaders, or supervisors to intervene in employee conflict (e.g., Elangovan, 1995; Nugent, 2002). (In this article, we use "leader" to refer to all these functions.) For example, when the issue of conflict is considered important and a solution is urgently needed, it has been suggested that third parties should force a solution (Elangovan, 1995; Nugent, 2002).

What researchers have overlooked, however, is how employees' perceptions of leaders' conflict management behaviors may affect employees' well-being (De Dreu & Beersma, 2005). This question is important because recent studies have demonstrated associations between employee conflict and depression, declined self-esteem, and decreased general health (De Raeye et al., 2009). Moreover, about 14 percent of people in Europe report work-related health problems, such as stress, depression, and anxiety (European Union, 2010). In turn, illnesses such as depression increase organizational costs because they are associated with absenteeism and decreased employee performance (Birnbaum, Kessler, Kelley, Ben-Hamadi, Joish, & Greenberg, 2010). Workplace conflict can, therefore, have significant effect on organizational

outcomes. Consequently, in the current study, we examined how employees' perceptions of leaders' conflict management behaviors affected the relationship between employees' experiences of workplace conflict and their levels of stress (see Figure 3-1).

We conducted a field study to investigate the role of perceived leaders' third-party behaviors on employees. With this study, we hope to contribute to the discussion of which factors affect the negative stressful impact of conflict on employee well-being. Furthermore, we seek to develop additional insight into the effects of leader behavior in conflict situations that can help design conflict interventions and conflict trainings for organizational leaders. For these purposes, we examined how employees perceived three of the most common types of conflict management behaviors (e.g., problem solving, forcing, and avoiding) displayed by leaders and how this affected their own conflict–stress relationship.

Figure 3-1
Research model



Types of Conflict and Stress

Past conflict research has distinguished between three types of conflicts among individuals in the workplace: relationship, task, and process conflict (Jehn, 1995; 1997). Relationship conflict occurs when parties disagree about personal issues that are not work-related, such as clashes of personality, political views,

hobbies, and social events. Task conflicts occur when employees disagree about the task being performed, such as what is causing a work-related problem and how they should solve it. Process conflicts are arguments about logistics (how to best achieve the agreed-upon solution to a work problem) and delegation (how and to whom to delegate which tasks) (Jehn, 1997).

In general, conflict in organizations can diminish parties' psychological well-being (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). For example, imagine that an employee has outlined his or her opinion about how to solve a particular problem, but his or her colleague disagrees and argues that he or she is wrong. It is likely that the first person will experience some frustration and dissatisfaction. Past research has found that conflict increases negative emotions that, in turn, negatively affect individual well-being by diminishing satisfaction and causing emotional exhaustion, which can increase absenteeism and employee turnover (Quick, Quick, Nelson, & Hurrell, 1997; Giebels & Janssen, 2005). Workplace conflict may, therefore, have long-lasting effects on individuals as well as organizations.

Conflict at work is a stressor (Keenan & Newton, 1985), and all three types of conflict have been found to negatively affect employees' well-being. Fights over task issues have been found to increase negative affect (Baron, 1984), and to decrease satisfaction and intent to stay with the employer (Schweiger, Sandberg, & Ragan, 1986). Previous research suggested that process conflict can have a negative impact on people's emotions (Greer & Jehn, 2007; cf. Jehn & Bendersky, 2003) and can increase the likelihood that a person will experience conflict in future interactions (Greer, Jehn, & Mannix, 2008).

Both task and process conflict are associated with decreased well-being, but to a lesser extent than relationship conflict (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Behfar & Thompson, 2007; Greer & Jehn, 2007). Past research suggests that relationship conflict seems to have an even more detrimental effect on individual well-being (compared with task or process conflict) because it can threaten one's identity and self-esteem, and generate more intense emotions (De Dreu, Van Dierendonck, & Dijkstra, 2004). Relationship conflict negatively affects morale,

which is likely to result in decreased satisfaction with the job, group, and organization (cf. Jehn & Bendersky, 2003). Furthermore, research has suggested that the different types of conflicts are often related to each other (Simons & Peterson, 2000; Rispens, 2012), indicating that people may misinterpret what the conflict is about. For example, one could perceive regular and ongoing conflict with colleagues about a particular task as a personal attack rather than a task-related disagreement. Nevertheless, given the empirical evidence, any interpretation of the conflict — whether one sees it as a task, relationship, or process issue — is likely to negatively influence one's well-being.

Leaders' third-party behaviors

Organizational leaders typically fulfill an informal or emergent third-party role in employee conflict (Pinkley et al., 1995; Kressel, 2006). Leaders are usually involved parties, given their responsibility for constructive teamwork. They usually have a relationship with the conflicting parties beyond the conflict (e.g., Pinkley et al., 1995). Despite the fact that employees often believe that dealing with the conflict is one of the organizational leader's responsibilities (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004), a formal prescription of this role is often missing, and empirical research on organizational leaders as third parties has been rare (Goldman et al., 2008).

The third-party role of organizational leaders differs from the role of institutional third parties who are external to and neutral in conflicts (e.g., outside mediators, institutional ombudsmen, etc.) in three ways (e.g., Pinkley et al., 1995). First, organizational leaders' performance heavily depends on their employees' performance. Second, organizational leaders often have an enduring relationship with their employees. Finally, an organizational leader may have his or her own interests regarding a specific outcome of the conflict between his or her employees (Lewicki & Sheppard, 1985; Pinkley et al., 1995).

The psychoanalyst Karen Horney (1945; 1950) described the basic behavioral tendencies of people when faced with conflict. These three tendencies are: moving toward others, moving against others, and moving away from others. Past research on third-party conflict has identified similar categories. For

example, intravention is a combination of problem solving (moving toward) and forcing (moving against) behavior (Conlon et al., 1994). Others have found that leaders, as third parties, use autocratic behavior (moving against) to impose a settlement between the conflicting parties, or mediational behavior (moving toward) in order to gain insight into the conflicting parties' concerns and to stimulate them to find a solution themselves (e.g., Karambayya et al., 1992). In addition, although this has been discussed less frequently, leaders confronted with conflicts may feel threatened, and therefore may try to avoid getting involved in the conflict (Sheppard, 1983). Because of this, Robin Pinkley and her colleagues (1995) added leaders' avoiding behavior (moving away) to their dimensions of leaders' third-party behavior.

In the current study, we examine the moderating effects of three corresponding third-party behaviors of leaders — problem solving, forcing, and avoiding — on interpersonal conflicts between their employees. 'Problem solving' is defined as searching for the underlying concerns of the parties and seeking to come to a solution that addresses all parties' concerns. 'Forcing' occurs when the leader imposes on the disputants the solution that he or she prefers, or pushes for any resolution that will end the dispute. 'Avoiding' occurs when the leader chooses not to get involved in the conflict.

Conflicts are likely to increase employee stress because they reduce employees' self-esteem and diminish their sense of control over their situation (e.g., De Dreu, Van Dierendonck, & De Best-Waldhober, 2002).

Leaders' problem-solving behavior can involve asking the conflicting parties questions about their goals and points of view (e.g., Carnevale, 1986); employees are likely to interpret this positively as the leader showing concern for their interests (cf. Giebels & Yang, 2009). Hence, when employees perceive that they are allowed to express their viewpoints, their feeling of control over the conflict situation is likely to increase, and therefore can help buffer the conflict's stressful impact. Indeed, in their study, James Quick and Jonathan Quick (1984) indicated that a participatory leadership style, in which employees participate in the decision-making process, decreases employees' feelings of stress.

Similarly, Ellen Giebels and Onne Janssen (2005) found that when outside help was called in, parties in conflict experienced fewer negative consequences in terms of individual well-being than people who did not ask for third-party help. Furthermore, a recent study by Renée De Reuver and Marianne Van Woerkom (2010) showed a negative correlation between leaders' engagement in problem solving with employees with whom they had conflicts and employee stress. Problem-solving behaviors may have these effects because they demonstrate that the leader has a higher commitment to his or her employees, they increase the employees' perception of justice, and they enhance their sense that they have a voice in their workplace (De Reuver & Van Woerkom, 2010). Although De Reuver and Van Woerkom (2010) focused on behavior in leader–employee conflicts, similar effects may exist for leaders' third-party problem-solving behavior. Also, William Ross, Donald Conlon, and Allan Lind (1990) suggested that the attention paid by third parties to people in conflicts (person-oriented behavior) is important for maintaining feelings of satisfaction and fairness.

To summarize, the literature indicates that when conflicting parties perceive that their leader is engaging in problem-solving behavior, they are likely to feel that their concerns are taken seriously, and consequently they experience less stress (Rhoades & Eisenberger 2002). Thus, our first hypothesis reads:

Hypothesis One: Relationship (1a), task (1b), and process conflict (1c) between employees are positively correlated with employees' feelings of conflict stress, and these relationships are affected by employees' perceptions of leaders' problem-solving behavior. These positive correlations between conflict and stress diminish when leaders employ problem-solving behavior.

In contrast, when employees perceive that their leader is using forcing behavior, it is likely that the correlation between conflict and stress will be amplified. Forcing behavior is likely to increase the employee's feeling that he or she is losing control (Dijkstra, Van Dierendonck, & Evers, 2005). Past research has shown that third-party forcing behavior is negatively associated with perceptions of procedural fairness as well as with perceptions of the perceived

fairness of the third party (e.g., Karambayya, Brett, & Lytle, 1992). Injustice perceptions are stressors and are negatively related to psychological health (Judge & Colquitt, 2004).

Moreover, forcing behavior is likely to be based on the third party's own interests, which may not be in line with the interests of the conflicting employees (Conlon et al., 1994). As a consequence, disputants' satisfaction with the conflict process or with decisions resulting from the forcing behavior may be low (Karambayya & Brett, 1989), and conflict stress will increase. Using power directly to solve conflicts, without paying any attention to the underlying issues of concern, is unlikely to offer an ultimate solution to the situation (Peterson & Harvey, 2009). Consequently, the conflict is likely to endure and may even intensify over time, accompanied with increased stress. Moreover, the leader's forcing behavior may only serve to pull the leader into the conflict (Peterson & Harvey, 2009). This additional conflict can cause extra stress. We, therefore, come to our second hypothesis:

Hypothesis Two: Relationship (2a), task (2b), and process conflict (2c) between employees are positively correlated with employees' conflict stress, and these relationships are affected by employees' perception of leaders' forcing behavior. Thus, the positive relationships between conflict and stress intensify when employees perceive their leader is using forcing behavior.

Making an effort to avoid a conflict situation is not a behavior consistent with the prototypical role that employees expect their leader to fulfill (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Employees expect their leaders to have the authority and the obligation to settle conflicts among employees. The conflicting parties so could interpret no action as a lack of support (Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994; Hardy & Clegg, 1996). When leaders avoid employee conflict, employees are likely to feel confused because they expected a different type of response.

Furthermore, the leader's avoiding strategy is likely to cause employee frustration. For example, when employees argue about which project must be cancelled because of a budget shortfall, they are likely to find it frustrating when they perceive their leader is avoiding the issue. When a leader fails to manage

the conflict, the conflict may escalate, and the conflict–stress relationship may be intensified (Dijkstra et al., 2009). People’s ability to process information decreases when they are experiencing conflict; consequently, they are less likely to change their opinion and consequent behavior. As such, the conflict could intensify and escalate. With escalating conflict, stress is likely to increase. Therefore, we propose that:

Hypothesis Three: Relationship (3a), task (3b), and process conflicts (3c) between employees are positively correlated with employees’ conflict stress, and these relationships are affected by employees’ perception of leaders’ avoiding behavior. Thus, the positive relationships between conflict and stress will become stronger when employees perceive their leader uses avoiding behavior.

Method

Data Sample

We invited all 341 employees of an insurance company to complete an online questionnaire. A total of 175 employees completed the questionnaire, for a response rate of 51 percent. Twenty-four of the questionnaires were incomplete and removed from the data set. Of the remaining 145 participants, 63 percent are female. The average age of respondents was 35.4 years (standard deviation = 8.1), and the average tenure with the organization was 6.6 years (standard deviation = 7.1). Sixty-eight percent of the respondents had completed intermediate- or lower-level vocational training, and 29 percent held a bachelor’s or master’s degree. The participating employees came from all departments of the company, such as claims and loss handling, human resources, call center, and marketing. The departments had an average size of 15.3 members (standard deviation = 12.9).

Measures

Conflict Types. We measured relationship conflict and task conflict based on Karen Jehn’s (1995) conflict scales. Process conflict was measured on the scale developed by Jehn and Mannix (2001). We measured each conflict type

using a four-item scale (see Table 3-1 for the specific statements). We asked participants to respond to these statements on a 7-point Likert scale from (1) 'almost never' to (7) 'almost always'. We calculated the Cronbach's alpha's (measure for internal consistency) for relationship, task, and process conflict to be 0.86, 0.87, and 0.84, respectively. Cronbach's alpha's above 0.70 are expected to reflect internal consistency, meaning that the four items we used to measure a type of conflict were, indeed, reliable in the sense that they measured the specified construct (i.e., relationship, task, or process conflict).

Conflict Stress. Conflict stress was measured with four items developed by Ellen Giebels and Onne Janssen (2005) (see Table 3-1 for all items). Answers were measured on a 7-point Likert scale from (1) 'never' to (7) 'always'. The Cronbach's alpha was 0.86. A confirmatory factor analysis with varimax rotation (see Table 3-1) on the four conflict measures revealed four factors, each with an eigenvalue higher than 1. This indicates that the three types of conflict are distinct constructs and that they are also conceptually different from conflict stress. This is important because conflicts often involve tension and emotions, and could be confused with conflict stress.

Leaders' third-party behaviors. We measured perceptions of the third-party behaviors (forcing, problem solving, and avoiding) adapting items from the Dutch test for Conflict Handling (DUTCH) (Van de Vliert, 1997; De Dreu et al., 2001). We rewrote the subscales to fit the third-party role of leaders and asked employees to rate their direct leader or supervisor on these three behaviors. We measured the three different types of third party behavior using four statements (forcing and avoiding) and three statements (problem solving), each on a 5-point-Likert scale from (1) 'completely disagree' to (5) 'completely agree'. Cronbach's alpha was 0.72, 0.66, and 0.82 for problem solving, forcing and avoiding, respectively. A factor analysis with oblimin rotation, indeed, revealed three factors with an eigenvalue higher than 1 (see Table 3-2 for all items and factor loadings).

Table 3-1*Factor analysis structure matrix for conflict types and conflict stress*

	Factors			
	Relationship conflict	Task Conflict	Process Conflict	Conflict Stress
How often is there friction among colleagues in your work team?	.79		.26	
How often are personality conflicts evident among colleagues in your work team?	.86			
How often is there tension among colleagues in your work team?	.90			
How often are there emotional conflicts among colleagues in your team?	.87			
How frequently are there conflicts about ideas in your work unit?		.76	.28	
How often do you and your colleagues in your team disagree about opinions regarding the work being done?		.83	.27	
How frequently do you and your colleagues in your team have conflict about reasons and solutions of work-related problems?		.84		
To what extent are there differences of opinion in your work unit?		.82	.26	
How often are there disagreements about who should do what in your team?			.84	
How often do you disagree about resource allocation in your team?		.31	.76	
How often are there disagreements about how work has to be done in your team?		.37	.76	
How much conflict is there in your group about task responsibilities?		.29	.72	.21
How often do you feel nervous during or directly after a conflict with colleagues?				.72
How often do you become upset during or directly after a conflict with your colleagues?				.86
How often does the stress in a conflict with colleagues increase to such high levels that you cannot let go of it?				.85
How often do you feel tension during or directly after a conflict with colleagues?				.89
Eigenvalues	5.23	2.75	1.23	2.47

*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.**Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.**Only relevant loadings (> .2 or < -.2) are shown, loadings >.4 are bold*

Control Variables. Because the impact of leadership behavior may depend on the actual need for leadership (Hunter, Bedell-Avers, & Mumford, 2007), we controlled for that variable, measuring it with a three-statement scale (Martin, 1983). An example is ‘Results of my work performance would be better

when there would be more leadership.’ Answers were rated on a 7-point Likert scale, from (1) ‘not at all’ to (7) ‘to a high extent’. In addition, we controlled for gender, age, amount of hours worked per week, and department size (Siu et al., 2001; Matud, 2004; Dijkstra, Van Dierendonck, & Evers, 2005; Giebels & Janssen, 2005).

Analyses

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a series of hierarchical regression analyses. We ran these analyses separately for the impact of each type of conflict (relationship, task, and process) on conflict stress (see tables 3-4, 3-5, 3-6, and 3-7). To test our hypotheses about the effect of the leader’s behavior (e.g., will the conflict related stress be higher or lower with different leadership behavior?), each analysis had several steps (Aiken & West, 1991). In the first step, we entered the control variables. In the second step, we analyzed the predictor variables of conflict type and leaders’ third-party behavior to examine whether a main effect existed. In the third step, we added the interaction terms to reveal possible effects.

To minimize problems of multicollinearity and facilitate interpretation, we standardized the predictor variables before calculating the interaction terms and regression statistics (Aiken & West, 1991). One could argue that given the fact that our respondents worked together in departments, our data could be nested, and therefore multilevel analysis should be used to test our hypotheses.

Table 3-2*Factor analysis pattern matrix for leaders' third-party behavior*

	Factors		
	Avoiding	Forcing	Problem solving
How does your supervisor react if there is any disagreement between subordinates (you and your colleagues), regardless if the issue is work related or non-work related?			
My supervisor...			
examines issues until a solution is found that really satisfies everyone who is involved	-.23		.58
stands for goals and interests of all involved parties			.85
works out a solution that serves all parties' interests			.78
enforces a decision		.73	.24
pushes his/her own point of view	.36	.65	
fights for a good outcome for him/herself	-.30	.69	-.27
does everything to win		.52	-.34
tries to get not involved	.80		
avoids the differences of opinions as much as possible	.80		
avoids the confrontation about the interests	.62	.24	
avoids the parties	.72		
Eigenvalues	4.41	1.37	1.31

*Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.**Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.**Only relevant loadings (> .2 or < -.2) are shown, loadings >.4 are bold*

However, calculation of the intraclass correlation (ICC1) values for our constructs indicated that our constructs did not have sufficient homogeneity within departments. Typical ICC1 values range between 0.05 and 0.20 (Bliese, 2000). In our sample, the values were much smaller, except for process conflict (Forcing: ICC1= 0.02, ICC2= 0.217; Problem solving: ICC1= 0.03, ICC2= 0.29; Avoiding: ICC1= -0.02, ICC2= -0.33; Relational conflict: ICC1= 0.02, ICC2= 0.16; Process conflict: ICC1= 0.08, ICC2= 0.50; Task conflict: ICC1= 0.008, ICC2= 0.09; Conflict stress: ICC1= -0.042, ICC2= -0.92). Moreover, the F-values were all non-significant (with the exception of process conflict), which indicates that the variation between the departments and its leaders was not significantly higher than the variation within the departments for all relevant constructs. Accordingly, the differences between the departments were small. Additionally, we followed

James' (1982) advice to aggregate only variables when conceptual reasons exist. Concerning the current study, we are interested in the individual's experience of stress as a consequence of conflict rather than in a climate of stress within the department. According to these statistical and conceptual aspects, we decided to analyze our data on the level of individual employees instead of conducting a multilevel analysis.

To control for the risk of multicollinearity (Cohen, Cohen, West, & Aiken, 2003), we tested the variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance of all predictors. The VIF of the six predictors varied between 1.00 and 1.39; the tolerance of the six predictors varied between 0.72 and 1.00. Average VIFs close to 1.00 have little risk of multicollinearity (Bowerman & O'Connell, 1990). Values of tolerance below 0.2 are reasons for concern (Menard, 1995). Thus, multicollinearity was not a concern in our data, which means that the regression coefficient could be interpreted without high risks of misinterpretation. To interpret interaction effects, we conducted regression equations on conflict stress given conditional values for the predictors ($M + 1SD$; $M - 1SD$) (cf. Aiken & West, 1991).

Because employees reported the different types of conflict as well as the dependent of variable conflict stress, we conducted the Harman's one-factor test to examine the possibility of method bias. A principal component analysis on the three types of conflict, conflict stress, and perceived leader behavior failed to show one single factor or one general factor, indicating that overlap between different variables was small (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986).

Results

The correlations, means, and standard deviations of all constructs are listed in Table 3-3. Correlation analyses showed that the intercorrelations of the three types of conflict are significant and similar in value to those found in other studies (e.g., Simons & Peterson, 2000; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). In Table 3-4, the regression coefficients of the control variables and the three main effects of type of conflict on conflict stress are shown.

Hypothesis One

In Table 3-5, the regression analyses are shown to test Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c. Hypothesis 1 stated that relationship conflict (1a), task conflict (1b), and process conflict (1c) are positively correlated with conflict stress, and this relationship is affected by leaders' problem-solving behavior such that the correlation between experiencing conflict and experiencing stress is stronger when leaders employ minimal problem-solving behavior.

Results indicated that relationship, task, and process conflict all have significant and positive main effects on conflict stress, meaning that all three types of conflict are positively correlated with conflict stress. This result is consistent with our hypotheses. But the proposed impact of leaders' problem-solving behavior was only significant in the case of relationship conflict (Figure 3-2). Simple slope tests showed that relationship conflict was significantly positively associated with conflict stress when problem solving is relatively low ($B=0.306$, $t[132] = 5.59$, $p < .00001$), but not related when problem solving is relatively high ($B = 0.048$, $t[132] = 0.348$, $p < .73$).

Table 3-3*Descriptive statistics and correlation matrix predicting, dependent, and control variables*

Measure	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.
1. Relationship conflict	1.39	0.53											
2. Task conflict	1.92	0.58	.16*										
3. Process Conflict	1.56	0.57	.26**	.58**									
4. Problem solving	3.83	0.49	-.05	-.09	-.11								
5. Forcing	2.60	0.53	-.04	-.01	.07	-.32**							
6. Avoiding	2.16	0.61	.08	-.03	.09	-.57**	.37**						
7. Conflict Stress	1.66	0.62	.15†	.14†	.18*	-.10	.06	.07					
8. Gender	1.61	0.49	.08	.01	-.05	-.11	-.03	.10	.04				
9. Age	35.7	8.13	-.08	-.11	-.11	.04	-.09	-.02	-.05	.00			
10. Need for leadership	2.54	1.07	.22**	.18**	.17*	-.45**	.34**	.50**	.19*	.10	-.08		
11. Weekly working hours	33.3	7.30	-.10	.21*	.10	-.06	-.03	.01	-.13	-.17*	-.10	.03	
12. Department size (amount of co-workers per department)	14.8	12.8	.41**	-.06	-.04	.18*	-.10	.04	-.02	.13	-.09	.03	-.21**

†p<.10, *p<.05, **p<0.01 (two-tailed); gender 1= male, 2= female

Table 3-4

Standardized regression weights of main effect of Conflict Stress on three types of conflict

		Main effects			
		Control	RC	TC	PC
Step 1	Gender	.14	.13	.14†	.14†
	Age	-.01	.00	.01	.01
	Need for leadership	.15*	.15*	.15*	.14*
	Weekly working hours	-.06	-.06	-.08	-.07
	Department size	-.06	-.12†	-.06	-.06
Step 2	Relationship conflict (RC)		.15*		
	Task conflict (TC)			.18*	
	Process Conflict (PC)				.18*
	Managerial third party problem solving behavior				
R ²		.06	.08	.09	.09
Δ R ²		.06†	.02†	.02†	.03*

†p < 0.10; *p < 0.05 (one-tailed)

Table 3-5

Regression between type of conflict and Problem solving behavior (n=145)

		Problem solving behavior Interaction effects		
		RC	TC	PC
Step 1	Gender	.15*	.14†	.14†
	Age	-.01	-.02	-.02
	Need for leadership	.11	.13†	.13†
	Weekly working hours	-.05	-.08	-.07
	Department size	-.11	-.05	-.05
Step 2	Relationship conflict (RC)	.17*		
	Task conflict (TC)		.17*	
	Process Conflict (PC)			.18*
	Leader's third-party Forcing behavior	-.03	-.03	-.02
Step 3	RC x leaders' third-party Problem solving behavior	-.14*		
	TC x leaders' third-party Problem solving behavior		.01	
	PC x leaders' third-party Problem solving behavior			.00
	R ²	.10*	.09	.08
Δ R ²		.02†	.00	.00

†p < 0.10; *p < 0.05 (one-tailed)

Table 3-6*Regression between type of conflict and forcing behavior on conflict stress (n=145)*

		Forcing behavior Interaction effects		
		RC	RC	RC
Step 1	Gender	.11	.11	.11
	Age	-.02	-.02	-.02
	Need for leadership	.14†	.14†	.14†
	Weekly working hours	-.11	-.11	-.11
	Department size	-.09	-.09	-.09
Step 2	Relationship conflict (RC)	.24**	.24**	.24**
	Task conflict (TC)			
	Process Conflict (PC)			
Step 3	Leaders' third-party Avoiding behavior	-.03	-.03	-.03
	RC x leaders' third-party Forcing behavior	.28***	.28***	.28***
	TC x leaders' third-party Forcing behavior			
	PC x leaders' third-party Forcing behavior			
	R ²	.14**	.14**	.14**
		ΔR ²	.06***	.06***

†p < 0.10; *p < 0.05; **p < 0.01; ***p < 0.001 (one-tailed)

Table 3-7*Regression between type of conflict and avoiding behavior on conflict stress (n=145)*

		Avoiding behavior Interaction effects		
		RC	TC	PC
Step 1	Gender	.13	.11	.14
	Age	-.01	.01	.01
	Need for leadership	.14†	.12	.14†
	Weekly working hours	-.06	-.11	-.08
	Department size	-.12	-.03	-.06
Step 2	Relationship conflict (RC)	.15†		
	Task conflict (TC)		.20*	
	Process Conflict (PC)			.17*
	Leaders' third-party Avoiding behavior	.01	.02	.00
Step 3	RC x leaders' third-party Avoiding behavior	.10		
	TC x leaders' third-party Avoiding behavior		.14†	
	PC x leaders' third-party Avoiding behavior			.04
	R ²	.09†	.10*	.09*
		ΔR ²	.01	.02†

†p < .10, *p < .05 (one-tailed)

Figure 3-1

Interaction of relationship conflict and problem solving on stress

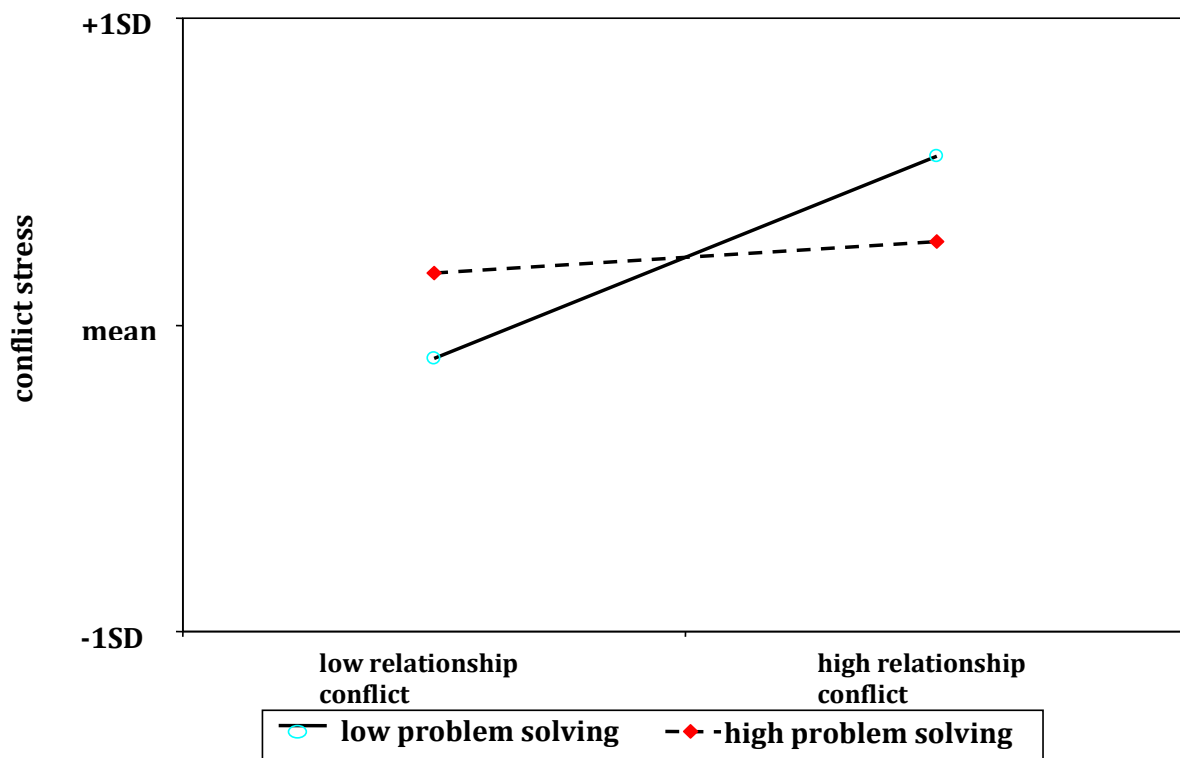
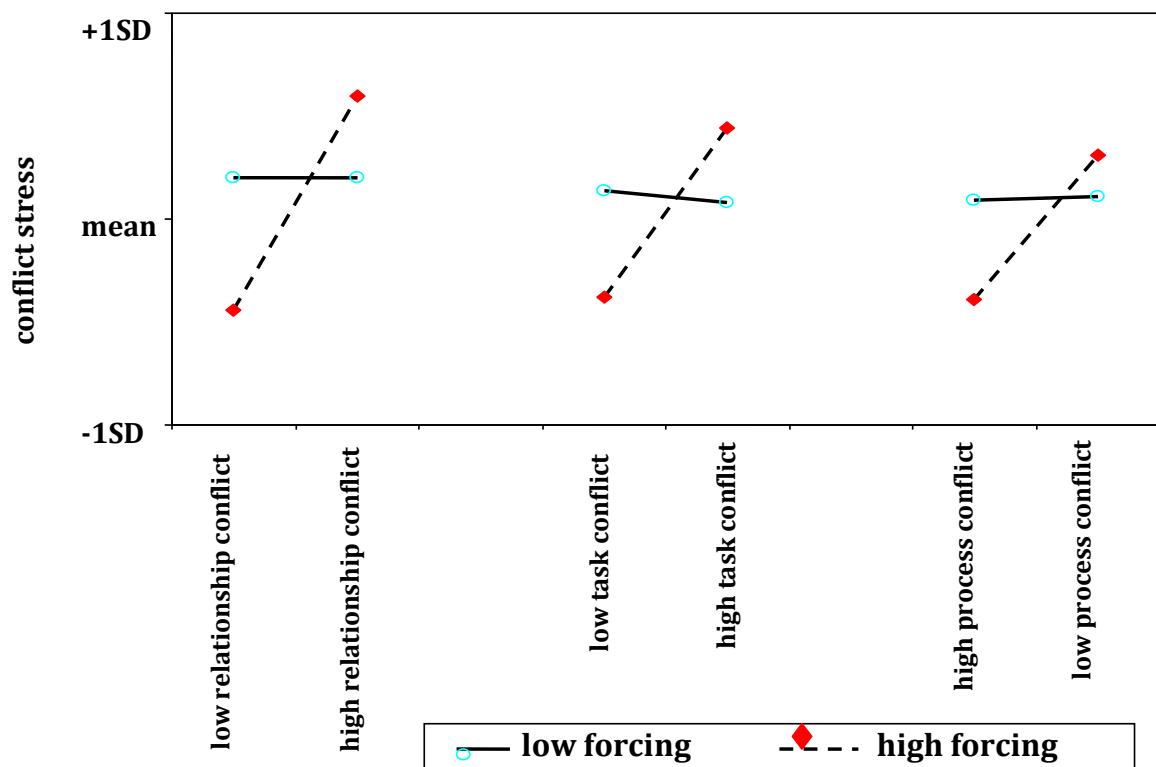


Figure 3-2

Interaction of conflict and forcing on stress



Our data suggest that when employees perceive their leader is engaging in problem-solving behavior, their relationship conflict is less likely to cause them to experience stress (Figure 3-2). Therefore, we found support for Hypothesis 1a.

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis Two stated that relationship conflict (2a), task conflict (2b), and process conflict (2c) are positively correlated with conflict stress, and that this relationship is affected by leaders' forcing behavior such that the employees will report experiencing more stress when leaders employ a high level of forcing behavior. The results (see Table 3-6) revealed forcing behavior had significant impact on stress for each of the three types of conflict. For interpretation of these effects, we plotted the interaction effects in Figure 3-3 and conducted simple slope tests. Simple slope tests showed that relationship conflict was significantly positively associated with conflict stress when forcing is relatively high ($B = 0.31$, $t[132] = 5.59$, $p < .001$), but not related when forcing is relatively low ($B = 0.048$, $t[132] = 0.348$, $p < .73$). Simple slope tests revealed similar results for task conflict, that is task conflict was significantly positively associated with conflict stress when forcing is high ($B = 0.327$, $t[132] = 3.45$, $p < .001$) but not related when forcing is low ($B = 0.149$, $t[132] = 1.31$, $p < .19$). And, for process conflict simple slope tests showed that process conflict was significantly positively associated with conflict stress when forcing is high ($B = 0.284$, $t[132] = 2.84$, $p < .01$) but not related when forcing is low ($B = 0.14$, $t[132] = 1.183$, $p < .24$). Our data suggest that when employees perceive their leader is engaging in forcing behavior, their stress increases for all the three types of conflict situations (Figure 3-3). Hypotheses 2a, 2b, and 2c are, therefore, supported.

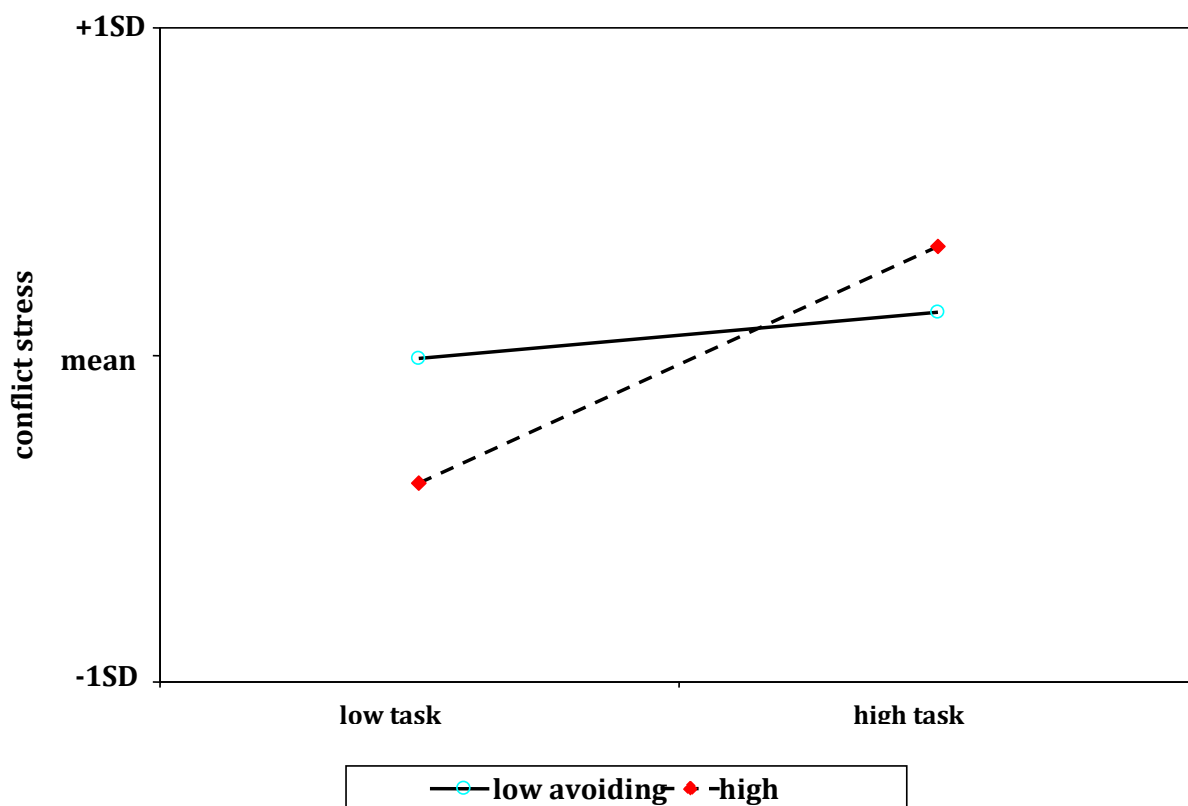
Hypothesis Three

Hypothesis 3 stated that relationship conflict (3a), task conflict (3b), and process conflict (3c) are positively correlated with conflict stress, and that this relationship is affected by leaders' avoiding behavior such that employees' stress levels increase when leaders employ avoiding behavior. The results (see Table

3-7) showed a marginally significant effect on stress in instances of task conflict that were accompanied by leader avoidance behavior. For interpretation of this effect we plotted the interaction effect (figure 3-4) and conducted a simple slope test. Simple slope tests showed that task conflict was significantly positively associated with conflict stress when avoiding is high ($B = 0.298$, $t[132] = 2.613$, $p < .01$) and marginally positively related when avoiding is low ($B = 0.178$, $t[132] = 1.876$, $p < .07$). Although, the simple slope tests reveal effects of task conflict for the instances of low and high avoiding leaders behavior, the effect in the high avoiding situation is stronger. Our data suggest that when employees perceive that the leader is more engaging in avoiding behavior, task conflict in particular will cause them to feel more stress than when avoiding behavior of the leader is low (see Figure 3-4). Hypothesis 3b is, therefore, supported.

Figure 3-3

Interaction between task conflict and avoiding on stress



Discussion

The goal of this study was to investigate the impact of perceived leaders' third-party behaviors on the relationship between employees' conflict and their levels of stress, which can have important impacts on their well-being. Past research on conflict and employee well-being largely ignored the role of the behaviors of employees' organizational leaders. This is surprising, considering the crucial role leaders play (Yukl, 2000).

In a study of 145 employees of a Dutch insurance company, we found that leaders' third-party behavior, as perceived by their employees, can have amplifying as well as buffering effects on the relationship between conflict and stress, depending on the type of conflict management behavior displayed. These results highlight how important it can be for informal third parties, such as organizational leaders, to deal with organizational conflicts to prevent them from diminishing employees' well-being and subsequently damaging organizational functioning.

More specifically, conflict management behavior characterized as forcing was found to increase employees' stress experience for all three kinds of conflict (task, relationship, and process). A conflict-avoiding leader, however, only amplified employees' stress when the conflicts in question were task-oriented. Leaders' problem-solving behavior decreased employees' stress levels when the conflicts were relationship-oriented. Thus, we suggest that conflict researchers should examine more thoroughly the behaviors of leaders, how employees perceive leaders' third-party behavior, and the impact of this behavior on employees' health and well-being.

An important finding is that the problem-solving behavior of leaders can buffer the detrimental effects of relationship conflict on individual well-being. This is interesting because relationship conflicts are thought to be more difficult to resolve when compared with task or process conflicts (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). Problem-solving behavior includes asking each conflicting party about his or her point of view (e.g., Carnevale, 1986), which is likely to be interpreted by each conflicting party as paying attention to his or her interests (cf. Giebels &

Yang, 2009). Apparently, the fact that a leader inquires about each party's viewpoints and feelings enhances the employee's feeling of control over his or her situation. When a leader is willing to listen to conflicting employee opinions and emotions, he or she demonstrates concern for employees' well-being (e.g., Lyons & Schneider, 2009).

It also seems likely that when a leader deals with employee relationship conflicts by using problem-solving techniques, the employees perceive that the leader seeks to create some common orientation or common ground (i.e., behaving professionally) despite the interpersonal differences among her staff.

Another possible explanation, however, is the misattribution of task conflict as a relationship conflict (Simons & Peterson, 2000; Rispens, 2012). Tony Simons and Randall Peterson (2000) found that the correlation between task and relationship conflict was lower in teams with a high level of trust than in teams with a low level of trust. When leaders manage task conflict in a problem-solving way, the personal animosity among the conflicting parties that may have caused them to perceive personal attacks (i.e., relationship conflict) could be blocked. Problem-solving leaders are likely to listen to each party's point of view and to encourage understanding between the parties. Emotional and personal issues are likely to be addressed, which allows greater focus on the task issues. The decreased emotional involvement may help the parties discuss the task and/or process issues in a more productive manner. As mentioned earlier, task and process conflict may cause stress as well; however, to a lesser extent than relationship conflict, accordingly employees still experience some kind of stress.

This study extends the discussion of how managing relationship conflict can decrease its negative effects on employees. These results and the Conflict stress explanations for the positive effects of problem-solving behavior appear similar to the explanations that have been offered to explain the success of mediation and its impact on well-being (e.g., satisfaction, justice, and agreement; see for a review Wall, Stark, & Standifer, 2001, and Wall & Dunne, 2012).

Furthermore, our results point toward the utility of differentiating among task-, process-, and relationship-related issues in determining the effects of

leader behavior. An explanation for the differences between results according to types of conflict in our results could involve employees' expectations of a prototypical leader (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). A prototypical leader is responsible for his or her employees and their tasks. In this way, task-related and process-related conflict issues could be seen as the leaders' responsibility to solve. Accordingly, employees would be likely to perceive that engaging in problem-solving behavior in task and process conflicts is their leader's duty more than they would when the conflict is more personal or relationship-oriented. This expectation may mean that the leader's involvement in task and process conflicts would have less impact on their experience of stress. The finding that the leader's avoiding (e.g., passive) behavior amplifies the stress, especially in task conflict supports this explanation. In task disagreements, employees' expectation that their leader will help solve the problem may be high — when leaders do not act according to their expectations, employees may become disappointed and frustrated. Future research should focus on the underlying mechanisms of employees' expectations and the needs for leaders to better understand why some of their behaviors are effective and others are not.

Our study confirms that the direct expression of power in the form of forcing behavior can harm employees' well-being (cf., Peterson & Harvey, 2009). A forcing leader may become an additional party to the conflict (i.e., employees may turn against their leader). This creates an even more complex situation for employees and can increase tension and negative emotions. Alternatively, the involvement of a leader in a conflict between employees may be perceived by the conflicting parties as an indication that they failed to effectively deal with the issue themselves, and therefore 'lost face' (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). In addition, because leaders judge employee functioning and performance, the conflicting parties may perceive that the leader's forcing behavior indicates that they do not function well, increasing their anxiety. Nevertheless, sometimes leaders may feel it necessary to use forcing behavior, for example, when time is limited and the need for a solution is significant (Nugent, 2002). In weighing whether or not to

use forcing behaviors to address employee conflict, leaders should be aware of the detrimental effects this behavior can have on employees' well-being.

Our results also shed light on the differential impacts of the different types of conflict responses. For example, we found that problem solving affected only relationship conflict, and avoiding behaviors affected only task conflict. This highlights the assumption that different types of conflict should be managed differently.

Our study has implications for organizational leaders who seek to manage employee conflict and for organizations that seek to reduce the detrimental consequences that employee conflicts can have on their staff and their organizations. Organizational leaders should be trained to recognize the different types of conflict and how to manage them, with a focus on the impact of conflict on employee well-being. Because our research focused on perceptions of leader behavior, they suggest that leaders should be particularly aware of how employees perceive their behavior. Accordingly, leaders should check to see how their problem-solving intentions are perceived. Moreover, leaders should clarify their behaviors and intentions so that they are not seen as conflict-avoidant.

Limitations and Future Research

In this study, conflict stress was measured as an outcome of interpersonal conflict. One may argue that conflict-related stress is a short-term consequence of conflict, and can therefore be disputed as a significant outcome variable. Earlier studies, however, have found long-lasting effects of stress on individual health (e.g., Reznik, Roloff, & Miller, 2010) and support the idea that stress has a significant impact on individuals and organizations. Giebels and Janssen (2005) found strong relationships between conflict stress and three indicators of individual well-being (absenteeism, turnover intentions, and emotional exhaustion) that have important impacts on organizations in the long run, highlighting the relevance of conflict-related stress. To understand the role of leaders' third-party behavior and its effects more deeply, however, we recommend future research to examine the effects of leaders' third-party

behavior on other outcomes (e.g., performance, productivity, decision quality, and innovative behavior).

This study measured employees' perceptions of leaders' third-party behavior, rather than the actual leader behavior. We must, therefore, acknowledge that the perception of leaders' behavior may differ from their actual or intended behavior. Therefore, we suggest future research could include controlled experiments or observational studies to examine the leaders' actual behavior.

Furthermore, our results should be cautiously interpreted because of the cross-sectional design of the study. We are not able to test whether conflict stress is a consequence of conflict or an antecedent. However, the statements we used to measure conflict stress were explicitly related to conflict (e.g., 'after a conflict I feel upset') in ways that make an alternative explanation less likely.

Future research should use objective data, such as absenteeism and employee performance, to verify our results on the subjective measure of well-being (e.g., perceived stress). To further contextualize our understanding of the role of leadership behavior, future research could take cultural aspects into account. For example, relative power distance (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010) could influence how employees perceive leader interventions. Power distance is relatively low in the Netherlands, and forcing behavior may be perceived differently in cultures with higher power distance because people in such cultures are more likely to accept behavior that the Dutch might perceive as authoritarian.

Gender could also be a factor — other studies have found that the third-party interventions of women yield different results than those of men (Benharda, Brett, & Lempereur, 2013). Finally, future research could examine such additional leader conflict behaviors as yielding and compromising (Van de Vliert, 1997).

Conclusion

We suggest that an employee's perceptions of how a leader has behaved as a third party to a conflict can amplify as well as buffer the employee's

experience of stress due to workplace conflict. These are important findings because dealing with conflicts is a major task of organizational leaders. Based on our results, leaders should be aware of the effects their behavior can have on employees' conflict-related stress. Specifically, forcing and avoiding behavior need to be used cautiously. Problem-solving behavior, particularly in relationship conflict, can help alleviate the stress experienced by colleagues in conflict.

Chapter 4

Employees' perspective of leaders' third-party
role in employees' conflict

An explorative study

Conflict – defined as a process between at least two individuals that arises when one party feels obstructed or irritated by another (Van de Vliert, 1997) - occurs frequently among colleagues (Wall, Stark, & Standifer, 2001). Workplace conflicts can be a costly affair. A Dutch investigation found that on average an escalated conflict cost 27.094 Euros, even when only the ‘direct costs’ (i.e., the cost of handling the conflict and the costs as a consequence of the conflict) were taken into account (Euwema, Beetz, Driessen, & Menke, 2007). In addition, employees spend on average 2.1 hours per week dealing with conflict (CPPInc, 2008). Workplace conflicts can have severe consequences for the involved employees in terms of feelings of anxiety, frustration, and tension (Spector & Bruk-Lee, 2008; Spector, Chen, & O'Connell, 2000). Meta-analytic evidence concurs that indeed conflict is mostly negatively related to the well-being of those involved (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). Past research has indicated the importance of conflict management to minimize the negative effects of conflict (e.g., Behfar, Peterson, Mannix, & Trochim, 2008; Dijkstra, Beersma, & Cornelissen, 2012; Friedman, Tidd, Currall, & Tsai, 2000). In this chapter we focus on the conflict managing role of organizational leaders (e.g., supervisors, managers) as research suggests that an intervention by such a third party can buffer the harmful effects of conflict on well-being (De Reuver & Van Woerkom, 2010; Giebels & Janssen, 2005; Römer, Rispens, Giebels, & Euwema, 2012).

Introduction

The prior literature on leaders’ third-party behavior mainly focused on prescribing best practices for managers, department leaders, or supervisors (e.g., Elangovan, 1995; Nugent, 2002). In the current chapter we investigate how employees that are involved in a conflict perceive and evaluate the third-party behavior of their leader. Arguably, the effectiveness of leaders’ third-party behavior largely depends on how their behavior is appreciated by their subordinates. We assume that employees often have clear expectations about the involvement of the leader and that these influence employees’ evaluation of the situation. Furthermore, perceptions may provide a more accurate account of

their leader's behavior, since self-reports often are poor predictors of actual conflict management behaviors (Korabik, Baril, & Watson, 1993). Given the limited empirical research on leaders' third-party behavior, we conducted an exploratory study to examine which leaders' third-party behaviors are perceived by employees, to investigate employees' expectations of their leader's third-party behaviors, and whether it matters if expectations match perceived behavior or not.

Given the exploratory nature of our research, we use a combination of in-depth interviews, linguistic analysis (of the transcripts of the recorded interviews), and literature research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). In the remainder of this introduction we briefly discuss different types of conflict management and their consequences, introduce a framework for leaders' third-party behavior, and discuss the role and effect of employees' perceptions and expectations about leadership interventions in conflict situations.

The role of leaders in workplace conflict

Prior research shows that the role and behavior of leaders are important for the effective performance and functioning of teams, departments, and organizations as a whole (Zaccaro, Rittman, & Marks, 2002). Because of their influencing power (Im & Nakata, 2008; Sarin & McDermott, 2003; Valle & Avella, 2003; Webber, 2002) leaders likely play a key role in all sorts of processes that qualify the cooperative relationships within organizations. Thomas and Schmidt (1976) and Watson and Thomas (1996) estimate that managers spend between 20 and 42% of their time on dealing with conflict or conflict negotiations. However, little is known about the specific situation when leaders are confronted with conflicts among their team members, and what third-party behavior they demonstrate. To further explore this, we review theories in the area of leadership as well conflict management.

In the leadership literature there are several relevant theoretical perspectives. The relationships between leaders and subordinates and specifically the quality of those exchange relationships (Leader Member

Exchange theory, LMX) have been examined exhaustively (for a review see e.g., Schyns & Day, 2010). In essence, empirical studies of LMX relationships indicate that higher quality of exchange relationships between a leader and subordinates have positive consequences for the attitudes, behaviors, and performances of subordinates. Furthermore, the leadership literature describes leadership skills associated with employees' performance. These skills include interpersonal skills such as the ability to understand feelings, attitude, and motives of others (e.g., Yukl, 2010). Modern leadership theories employ a contingency perspective, emphasizing that leaders need to adjust their behavior depending upon situational characteristics (e.g., Avolio, 2007; Hackman & Wageman, 2007; Vroom & Jago, 2007; Yukl, 2013).

Only a few studies that we know of empirically investigate general leadership theories in the realm of conflict. For example Doucet, Poitras, and Chênevert (2009) examined how leadership styles were related to the level and nature of conflicts in the workplace. This study indicates that fewer task conflicts occur the more the leader uses inspirational motivation, but more task conflicts occur under both passive management and intellectual stimulation. Furthermore, the results of Doucet and colleagues (2009) indicate that both inspirational motivation and individualized consideration decreases the occurrence of relationship conflicts, whereas management by exception increases the occurrence of relationship conflicts. In a recent paper, Saeed, Almas, Anis-ul-Haq, and Niazi (2014) investigate how leadership styles correlate with conflict management styles shows that transformational leaders often adopt integrating and obliging styles of conflict management, transactional leaders are more prone to employ a compromising conflict management style, and laissez-faire leaders seems to prefer an avoiding style. To summarize, based on the literature we identify the relevance of leadership for the emergence and existence of conflict within teams. In the next section we explore the conflict management literature in order to integrate these two areas, which might help us to better understand leaders' third-party behavior.

In the current chapter we are interested in the role of organizational leaders in workplace conflicts. Specifically, we are interested in their intervening role in a conflict among subordinates. In determining the effects of conflict, conflict management plays a crucial role (Tjosvold, 2008). Conflict management is defined as the actual and/or intended reaction of an individual to the perceived conflict (Van de Vliert, 1997). A dominant model in the conflict management literature is the dual concern model (Blake & Mouton 1964; 1970 Pruitt & Kim, 2004; see also Thomas, 1992), which has been used, both for the behavior of conflicting parties, as well as for behavior of leaders. The dual concern model classifies conflict management behaviors along two dimensions ('concern for others' and 'concern for self'). Along these two dimensions five conflict management styles are distinguished, namely forcing, avoiding, accommodating, problem solving, and compromising (Rahim, 2002; Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). In the context of leaders' intervention in workplace conflict several leading authors see a classification of three out of these five behaviors as most suitable. Particularly, the emphasis is on forcing, avoiding, and problem solving (Gelfand, Leslie, Keller, & De Dreu, 2012; Horney, 1945, 1950; Römer et al., 2012). Problem solving is solution oriented, forcing is largely about having control about the outcome, and avoiding is a non-confrontational approach (Putnam & Wilson, 1982). For example, researchers have suggested that leaders as third-conflict parties use forcing (i.e., *moving against*) to impose a settlement upon the conflicting parties, whereas problem solving (i.e., *moving towards*) can be used to gain insight in the conflicting parties' concerns and to stimulate them to find a solution themselves (Karambayya, Brett, & Lytle 1992). Furthermore, leaders may try to not get involved in the conflict by employing an avoiding style (i.e., *moving away*; Pinkley, Brittain, Neale, & Northcraft, 1995; Sheppard, 1983). The other two styles of the conflict grid, being accommodating and compromising are less mentioned for measure leaders' behavior in conflict (Gelfand et al., 2012; Way et al., 2016). Accommodating as a third party is usually framed as similar to avoiding, while compromising in this context is considered to be part of problem-solving behaviors.

In most organizations managing conflict is part of the task of managers and seen as such. In this vain, managers usually fulfill an emergent third-party role in employee conflict (Kressel, 2006; Pinkley, et al., 1995; Römer et al., 2012). This role however clearly differs from the role of formal mediators who as neutral parties have no hierarchical or decisive power to impose any binding decisions (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). Furthermore, organizational leaders, by definition, also have an interest in solving these conflicts and they may be biased towards one of the antagonists' perspectives (e.g., Pinkley et al., 1995). Usually, leaders also have formal power to impose solutions. From leadership theory, we derive that many employees see managing workplace conflicts as an obligation for leaders (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). It is therefore surprising that empirical research on the effectiveness of organizational leaders' third-party behavior is rather scarce (c.f., Goldman, Cropanzano, Stein, & Benson, 2008; see also Römer et al., 2012). Furthermore, one could argue that the conflicting parties are in the best position to judge a leader's intervening behavior. Additionally, research on conflict management within workgroups suggests that discrepancies between leaders' perception of their conflict management style and members' perceptions are common (Gibson et al., 2009). Therefore, we are interested to examine how employees perceive leaders' third-party behavior and whether they observe the often-made distinction within the literature (i.e., avoiding, problem solving, and forcing). That most of the work on how leaders manage conflicts is prescriptive (e.g., Sheppard, 1984; Elangovan, 1995) implies that there is not much for us to build on. Therefore, an exploratory research design seems justified (Eisenhardt, 1989). We formulate our first research question as follows:

Research question 1:

Which third-party behavior of their leaders do employees observe, when they are involved in a conflict with a colleague?

Employees' expectations of leaders' third-party behavior

Based on Vroom's expectancy theory (1964), we expect that employees who turn to their leader for third-party help may desire a change in the conflict. It

is likely that employees ask their leader to intervene when they believe that the leader is indeed able to do so (expectancy), when they strongly desire a certain outcome (valence), and when they believe that the behavior of the leader will result in that outcome (instrumentality) (Vroom, 1964). Furthermore, the effectiveness of leaders' behavior largely depends upon meeting the expectancies of their subordinates. According to expectancy-violation theory, when our expectations of someone else's behavior are not met (i.e., violated) we tend to feel disappointed and are likely to judge the other more negatively than when expectations are confirmed (Burgoon, Le Poire, & Rosenthal, 1995). The leadership literature employs the Implicit Leadership Theory as a theoretical model to describe how subordinates perceive their leader (ILT; Lord & Alliger, 1985). This theoretical framework identifies employees' personal assumptions about the traits and abilities that characterize an ideal leader (Lord & Alliger, 1985). These idealized assumptions are based on prior experiences with leaders, exposure to social events, and interpersonal interactions (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Employees compare their leader's actual behavior with their own assumptions of an ideal leader (Rush & Russel, 1988). Concerning third-party behavior, employees may have an implicit theory about ideal third-party help of their leader and matching this expectation is likely to determine the effectiveness of leaders' conflict management behavior (Rousseau, 1989).

Employees may perceive conflict situations as uncertain when they feel that their membership of the team or organization is threatened (De Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; Hogg, 2009). Prior research suggests that when faced with uncertainty, employees are more likely to expect assertive and directive behavior of their leader. They expect leaders to take initiative and prefer behavior that is decisive instead of supportive (Peterson & Van Fleet, 2008; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1982), specifically to reduce the experienced uncertainty. Recent work by Schoel, Bluemeke, Mueller, and Stahlberg (2011) suggests the inverse can also be true, namely that people's certainty perceptions are positively related to a desire for democratic leadership. So, when feeling certain, employees prefer a democratic leadership style rather than an autocratic leadership style. In that case

employees want to maximize the own input in decision-making; democratic leadership enables this to a greater extent than autocratic leadership. As mentioned earlier, conflicts trigger feelings of uncertainty and therefore a desire for more directive or decisive leadership behavior in the conflict. On the other hand leaders' third-party behavior that is directed to let disputants solve their problem leads to higher fairness perceptions of employees (Karambayya & Brett, 1989). With the current study we want to further explore employees' expectations when experiencing conflict at work.

Research question 2:

What expectations about third-party leadership behavior do employees have when they are in conflict with a colleague and what possible factors influence these expectations?

Expectancy violation theory suggests that when expectations are not met, people tend to be stressed (Burgoon et al., 1995). Researchers have also suggested that exceeding subordinates' expectations have positive effects for the employee (e.g., Barry, 2001). We are unaware of any research that has investigated the consequences of expectancy violation or exceeding regarding leaders' third-party behaviors. Moreover, it is not known if and how expectancies do play a role when employees evaluate leaders' third-party behavior. Therefore, we formulate our third research question as follows:

Research question 3:

How do employees evaluate leaders' third-party behavior in relation to their expectations towards their leader? Specifically, how is this evaluation affected by whether expectations are met or not.

To summarize, the current study explores employees' perceptions and expectations of their leader's third-party behavior when they experience a conflict with a colleague. We direct our attention towards reasons to ask the leader for intervention and for reasons to refuse to ask the leader. In addition, we examine what general expectations employees have about idealized third-party behaviors.

We also investigate to what extent violation and meeting the expectations influences the relationship with the leader as well as the outcomes of the conflict perceived by the employee.

Method

Sample

We approached employees from various organizations to participate in our exploratory study; these were identified in collaboration with a Dutch training and consultancy company. The company offers training programs to professionals aimed at developing 'soft skills' such as communication, cultural awareness, leadership, and conflict management. We contacted 49 persons who were about to participate in a training (on different skills such as communication and leadership) a few weeks after our data collection period. Because of the explorative nature of our study, we approached interviewees based on availability without aiming for a representative sample. The interviewees were merely Dutch and all are working in the Netherlands. After initial contact, eventually 22 individuals volunteered to be interviewed (response rate = 44.9%). Reasons for non-response were a lack of time or no interest in participating at all. We excluded eight of the 22 interviews in our analyses. The recording of one interview failed and seven interviews did not fulfill the criterion that the recalled conflict situation(s) involved one or more colleagues under the same supervisor. From the remaining 14 participants 20 conflict cases were obtained and used for our exploratory inquiry.

Seven interviewees were female (50%), and interviewees' age ranged from 21 to 57 years (mean = 37.5; SD = 10.8). The interviewees came from different organizations that operated in different sectors: 4 worked for the (local) government, 3 worked in the financial sector, 3 in the business services, 2 in the industrial sector, and 1 each in logistical sector and the housing sector. The average tenure of the interviewees in their current position was 4.8 years (SD = 4.7) and the average tenure within the organization 6.8 years (SD = 6.3). Most interviewees were native Dutch (92.9%) and one was Indonesian. A total of 42.9% of the interviewees had a university-degree, 28.6% had higher vocational

training, and the remaining 28.6% had intermediate vocational training. The average contractual workload was 36.4 hours (SD = 5.5). Two interviewees had a management role with HR responsibilities and one interviewee had a project management role and managed project team members (without HR responsibilities).

Procedure

Conflicts are a difficult, sensitive issue and in general, people may be hesitant to share information about experiences of conflict, because they consider it as a private, threatening, or even an incriminating issue (cf. Jehn & Jonson, 2010). Using a qualitative research method (personal interviews in an open setting) was therefore suitable (Eisenhardt, 1989), also because we were not interested in testing hypotheses, but rather wanted to explore how people perceived their workplace conflicts, whether their supervisor was involved or not, what their expectations were of their leader in that situation, etcetera. We conducted semi-structured interviews to collect employees' perceptions and experiences of conflict at work as well as their expectations of leaders' third-party behavior in those conflict situations.

The interviewer (the first author) used a checklist of relevant topics during the interviews. We developed this checklist following the suggestions of Rubin and Rubin (2005) and pre-tested it in three pilot interviews (which are not included in the analyses here). This pre-test confirmed that our checklist incorporated the main relevant subjects; no other subjects came up during the pilot phase. Furthermore, the pilot interviews also helped to develop our introduction about the purpose of the study, and we found a logical order of the issues we wanted to address in the interviews. The first author interviewed the participants in person. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. The interviewees were assured confidentiality and anonymity.

The interviews consisted of two parts. In the first part, based on the critical incident technique (Flanagan, 1954), the interviewees were asked to recall a conflict situation with a colleague and to describe that situation as concrete as possible, identifying who were involved, what the interviewee perceived the

conflict to be about, what the employee did, what the other party did, and what the behavior of the leader was. The interviewer defined conflict to the interviewees based on Van de Vliert's (1997, p. 5) definition as 'a situation in which you got frustrated or obstructed by a colleague. Such a situation may entail small frustrations, for example because of a loud phone-call in the office, discussions about the tasks to perform, or severe personal clashes'. In the second part of the interviews, interviewees were asked to recall the behavior of their direct supervisor in this specific conflict (e.g., whether he/she intervened and if so, what the intervention was) and its effect on them, as well as whether this was what they expected or not. We also asked interviewees what the consequences were of the (non-)intervention by the leader and whether they felt satisfied with the (non-)intervention.

In the next part of the interview, we focused on the role of the leader. We invited the participants to tell about their perceptions of their direct supervisor involvement in the specific conflict. What conflict management behaviors did they observe? What were the consequences of those behaviors? What was their evaluation of the leader's behavior? We also asked the interviewees about their expectations towards the leader in this particular conflict case. For example: Did you expect the leader to act as he/she did? What had you expected different?

At last, we asked the interviewee about expectations towards a leader in conflict in general. For example: what should an ideal manager do in conflicts between employees? What would you – in general – expect your direct manager to do when you are in conflict with a co-worker?

Throughout the interview, the emphasis was on reporting conflict events, and participants' perceptions, experiences, and expectations as accurately as possible. Participants were reminded several times of the confidentiality and the non-judgmental character of the interview.

Analysis approach

The interviews were voice-recorded and transcribed. Afterwards two coders systemically analyzed the transcripts. We first identified broad categories based on prior research we discussed in the introduction and on our research

questions (Druckman, 2005). The first author and a second coder independently defined the constructs that seemed essential regarding the research questions. After discussion, the two coders ended up with the list of categories as displayed in Table 4-1. Next, the same two coders were trained in coding relevant fragments of the cases as belonging to one of the predefined categories (see Table 4-1). After the training the coders coded four cases independently, followed by a comparison and discussion in case of disagreement. In these four cases the two coders agreed in 88% of the categories for relevant sequences and this level of agreement is acceptable (Cicchetti, 1994). The remaining 16 cases were coded once by one of the coders (c.f. Druckman, 2005; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The categories were used to compare the conflict cases systematically. Common themes among these cases were identified in order to find answers to the research questions.

Table 4-1
Coding categories

Category	Description
1. Conflicts	This construct refers to what the conflict is about (i.e., content and type conflict), who the other party is, what the kind and quality of relationship is with the other party, and the duration of the conflict and if it is finished.
2. Reaction	This construct is about the respondents' reaction to the conflict. We coded thoughts (what were ideas, convictions or reasons to act or not), beliefs, emotions, behaviors, and physical reactions in this category.
3. Initiative taking	This construct is about who took the initiative concerning leader's involvement in the employee's conflict and employee's thoughts whether to call the leader in or not.
4. Respondents' perception of the leader's actual third-party behavior	Whether and how the supervisor intervened, how the employee perceived this behavior and which consequences the behavior had.
5/6. Respondents' expectations of ideal third party help	Both constructs were about respondents' expectations and needs regarding leaders' third-party intervention; in the mentioned conflict case (construct 5) as well as in general (construct 6).
7. Consequences of leaders' behavior	Quality of the relationship between the co-workers, quality of the relationship between leader and employee, and respondents' well-being before and after the (non-)intervention of leader.

In addition, we used the literature to complement the content analysis of the 20 conflict cases (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This means we related our findings to existing theory and the other way around. In this way we assured to conduct new perspectives and relating these to existing ones.

Results

The cases in this study were about varying issues. Some were relatively small in terms of time and escalation, for example a colleague who does not arranged the reparation of a copy-machine. Other cases were more severe in terms of time and intensity for example a colleague who did not accept a new co-worker and obstructed this co-worker for a period of weeks. In general, we found that in eleven cases (55%) the initiative to involve the supervisor was taken by the interviewee, in two cases (20%) initiative was taken by others (i.e., the leader or the opposing party), and in seven cases (35%) the initiative to involve the leader was not taken and the leader was not involved at all (see table 4-2 for an overview of all cases). In most cases wherein the interviewee took initiative to inform the leader about the conflict and asking for help, the interviewees told they did so because of their feeling of not being able to handle the situation by themselves; that is, the conflict was too complex, too severe to manage it alone, or that they were not able to perform their work because of the conflict. This latter finding is in line with what we know from the literature (e.g., Vroom, 1964).

Indeed, the warning of disputants' efforts to make the leader choose sides is based on that idea (Nugent, 2002). In those cases in which interviewees indicated no initiative to inform the leader, an often-mentioned reason was to avoid negative perceptions of employee abilities by the leader. This suggests that motivations to save face (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Oetzel et al., 2001) play a role when deciding not to inform a leader about the conflict. These employees seemed to be motivated to prevent their leader to infer that asking for help indicates not being able to handle or resolve the conflict on their own (Heider, 1958; Ross, 1977). Self-determination is another explanation for to not involving

the leader that is to have the autonomy, competence, and ability to actually do that.

Types of leader behavior (research question 1)

Regarding our first research question - *‘What leadership behavior do employees perceive when they are in conflict with a colleague?’* - we found the following results.

A first aspect we explored was if the employee knew if the leader was aware of the conflict or not. In the majority of the cases (14 out of 20), the employee stated that the leader knows about the conflict. The leader’s third-party behavior in these 14 cases was described as moving away from the conflicting parties (or avoiding; e.g., diminishing their own role in the conflict; nine cases), moving towards the parties (or problem solving; e.g., trying to search for a solution together with the parties; four cases), or moving against (one of) the parties (or forcing; supporting the interviewee in the conflict; two cases). In the remaining 6 cases, it was not clear to the employee whether the leader was aware of the conflict and the interviewee reported their leader’s non-involvement. We have to note in this respect that we cannot conclude that the leader indeed was not aware of the conflict. The leader may took notice of the situation by him/her self or may have been informed by another party. Interviewees described these cases for example as *‘As far as I know, my leader did not know anything about the conflict; he is working on the third floor. That’s far away from our floor and that is why he is not taking notice of what is happening with out copy machine.’*

Table 4-2

Summary of cases

Case	Demographic data	Issue	Leaders' involvement	Interviewee's evaluation of their leader's involvement	Reason for no leader involvement
1	Male, 42 yrs., industry, project manager, university	Respondent applies a change of a project plan that was written by a colleague who disagrees.	Interviewee asked the leader after a couple of weeks to help in this situation. Leader did not intervene nor listened to the interviewee's request. After some time the leader said that the interviewee should stop with the project because the situation was not workable anymore.	Disappointed. Leader did not visit team meetings to see what happens. The decision in the end to stop was helpful but disappointing for the interviewee because the leader put no effort in solving the situation.	
2	Male, 27yrs., industry, engineer, university	Colleague who is aggressive in his communication.	Leader was aware of the conflict and experienced the other party as aggressive as well. However, leader was not intervening in the conflict. Interviewee and leader were talking about the experiences with the other party in the sense that they share the frustration.		Interviewee did not see any other behaviour the leader could employ. He saw the situation as a given.
3	Male, 52yrs., telecommunication, accountant manager, intermediate Vocational Training (IVT)	Disagreement between interviewee and colleague about the allocation of revenues for a particular order.	No involvement of leader. Interviewee wanted to solve the issue directly with the co-worker.		Agreed with the non-intervention of leader because neither he nor the co-worker asked for intervention. Only if the two would not reach consensus about the allocation they would ask the leader to decide.
4	Female, 44 yrs., government al, information services staff, university	Colleague who did not fix the broken copy-machine.	No involvement of the leader. He is working on a different floor. Interviewee mentioned that such little things are no issue for the head of department. They solve such issues with the co-workers alone, or if they do not succeed they ask one of the two deputy heads.		Interviewee did not expect the leader to intervene in such minor cases as the copy-machine. The leader should be involved when it comes task related issues, or distrust/ineffective tensions between team members.
5		Disagreement about the content of a policy document.	Interviewee asked the supervisor to decide. The two employees were stuck in the process and needed a decision to be able to go on. The leader sent them back to continue with their discussion.	Interviewee was not disappointed because he did not expect the leader to decide. The interviewee knew the leader and his abilities long before, and that taught him to have no expectations from the leader.	

6	Female, 25 yrs., government consultant PR, university	Colleague who is walking away instead of helping.	No involvement of the leader.	.	Interviewee mentions an open communication and therefore such issues would be discussed directly with each other
7		A young colleague needs a lot of support and time.	Interviewee talked to her leader when the colleague did not met deadlines. Leader said she would talk to the colleague but did not.	Interviewee expected the leader to intervene. Intervention such as asking if the colleague needs help and by supporting the colleague to learn.	
8	Female, 38 yrs., financial services, process controller, HVE	Colleague who talked a lot and long, which irritates interviewee.	No involvement requested. Interviewee said she knows that her manager has the same irritation about this colleague. She was not convinced about the qualities of her manager that supported her hesitance to ask him to intervene.	Interviewee expected from her manager that he would stop the long talk of her colleague more effectively. Now, the manager cut off the colleague but did not coach him to change the behavior.	
9	Female, 38 yrs., business services, project assistant, IVT	Disagreement about switching rooms	Interviewee made a proposal about the rooms that is different to what a colleague proposed. The leader has to make a decision in the end. The leader asked everyone about his or her opinion and it took some time.	Interviewee expected the leader to make a decision but had the impression the leader listened to the one that was demanding the most. The leader was not deciding in the way what is most effective for the team and was not communicating about the decision in a transparent way.	
10	Female, 31 yrs., government consultant PR, university	Joint project (writing article): One colleague did not meet the obligations and the interviewee had to carry the task over.	Interviewee informed the leader about the hampering process. Not pointing to the colleague as the problem, but to ensure that the interviewee was covering herself.	Interviewee was not satisfied when the leader asked her to confront the colleague with being too late for the deadline. It felt to the interviewee as not fair that she has to do the confrontation; she hoped that the leader had done that.	
11	Male, 21 yrs., business services, service desk assistant,	Interviewee had to carry tasks over from slow working colleague.	Interviewee told leader about his issue with the colleague, more co-workers experienced the same, even the leader is talking about the 'slow working colleague'. Leader said she would speak to the other party.	Interviewee had expected the leader to intervene more fast and decisive. The other party did not change her way of doing and the interviewee doubted if the leader indeed spoke to the colleague.	

12	IVT	Team conference: interviewee criticized colleague and got scathing remark. After two days off interviewee got scathing remark from colleague.	Leader was present in the meeting (together with 7 others). Leader's intervention was that the leader tried to explain that the critical remarks are of the interviewee and that does not mean everybody has the same opinion. Leader was not involved.	Interviewee was satisfied after all. The situation in the meeting was not pleasant for the other party but in the end her behaviour changed.	
13	Female, 54 yrs., government al, personal secretary, HVE			Interviewee expected the leader to say that they had to solve the problem by themselves and therefore did not ask the leader for help.	
14		Secretary of other departments did not meet obligations.	Leader was not involved.		Expectation was that leader would not intervene. Based on the past and what he said in bilateral meetings the interviewee expected the leader to say they should solve the problem alone.
15		Personal friction about the way of working and communicating.	Leader refused to intervene, instead stating that the issue is something for the two parties to deal with.	Interviewee expected the leader to help to solve the problem but he did not. He tried to diminish his role in the conflict as much as possible.	
16	Female, 27 yrs., business services, project assistant, university	About the transfer of tasks.	Interviewee talked to a colleague who was present about the situation in which she was frustrated about the colleague and received support. She did not ask the leader to intervene, as the leader was absent.	The interviewee did not expect the leader to intervene since a colleague helped her. However, she said she had talked to her leader if she was present at that moment.	
17		A team member did not accept the interviewee.	Interviewee talked with the leader and the leader offered the idea to talk to the colleague.	Interviewee saw the leader acting effectively, the leader had a good understanding of what was going on and listened to the interviewee.	
18	Male, 35 yrs., education / business services, manager, HVE	Colleague did not manage to accomplish his tasks.	Interviewee talked to the leader about the issue after he confronted the other party a couple of times with his observations. But when clients noticed the problem as well, the interviewee thought he needed to involve the leader. The leader said she would talk to the other, but the interviewee thought she never	The interviewee mentioned that the leader is effective in times when all is going well, but that the leader misses the courage to intervene when it is becoming delicate.	

19	Male, 57 yrs., industry, team leader, IVT	Interviewee had a lot of confrontations with his co-position-holder; they sharing the position. It is not a disagreement, but more a fighting way of dealing with each other.	The leader was present during the meetings and sometimes the parties having a clash during these meetings. The interviewee assumed that the other party was complaining about him towards their leader. The leader arranged two meetings with the three of them and forced them to solve the conflict. The leader said he would facilitate, but the parties had to solve the issue.	Interviewee thought the leader's intervention was good. Interviewee thought this was the best way. He was not afraid and initiated progress that was important.
20	Male, 34 yrs., industry, controller, HVE	Interviewee was irritated because other party reduced her working hours (parental leave) and refused to work overtime, so he had to carry tasks over.	Interviewee asked the leader if it was justified that he had to work more because the other refused to work overtime.	Interviewee thought intervention was too little: the leader asked the two to work out a solution. However, the leader did decide to not to hire some one to fill in the working hours.

Avoiding behavior. In nearly half of the conflict cases (9 out of 20), interviewees described avoiding behavior of their leader. Avoiding behavior is defined as resisting to get involved in the conflict (e.g., Van de Vliert, 1997). Several interviewees described their leader's behavior as follows:

'My supervisor did nothing, he just said 'this is how our organization works.'

'He [the leader] sent us back to continue negotiating'.

These quotes highlight their leader was aware of the conflict situation, but also signaled that the conflict parties should handle their dispute without help. Other examples of leaders' avoidance were also noticeable. For instance:

'She [the leader] noticed my concern and said she would speak to the other party about her behavior. However, nothing happened. She [the leader] is very good at listening to people and their point of view, moreover she often agrees with others. But in the end nothing happened.'

This quote is indicative of leaders' conflict avoidance behavior yet differs from the first set of quotes. First, the leader is listening to the request of the interviewee and indicates to be willing to act according to the request. However, the employee's perception is also that nothing happened. Thus a second difference is the perceived inconsistency of the leader by the employee: making a promise to intervene but not acting upon that promise. These findings suggest that a further distinction can be made among leaders' avoidant behavior, namely, overt avoiding and word-action mismatch. Overt avoiding behavior means that the leader actively decides not to intervene and offers reasons for staying out of the conflict (see also Carnevale, 1986). In five cases the interviewees described their leader's behavior as direct avoiding and in four cases a word-action mismatch was described. A word-action mismatch (the second quote above) is behavior that seems to have no explicit message. The leader expresses a will or promise to intervene (e.g., talk to the other party), however does not show the promised behavior. This finding is similar to a demand-withdraw interaction pattern that was found in conflicts wherein one party demands something from the other and the other tries to minimize the own role (Kluwer, Heesink, & Van de Vliert, 2000).

Problem-solving behavior. Problem-solving behavior is defined as behavior directed towards the conflict parties and consists of trying to find a solution that fits everyone's interest (e.g., Gelfand et al., 2012; Karambayya & Brett, 1989). We observed leader problem solving ('moving towards') behavior in four conflict cases. An illustration of interviewees' description reads as follows:

'We had meetings with the three of us, our leader wanted to help us to solve the problem and he would facilitate a solution... he made it a personal goal of finding the solution to this issue, he really wanted to help us.'

This is in line with the literature about problem solving which described an intervention that is aimed at facilitating a solution that fits everyone's interests (Karambayya & Brett, 1989). Based on the literature most employees appreciate problem-solving behavior and it is seen as effective in terms of employees satisfaction and well-being, furthermore problem solving is expected to be adequate leader behavior in conflicts (Nugent, 2002).

Forcing behavior. In two conflict cases, interviewees perceived forcing behavior ('moving against'). The following quotes are exemplary:

'He [the leader] spoke to her and tried to convince her [the colleague] to adhere to the solution I [the interviewee] had thought out'

'He [the leader] is a person who does not listen; he tried to push his own ideas'.

These examples describe leaders who coerce the conflict parties towards one solution. The leader in this case may enforce the solution brought in by one of the employees and one could say the leader is therefore siding with one of the parties (e.g., Van de Vliert 1981; 1997; Yang, Li, Wang, & Hendriks, 2011), or the leader enforces a solution that is brought in by him or her self. Either way, the leader is forcing one or more conflict parties towards one solution that he or she prefers/thinks is the best.

Employees' expectations (research question 2)

In all twenty cases, interviewees revealed they had certain expectations about their leader's behavior in the conflict situation. In thirteen cases, the interviewee expected forcing behavior in the described conflict situation. The vast majority of these interviewees expected their leader to force the opposing conflict party to a solution that was in favor of the interviewee. One interviewee formulated:

'I expect him [the leader] to support my point of view, and that he will make sure the other party will see my point of view'

In five of these thirteen cases interviewees expected forcing behavior, even when the solution was not particularly in favor of the interviewee. For example:

'I needed a decision to move on.'

'He [the leader] does not have to listen to a lot of people. The only thing he needs to do is deciding what should be done, that is it!'

Problem-solving behavior was expected only in three cases. One interviewee described his expectations as follows:

'I expect my leader to facilitate the process [...] to try to create a space wherein solutions can arise.'

In the remaining four cases, interviewees expected their leader to be non-intervening:

'These issues are minor, my leader should not deal with such things.'

The conflict issues indeed seem to have no severe consequences in these cases. Conflicts in these cases were for example about a colleague who went away instead of helping or about a broken copy-machine. Interviewees in such cases felt they should act professionally and should resolve disputes without an intervention of their leader. Interviewees described this as follows:

'Such issues should not be of concern for the leader.'

or

'We are professionals and should solve this by ourselves.'

Only when things get severe and interviewees' well-being or the performing of the task may be at stake, they are likely to turn to their leader for help:

'I try to solve the conflict myself but only when that fails and it harms my work, I will contact my supervisor for help'.

Furthermore, we explored employees' expectations of leadership behavior to identify prototypical leadership behavior (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). By defining prototypical leadership behavior, we may be able to predict psychological contract breach in general. When asked about expectations of what an 'ideal' leader should do in conflict between two employees –referring to implicit leadership theories- all interviewees indicated that they hold their leader responsible for conflict resolution. For example:

'Conflicts within the team are the responsibility for the team leader, team spirit is his task'.

and,

'It says 'director' on her business card and therefore she should deal with such conflicts.'

and,

'A leader's obligation is to restore the atmosphere in the team and should act such as to avoid future conflicts among employees.'

Interestingly, all interviewees had this opinion. This points towards a perceived leader obligation for conflicts and therefore being part of the prototypical leadership (e.g., ILT, Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Yet, at the same time all interviewees indicated they would only ask the leader to intervene in conflict situations in which the conflict affects the performance of the tasks. Most interviewees explained their hesitation to call in the leader as saving face towards the leader. Asking the leader for help or to intervene may be linked to the inability to deal with own problems, and therefore negatively influences leaders' perception of employee's overall functioning. An illustrating example is the following quote:

"He [the leader] may develop the opinion that I cannot handle the situation by myself. He may develop a negative perception of me"

Another explanation some interviewees gave was that they felt it was better to handle the issue alone instead of involving the leader because of concerns to harm the working relationship with the colleague.

When employees did ask their leader for help (twelve cases), the majority expected their leader to listen to both parties and their problems (six cases). In the cases without expected listening, they expected their leader to come up with a solution (either taking a decision/enforcing a solution or facilitating problem solving) such that both conflict parties could return to business as usual. The interviewees indicated that using forcing or problem-solving behavior might be dependent upon the situation. For example, the interviewees perceived in conflicts about task-related issues leaders' decision (e.g., forcing behavior) as appropriate. An example of this finding is a conflict between an interviewee and a colleague about a customer order, and more specifically who of the two should get the sales provision:

"We will deal with this issue without my leader. However, if my colleague and I cannot reach an agreement, I will ask our supervisor to take a decision."

In contrast, in conflicts that regard relationship issues employees seem to prefer problem-solving behavior of their leader. One interviewee described a relationship conflict and stated:

"I think it is my personal problem and my supervisor does not have to deal with the specifics of it. Maybe a meeting with the three of us could help. I want to hear his [the opposing party] reaction about my opinion."

Evaluation of leader (research question 3)

Regarding our third research question about how employees evaluate the third party conflict behavior of their leader and when it does or does not match their expectations, we found the following results.

The evaluation of leaders' behavior indicates that matching implicit leadership theories and expectations is important. When employees'

expectations were not matched by actual leader behavior, interviewees reported dissatisfaction with their leader's behavior. Common comments were:

'I was disappointed'

and,

'It is a pity that he [the leader] didn't make a decision'.

On the other hand, when expectations were matched, interviewees described their leader behavior as:

'He [the leader] did everything I asked for, that feels good'.

The consequences of a mismatch on the ongoing relationship between leaders and employees differed among interviewees. One employee mentioned severe consequences, for example

'I will never, never inform my supervisor about conflicts between me and my colleagues, he failed to deal with these things in the past and I would rather quit than ask him for help. Some years ago I had a conflict with a colleague and he let us solve the issue by ourselves. He said this is our problem and he refused to act.'

Other interviewees were milder in their evaluation, for example:

'He [the leader] could have intervened earlier in the conflict, but he did okay.'

These findings are in line with our reasoning that not matching expectations is seen as a sign of decreased employee's trust in the leader (i.e., perceiving the leader is not intervening as – based on his/her position – could be expected). This loss of trust was more clearly indicated in cases where leaders did not intervene at all despite employees' request for intervention. This compared to cases, in which the leader employed an active behavior (e.g., listening to the employee) but could – according to the employee – have acted differently (e.g., take a decision) or could have acted earlier. Worth mentioning is the fact that we did not observe one case in which the leader behavior exceeded the expectations, but only leaders that are fulfilling expectations, not fulfilling expectations, or showing different behavior that expected. To summarize, our

employees' evaluation of leaders' behavior seem to be partly depending on employees' expectations of leaders' third-party behavior.

Additional analyses

Some of the findings of the first analysis warranted additional analyses to get more insight in the underlying processes. We decided to also linguistically analyze the transcripts of the interviews using the Linguistic Inquiry Word Count software program (LIWC; Pennebaker, Booth, & Francis, 2007). LIWC counts words in predefined categories and presents percentages for every category related to the total amount of words in the document. Doing so, we could verify our findings by word count analyses of relevant word categories, allowing us also to detect whether we suffered from our own biases in our narrative coding analysis we just presented (Jehn & Jonson, 2010, Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The words people use in describing events or situations (or even those we use in daily life) are theorized to be indicative of their attention focus, thoughts, feelings, and sense making processes (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010).

From the interviews we learned that most of the interviewees would ask the leader to intervene only if the conflict situation was severe or complex. To get more insight into what aspects of a conflict situation interviewees perceive as severe and therefore as a reason to call in the leader, we text analyzed the descriptions of the conflict cases and employees' reactions to the conflicts. In order to do so, we compared interviewees' description of the conflict in cases in which they called in the leader with cases in which they did not call in the leader. This led to our additional research question:

Research question A: *To what extent do interviewees who asked their leader to intervene differ in their descriptions of the conflict and their reactions to the conflict from interviewees who did not ask for leader intervention (in the analysis we used our predefined labels 'conflict' and 'reaction to conflict')?*

We also learned from our first analysis of the conflict cases that interviewees were generally reluctant to ask the leader to intervene. Explanations interviewees gave were anxiety to lose face and unwillingness to compromise the work

relationship with the opposing party. Therefore, we text analyzed the consequences described by interviewees who asked for leader intervention and compared those with descriptions of consequences by interviewees who did not ask their leader to intervene.

Research question B: *To what extent do interviewees differ in their description of the consequences of leader behavior in cases where the leader did intervene compared to interviewees in cases where the leader did not intervene?*

A last additional research question arises from our finding that when leaders' behavior do not match employees' expectations, employees negatively evaluate leaders' third-party behavior. To examine whether this finding is reflected by the use of words, we come to our last additional research question C:

Research question C: *To what extent do interviewees in cases where their expectancies of leader behavior were matched by actual leader behavior differ in their description of leader intervention compared to interviewees in cases with no match between expectancies and actual behavior?*

LIWC method. LIWC counts the words used in 80 categories that are psychological meaningful and have proven their relationship with relevant constructs (see for an overview of all categories Pennebaker, Chung, Ireland, Gonzales, & Booth, 2007). For our purpose we focused on word categories that tap into psychological constructs relevant to our research questions. Categories used in this study were e.g. emotions, affective states, pronouns, cognitive and social processes, and job related words (see for all categories and example words Table 4-3). These categories are expected to reflect the constructs of our research questions (leaders' third-party behavior, employees' expectations towards the leader, and the evaluation of such behavior). For example the words in the category 'discrepancy' refer to the comparison between distinctive situations (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). Using words of the category 'We' represents a friendlier atmosphere and is an indication of more integrative conflict behavior (Vogelzang, Euwema, & Nauta, 1997). The categories affective states and positive as well as negative emotions are useful to examine the way interviewees describe the conflict and the consequences of the conflict. We

assume the categories cognitive processes and social processes help us to determine how interviewees describe the conflict situation to have an indication of how related to rational or social aspect the conflict is perceived. The categories certainty and optimism help us to identify how the interviewees describe their evaluation and consequences of leaders' behavior. The categories were developed and validated by Pennebaker and colleagues (2007) and in this study we used the Dutch dictionary. LIWC provides percentages of these categories compared to the total amount of words used in the document.

Table 4-3
Categories of linguistic inquiry

Category	Key words (examples)
I	I, I'd, I'll, I'm, I've, me, mine, my, myself
We	Lets, let's, our, ours, us, we, we'd, we'll, we're, we've
Positive emotions	Commitment, freely, good, honest, hope, improve, important, trust, support
Negative emotions	Crude, depressed, disappoint, ineffective, shame, useless
Affective states	Accept, afraid, anger, avoid, ashamed, dominating, harm, trust*, nice*, sorry
Cognitive processes	Change, choice, maybe, mean, save, seem, understand, totally, opinion
Social processes	Call, his, her, listen, meet, member, everybody, speak, tell
Job related	Feedback, absent, challenge, department, duty, supervision, work
Discrepancy	Couldn't, expect, lack, inadequate, must, need, prefer, problem, rather, shouldn't
Certain	Absolute, always, completely, essential, directly, facts, sure, true
Optimism	Accept, best, confidence, courage, faith, inspiring, promising, secure, strong, superior

We analyzed the transcriptions of the interviews; we created individual text files for every category of every conflict case. We defined groups according to the labels coded earlier; we were able to compare average percentages of categories between meaningful groups of cases.

1. Research question A

Group 1: Cases in which the interviewee called in the leader for help (N=12).

Group 2: Cases in which the interviewee did not call in the leader (N =8).

2. Research question B

Group 1: Cases in which the leader did intervene (forcing or problem solving).

Group 2: Cases in which the leader did not intervene.

3. Research question C

All cases were used; categories within each case were analyzed (specific expectations versus general expectations about leader behavior).

Results of additional analyses

Results regarding research question A

Interviewees who asked their leader to intervene in the conflict situation used more words that are related to cognitive processes than interviewees who did not ask their leader to intervene when describing their own reaction (behavioral, emotional, and physical) to the conflict. Interviewees who asked the leader to intervene in the conflict situation used less job-related words when describing the conflict issue and more words related to ‘certainty’ and ‘we’ than interviewees who did not ask the leader to intervene in the conflict (see for examples of keywords Table 4-4). Reasons for these differences may be that in cases where the leader was asked to be involved the employee had thought more and more deeply about the conflict and it could be that employees who involved the leader experienced more personal related aspects in the conflict than employees who did not involve the leader. This is supported by the qualitative analysis of the conflict cases. There has been discussed that employees who asked the leader to intervene experienced the conflict as more obstructing for their work than those who did not call in the leader. For example: ‘I first confronted the other with my observation, but after a couple of confrontations and no result, I told my leader about this situation’ (Case 18). These results suggest that employees are indeed hesitant to involve their leader in conflicts that

are neither complex nor escalated. When the conflict involves personal aspects employee seem more likely to ask their leader to intervene.

Results regarding research question B

In cases with no leader intervention interviewees described the consequences of the non-intervention with more words from the category 'discrepancy' than interviewees in cases with leader intervention. Words in the category 'discrepancy' refer to the comparison between distinctive situations (Tausczik & Pennebaker, 2010). Regarding research question B, these distinctive situations refer to a comparison between what really happened with what interviewees would liked to have happened. That implies that the interviewees in the non-intervention cases described behavior they had expected from the leader, which was different to what they had wanted (e.g., 'he should have done...'). This indicates a mismatch of what leader behavior interviewees observed and what leader behaviors were expected, and supports our qualitative analyses of the interviews that employees in general expect their leader to intervene in conflict situations. For example in Case 1: 'I think the leader could have had better motivated the other party'.

Results regarding research question C

Interviewees used more words in the categories I, we, self, cognitive processes, discrepancy, and social processes when describing their expectations in the particular situation compared to describing general expectations about leaders' third-party behavior in workplace conflict. The interviewees used more words from the categories affective processes and particularly negative emotions when describing general expectations of leader behavior compared to expectations in the specific conflict. This means they talked about their expectations of general leaders' third-party behavior more in terms of frustration, damage, and pressure. For example in Case 3: the expected leader behavior in the specific situation was described as 'I would ask my leader for a decision if I and the other party were not be able to find a solution'. In contrast, in general terms the interviewee described his expectations of leaders' third-party behavior

'If he cannot handle such issues correctly, there might be a huge clash and people will may be harmed.' These results are interesting with regards to our finding that interviewees indicated not to expect leader intervention in all cases, but in general they do perceive third-party behavior as a responsibility of the leader. The results of using more words that are related to (negative) emotions when talking about general expectations from leaders' third-party behavior point in the direction that employees expect conflict management behavior of leaders in more affect laden situations than the specific situation they experienced and recalled in the interview. Another reason could be the negative emotions interviewees associate with term 'conflict' are more severe than the emotions in the actual situation because of differences in the definition. In the interviews the interviewer built up the construct of conflict by explaining that conflict arises when one party feels obstructed by the other party.

In cases where employees' expectancies did not match the actual observed leader behaviors, interviewees used more negative emotion words (e.g., disappointed, frustrated) to describe the consequences of leaders' behavior compared to interviewees describing cases where expectancies matched leaders' actual behavior. For example: 'I think it is a pity that she did not act in line with her own words.' (Case 17) vs. 'I liked what he did. There was no beter way than what he did.' (Case 18).

Interviewees in cases with a match between expectancy and actual behavior used more words of the categories positive emotions (e.g., agree, accept), certainty (e.g., definitely, confident), and discrepancy (e.g., hope, need) than interviewees in no match cases. These findings indicate the match or mismatch of actual leader behavior and expectancies in conflict cases affects the evaluation of leaders' third-party behavior by the employee who is in conflict.

Discussion

In this chapter we explore the perceptions and expectations of employees regarding leaders' third-party behavior in workplace conflicts. Although there has been a lot of attention for the role of formal third parties (e.g., LaTour, Houlden,

Walker, & Thibaut, 1976; Sheppard, 1983) and best practices for leaders as third parties (e.g., Elangovan, 1995; Nugent, 2002), prior research largely ignores the perspective of employees as conflict parties. We believe this is unfortunate because perceptions of leaders' third-party help may differ from actual or intended interventions and can affect employee performance and well-being.

Our goal was to explore how employees perceive third-party behavior by their superiors, and what role their expectations play when they evaluate the effectiveness of leaders' third-party behaviors. We believe our study offers a first step in better understanding third-party behavior from the perspective of employees and calls for more empirical research. We highlight important conclusions and suggestions for future research below.

Theoretical implications

The first conclusion based on our findings is that interviewees' perception of their leaders' behavior is similar to descriptions of leaders' third-party behavior found in past research (Gelfand et al., 2012; Römer et al., 2012) and can be classified as avoiding (either overt or words-action mismatch), forcing, or problem-solving behavior. In almost half of the cases in our sample (nine out of twenty) the leader was perceived to apply an avoiding strategy. Forcing and problem solving-behaviors were described to a lesser extent. This is an interesting observation, (i) because it points towards little active involvement of leaders in employees' conflicts, and (ii) because prior research suggests an active involvement of leaders in employees' conflict.

- (i) In the interviews we started with asking about a situation in which the interviewee experienced an obstruction or irritation with another employee without explicitly asking about leaders' involvement. That is why, based on these interviews, one can assume that a substantial part of the conflicts between employees take place without leaders being involved.
- (ii) Earlier studies find a positive relationship between power and action found in earlier studies (Galinsky, Gruenfeld, & Magee,

2003) and employees' assumptions of a sensitive, dedicated, and strong leader (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). These earlier findings would imply a more active involvement of leaders in employees' conflict.

At least in the four cases where avoiding leader behavior was reported despite explicit requests for intervention, the prior literature predicts active leader behavior. However, due to the small number of cases, this finding has to be confirmed by quantitative future research. Moreover, this finding is worthy of examining in other cultures than the Dutch, as one might expect both the degree of intervention as well as the type of intervention to vary with cultural differences. For example, Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) proposed the involvement of a third party as an explicit conflict management strategy in (intercultural) conflicts. In cultures where saving face is more important than in the Dutch culture, third-party involvement may be seen as an adequate strategy to save face and may be used more often or earlier in the conflict.

Our findings about avoiding behaviors contribute to the area of leaders' third-party behavior. We identify two types of avoiding behavior, which seem exemplary for organizational leaders: overt avoiding and a mismatch between leaders' words and actions. Overt avoiding refers to situations where a leader gives reasons for not getting involved in the conflict and a word-action mismatch refers to situations where a leader promises to intervene but actually stays out of the conflict (see also, Carnevale, 1986, Simons, 1999; 2002). In terms of leader behavior, a mismatch between words and action might appear similar to overt avoiding behavior (i.e., no intervention); however, employees' perception, evaluation, and reaction of this behavior will be different (Simons, 1999; Simons, 2002). A words-action mismatch is likely to harm the relationship between leader and employee because of decreased or diminished trust, as behavioral integrity by the leader lacks (Simons, Friedman, Liu, & McLean Parks, 2007). The promise to intervene by the leader likely leads to a positive evaluation by the employee (e.g., Leroy, Palansky, & Simons, 2012). However, when employees realize that their leader shows no consistency in his or her action, a negative evaluation is a

likely result, which may lead to decreased commitment (Leroy et al, 2012). The leader is likely to be perceived as not trustworthy, which may affect their perceived behavioral integrity. Our qualitative analysis of the four cases in which words-action mismatch was reported supports this notion. For example, the employee in case 18 stated: 'When I realized the leader does not do what he said he would, my trust in him decreased'. Based on these indications, we pose that words-action mismatch is harmful, which impedes leaders' behavioral integrity and minimizes the trust of their employees. We think it is important for future research to focus on the antecedents of the different avoiding behaviors and its effects. Moreover, we think it is interesting to analyze whether the mismatch between leaders' words and actions is a conscious decision or merely a coincidence.

Overall, our exploratory study reveals that employees seem to try and solve the conflicts they experience themselves before calling in the leader. Asking their leader to intervene becomes an option when employees perceive the conflict to be related to relationship issues, when the conflict has escalated, or when the conflict obstructs task performance. This is an important finding given that earlier research usually advises to avoid relationship conflicts rather than applying other conflict behaviors such as problem solving or accommodating (De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). However, our study suggests that there seems to be a need among employees for leaders' intervention in especially these situations. Fortunately, some scholars have provided steps in how to manage this type of conflict (see e.g., Edmondson & McLain Smith, 2006) but more empirical research is necessary to identify (evidence based) effective interventions.

The majority of employees in our sample indicates that calling in the supervisor equates to failing, this obstructs initiative taking by employees (i.e., expectancy: Vroom, 1964). Employees want to avoid that the supervisor perceives them as incompetent (e.g., Ross, 1977) and are concerned with saving face (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998; Oetzel et al., 2001). This implies that conflicts are not managed properly or resolved and the conflict situation will linger and is likely to escalate. These findings warrant more empirical research to establish

whether asking a leader to intervene indeed depends upon the type or severity of the conflict, Furthermore, research need to establish which motives people have for not asking a leader for help in conflict situations. More rigorous evidence of these processes may provides a thorough understanding of how organizations can develop constructive norms for workplace conflicts.

Furthermore, we find that employees have implicit leadership theories about third-party behavior (i.e., ILT; Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). Specifically, employees perceive conflict management as a necessary skill of their supervisors. This complies with Brion's (1996a; 1996b) and Guirdham's (2002) notion of the importance of managerial skills in mediating between disputing parties. Furthermore, the linguistic analysis indicates that a mismatch between actions and expectations is harmful in that employees are likely to develop distrust towards their leader, which likely complicates the work relationship.

Implications for practice

Our study highlights the importance for leaders to understand their employees' expectations about interventions in workplace conflict situations. Not matching these expectations may harm individual outcomes (e.g., increased stress, decreased performance, decreased trust in the leader) as well as organizational outcomes. Interestingly, employees' expectations about their supervisor are unwritten and subjective, and when the involved parties are aware of this informal contract, they do not necessarily or automatically agree with it (Inkson & King, 2010; Rousseau, 1989). Moreover, employees apparently hesitate to inform the leader about conflicts and, at the same time, think that managing these conflicts is a leader's responsibility. Therefore we argue that, for example, when an employee asks the leader to help in a conflict, the leader should simply ask what the employee expects the leader to do. Of course, whether the leader should act according to this expectation depends on more factors, however the leader could explain what he or she could do (or not do) in the conflict and why. Furthermore, our study implies that the employees' expectations should be made explicit at an early stage, preferably before conflict

has emerged. In this stage, leaders can influence employees' expectations by expressing their ideas of their intervening role in future employees' conflict. Additionally, agreements can be reached as to how conflict situations are handled in the future. When asked for help, leaders need to intervene and to make sure the involved parties are aware of his or her conflict management actions. Results of our study show support for this notion; however, our conclusions should be taken with care due to the explorative manner of this study.

Concerning the finding of the perceived word-action mismatch of leaders, leaders need to be careful about acting in line with their promises. Our results point towards negative consequences for the employee-leader relationship when promised leader behavior will not occur. However, a reasonable explanation for not fulfilling the promise may help to prevent this negative consequence. Our explorative approach did not allow us to test this. Future research could focus on the specific circumstances of the effect of not fulfilling promises. Leaders therefore should only promise behavior they are actually able and willing to perform. In other cases, leaders should be honest about what they can and will do, since employee expectations may adapt to this reality. Another way would be to reflect together on what leader and employee had discussed to get to know how the other remembers the discussion.

Our results further suggest that organizational leaders need to be proactively think through situations in which conflicts are likely to arise in their team. Many employees try to solve conflicts themselves and only call their leader in if the situation escalates and/or the performance of the task is suffering. When leaders are more tuned in with the disagreements in their team or department, they may be able to monitor the situation. To achieve this, the leader should be accessible for employees when they encounter conflict and react in a constructive way by listening what the employee is actually asking for. Surveys or other instruments to measure satisfaction with co-workers relationship could help the leader to pick up relevant signals. When employees are not able to manage the situation, it might be time for the leader to intervene and to prevent

escalation. Finally, another way for leaders to deal with conflicts is to help the employees solve the conflicts by themselves by stimulating a cooperative culture in the organization or team (Gelfand et al., 2012). In that case employees may be able to solve conflicts without escalation and therefore with diminished need to involve the leader.

Limitations and future research

Our study's aim is to investigate previously unknown aspects of employees' perceptions, expectations, and the evaluation of leaders' third-party behavior. Through an exploratory design we identify relevant aspects for further research in the area of leaders' third-party behavior. Additionally, our findings indicate directions to help practitioners effectively deal with conflicts at work. However, the design of this study comes with some apparent limitations.

The sample of our study is modest in size and by no means representative. The interviewees were all clients of a training and consultancy company and originate from and work in the Netherlands. As the cultural aspect in the concepts of expectations and Implicit Leadership Theory is significant (Hunt, Boal, & Sorenson, 1990), our findings may not be applicable to other cultures. Future research should focus on larger, representative samples with a cross-cultural design to confirm these findings or to distinguish cultural dependent aspects of employees' perception, expectation and evaluation of leaders' third-party behavior.

Furthermore, the exploratory design of the study restricts general conclusions about our findings. Future research needs to use quantitative or experimental designs to further examine the issues that come up. We indicate some promising paths for further examination. For example, the different types of avoidance need further clarification and the match or mismatch between employee' expectations and perception of leaders' third-party behavior needs to be verified by quantitative studies.

Conclusion

Our explorative study about employees' perception, expectation and evaluation of leaders' third-party behavior reveals that employees perceive that the leader acts in ways that can be described by the three tendencies of moving towards (problem solving), moving against (forcing) and moving away (avoiding). Furthermore, we conclude that employees have a rather concrete idea of how a leader should act in a specific conflict situation as well as in general terms. At the beginning of the conflict, the employees' expectation of the leader's involvement is rather limited; employees try to solve the issue by themselves before asking the leader for help. However, once employees cannot resolve their conflict, they regard solving the conflict as a task for the leader. Our last conclusion from this study is that a match or mismatch between employees' expectation and perception seems to matter for the evaluation of the leader.

Appendix: Coding scheme

<i>Construct</i>	<i>Answers</i>	<i>Codes</i>	<i>Description</i>
<i>Conflict</i>	Issue	CI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conflict issue. What is the conflict about? - Type of conflict: task / process / relationship - Objective description of conflict - Personal traits of conflict party according to interviewee
	Other conflict party	CP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is the other? - Quality of relationship between the two before and after the conflict. Work related and non-work related.
	Duration	CD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How long was the conflict at stake? - Does the conflict still continue?
<i>Reaction to conflict</i>	Thoughts	RGeda	- Thoughts, associations
	Emotions	RE	- Emotions
	Behavior	RGedr	- Own behavior (towards other party, home etc.; not towards leader)
	Physical	RL	- Physical reactions
<i>Initiative to involve the leader</i>	Initiative	IZ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No initiative - In case of initiative: Who took initiative? Why?
<i>Actual leader behavior</i>	Intervention	LI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Relationship with leader - Concern: own (leader's) / party A's / party B's concern? - What exactly did the leader?
	Goal	LD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leader helps the parties to solve the problem. - Leader implies an own solution.
	Satisfaction	LT	- What was the effect of leader behavior (in terms of satisfaction) on the interviewee?
	Consequences	LG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was the effect of leader behavior on the interviewee? - Future contact with leader, own conclusions based on the behavior.
<i>Interviewee's expectations about the leader in this specific conflict situation</i>	Expectation situation	VS + x*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What was the expectation of interviewee in this situation? - What did the interviewee needed in this situation? - What is the reason to ask the leader to intervene?
<i>Interviewee's expectations about leader in general</i>	Expectation general	VA + x*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What is the ideal behavior of the leader as third party in general? - What is the opposite of ideal leader behavior as a third party?

* The code of VA en VS were combined with one of the other codes.

Chapter 5

Discussion and conclusions:

Towards a contingency model for
leaders' third-party behavior

Erica is a team manager and is working at her desk when Tracy (one of her team members) enters the room and asks for a minute of her time. Erica and Tracy know each other for several years, as they worked together in a different department before. Erica values Tracy's work and dedication and she knows that she should take notice when Tracy asks for help. That is why she offers her a chair and starts listening to Tracy. Tracy is telling Erica about her troubles to meet the deadline in her project. This, according to Tracy, is foremost because Maggie (a direct team member) does not accomplish her tasks in time. This is problematic as Tracy's progress really depends on Maggie's input. Tracy says she has asked Maggie now for the third time to deliver her work. Maggie acknowledged the need for her to speed up, but in the end nothing happened. Tracy asks Erica what she should do now. Erica hired Maggie, a young woman who started just months ago. She already noticed that Maggie does not feel very confident about her capabilities. As a consequence she needs more time than others to do her work. Erica now is thinking what would be the best way to proceed, as well as how best to respond to Tracy.

This case describes a conflict between employees, Tracy and Maggie, which may happen every day in organizations where people have to cooperate in order to achieve their and the organization's goals. The case also illustrates a dilemma that probably is exemplary for leaders who are getting involved in conflicts between employees. What could we advise Erica to do? Would it be best to talk to Tracy about how she can deal with the situation on her own? Would it be better to get Maggie at the table as well, to hear her perspective on the issue, and try to solve it when all parties are present? Or should Erica say to Tracy that she herself would talk to Maggie in order to stress the need that she delivers in time? What are the consequences of each of these behaviors for Maggie, for Tracy, for Erica, for the team, and for the project?

Situations as described above are central in this thesis. Basically, it concerns a leader's outward response to a conflict between two employees, labeled as 'leaders' third-party behavior'. Throughout this thesis, we explore and examine such conflict situations in order to try to answer the question what

organizational leaders (e.g., managers, supervisors) in similar situations should do or should not do. In order to do so, we begun based on the existing literature with investigating possible reactions by leaders in conflicts between their employees, what circumstances influence their behavioral choices, and what the outcomes of these behaviors might be (Chapter 2). We continued with examining how leaders' third-party behavior influences the relationship between conflict issues and conflict outcomes (Chapter 3). And we examined the employees' perspective, and more specifically what employees perceive and expect from their leader when they are in conflict and accordingly how they evaluate the leader's third-party behavior (Chapter 4). In this last chapter we summarize the main findings and relate these to the existing literature. Furthermore, we discuss limitations of the conducted research and point towards future research paths. Finally we discuss practical implications for leaders, consultants, employees and trainers who would like to improve their approaches in dealing with conflicts at work based on insights of this thesis and round off with several concluding remarks.

The role of leaders as third parties in employee conflict is worth to consider. First because leaders are identifiable connected to employees' conflicts. Leaders are seen responsible for the employees' performances and well-being, and since conflicts potentially affect both, conflict management, belongs to the tasks of leaders. Secondly, leaders' third-party behavior can have serious consequences for employees such as illness, damaged relationships, reduced commitment, and hampering productivity. And thirdly, the role of leaders as third party in employee conflict is complex due to the involvement of leaders' interests in the conflicts. Moreover, the literature so far provides little overview of the conducted research of leaders' third-party behavior. Furthermore, there is a gap in the literature regarding the underlying mechanisms that contribute to the understanding why and what type of leaders' third-party behavior may be effective.

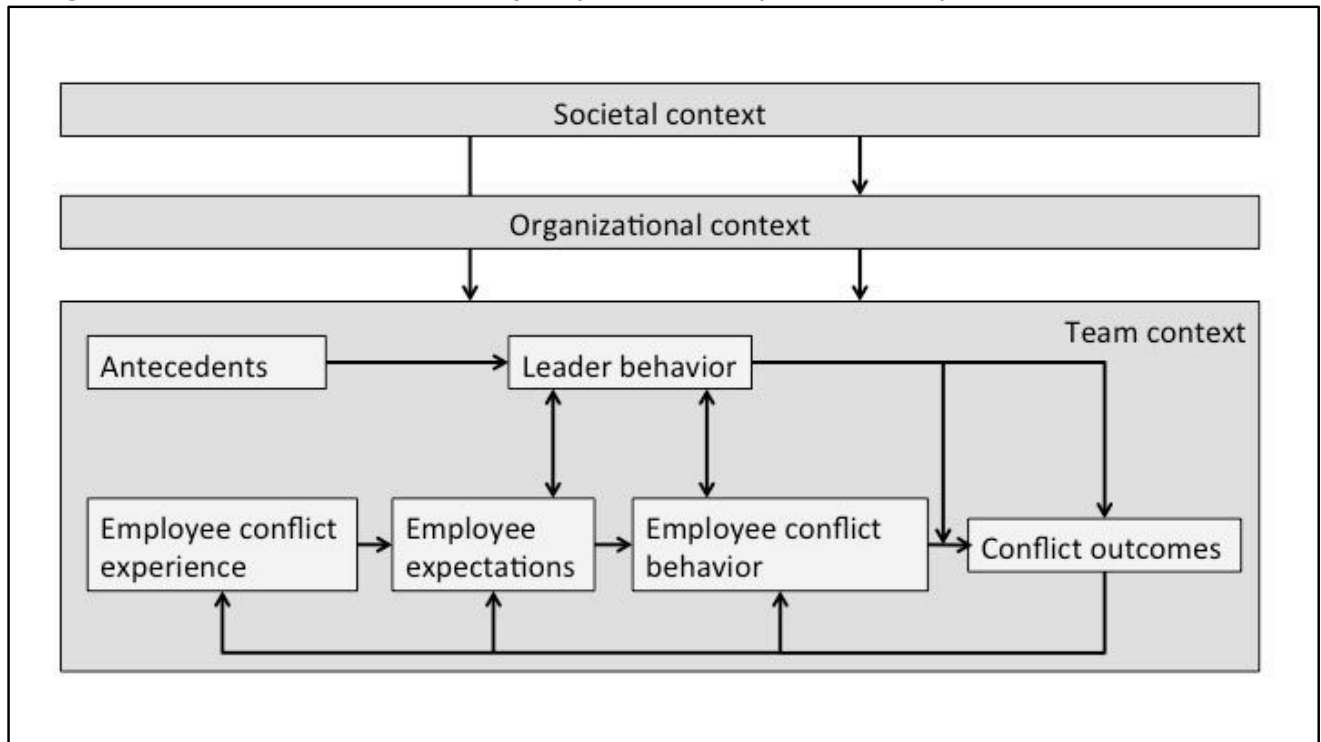
Key findings of this thesis

Integral model for leaders' third-party behavior (L3P-model)

Our literature review revealed that the topic of leaders as third parties in employees' conflict was subject of a relative small amount of scientific work. Besides that, a significant amount of the studies we found focused on the development of different models to describe what behaviors leaders employ in employees' conflict. However, the review did not reveal an overarching model to describe leaders' third-party behavior that is notably shared in the scientific studies. Therefore, and based on the findings of all the studies in this thesis, we propose a model that integrates the examined aspects of leaders' third-party behavior and indicates the interrelations of these aspects (Figure 5-1). The model shows first of all the context of the conflict. Bollen, Euwema and Munduate (2016), in their 3-R model of workplace mediation, emphasize the importance of analyzing the context of conflicts to understand the role of third parties. We follow their approach, and include the context of the conflict at three levels: team, organizational and societal. The team context includes aspects that are known to influence the conflict process such as intra-team trust, norms, and importance of the tasks (De Wit et al., 2012; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003; Rispens, 2012). The organizational context refers to aspects such as size of the organization, the market it is operating in, being a profit oriented, a non-for profit organization or a governmental organization etc. The societal context refers to aspects such as power distance and face saving behavior (e.g., Giebels & Yang, 2009; Hofstede et al., 2010; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

Figure 5-1

Integral model for leaders' third-party behavior (L3P-model)



In this context the conflict starts when an employee feels obstructed or irritated by a team member (e.g., Van de Vliert, 1997) (*Employee conflict experience*). This employee conflict experience may raise expectations towards the leader about involvement (or not) and specific behavioral expectations when a leader gets involved (*Employee expectations*). The employee, who is experiencing conflict, might demonstrate an outward reaction to the conflict (*Employee conflict behavior*). This reaction could be asking the leader for help, trying to manage the conflict by him or herself, or talking about it to colleagues, or to HR. The conflict process triggers outcomes that affect the employee, his or her well-being and performance, the relationship between conflicting parties, or similar aspects (*Conflict outcomes*). Leaders' third-party behavior is triggered by a variety of aspects such as awareness of the conflict, leaders' role concept, and leaders' motivation or self-efficacy (*Antecedents*). Leaders' third-party behavior (*Leader behavior*) affects the conflict process at different points; one is the effect on the conflict behavior of the employee for example by arranging a meeting with the other party to speak things out. Another way to affect the conflict process is to

influence the outcome, for example by imposing a solution in the conflict. A third way is the relationship between conflict and outcomes, for example by avoiding the conflict and the parties. This is likely to amplify detrimental outcomes of the conflict in terms of employees' well-being (Römer et al., 2012). Leaders' behavior may affect employees' expectations for the next time by frustrating or confirming the expectations. A last aspect of the model we highlight is the feedback loop, which implies learning effects that may derive from (un) desirable outcomes of the conflict. For example, when a leader's third-party intervention had negative outcomes in terms of employees' well-being it may diminish the chance to ask the leader to intervene in a future conflict situation. But the inverse could also be true when a leader intervention helped the employees to deal with the conflict in a constructive way and to reach desirable outcomes of the conflict. This, in turn, may lead to a stronger likelihood that the employees will ask the leader for help in a future conflict. We discuss the example of Erica, Maggie, and Tracy in Box 5.1 below to further illustrate the model.

In Chapter 1 we emphasized that employees' conflict and leaders' third-party behavior is a multisided process with different perceptions of the involved parties. This is similar to what Bollen and colleagues (2016) have stressed in their model for mediation (Bollen, Euwema, & Munduate, 2016; see also Bollen, Euwema, & Müller, 2010; Fitness, 2000). Multisided means that the different parties in the conflict have different perspectives on the conflict itself and on a leader's (appropriate) behavior in a given situation (e.g., Bollen et al., 2016). Bollen and colleagues (2016) conclude that the effectiveness of mediation tactics depends on contextual factors such as regulations, relations, and roles.

Box 5.1

An illustrative example of the L3P-model

In the case of the situation we described in the beginning of this chapter, the conflict starts with Tracy's *experience of a conflict*. That is Tracy's feeling of not being able to perform her tasks (e.g. mastering deadlines in her project) because of Maggie. After she confronted Maggie with this situation a number of times, Tracy asks Erica for advice how to deal with the situation (*Employee conflict behavior*). It is reasonable that this request is based on expectations Tracy has towards Erica (*Employee expectations*). Erica now, thinks about her reaction (*Leader behavior*). This leader behavior is influenced by different aspects such as Erica's attitude towards Tracy and towards Maggie (*Antecedents*). In this case Erica knows Tracy long before and values Tracy's work, in contrast to Maggie, whom she knows only since a couple of months. Other antecedents may be the self-efficacy of Erica to deal with such situations or Erica may have received hints of other colleagues that Tracy is really hurried and irritated during the last weeks. All these aspects may trigger certain behavior of Erica. The behavior of Erica could be that she advises Tracy to have more patience with Maggie and to ask Maggie if Tracy could help her in any way. Another possible reaction could be that Erica speaks to Maggie in person and stresses the need that Maggie performs her tasks more quickly. In anyway, the conflict process and its outcomes may be affected by Erica's behavior or absence of that.

We assume the same is true for leaders' third-party behavior and therefore included these diverging perspectives in the L3P-model. We found some support for the relevance of different perspectives by demonstrating how employees' perceptions of leaders' third-party behaviors influences their level of stress resulting from an employee conflict. We think it is important for future research to incorporate a multiple-angles approach in order to accurately determine the influence of the multiple perspectives. Moreover, we found employees having implicit expectations about what an ideal leader is supposed to do in employees' conflicts (e.g., Implicit Leadership Theory; Epitropaki, & Martin, 2004; Lord & Alger, 1985). Accordingly, we think it is valuable when future studies examine when perceptions and/or expectations are not aligned. A few

studies have underscored how misalignment of perceptions between leaders and team members can have important negative consequences for team functioning and performance (e.g., Gibson et al., 2009).

Another finding of the literature review is that so far little is known about contextual factors and antecedents of leaders' third-party behavior. The specific context of the emergence and the outcomes of leaders' third-party behavior were examined by only few studies. The proposed model integrates these aspects. Moreover, we added employees' expectations to the model compared to the model we discussed in Chapter 2. This follows from Chapter 4 that revealed the potential relevance of employees' expectations for the involvement of the leader in employees' conflict as well as for the determination of outcomes of leaders' involvement. The review in Chapter 2 disclosed that the number of studies examining leaders' third-party behavior in the specific organizational and relational circumstances was scarce. Instead, a significant amount of studies used simulations in an experimental design, mostly with students in the lab, and therefore did not focus on more naturalistic field settings. We understand the merits of experimental designs, however we call for more examination of the specific contexts in which leaders intervene because of the interrelations between relational and organizational factors on the one hand and the leader's and conflict characteristics on the other. For example, an employee who trusts his leader is more likely to involve the leader in a conflict. In other words, leaders are able to influence if and how they are involved in employees' conflict by creating a healthy relationship with their employees. Examining this contexts helps to better understand the emergence of leaders' third-party behavior and it gives input for leaders to create circumstances in which conflicts are less likely to harm employees' performance, well-being, and relationships with colleagues.

Leaders' third party behavior moderating conflict outcomes

Experiencing conflict can have important negative consequences for those involved. Previous studies demonstrated that workplace conflicts can be linked to depression, low self-esteem, and decreased general health (De Raeve,

Jansen, Van den Brandt, Vasse, & Kant, 2009) and consequently to high costs for organizations (Euwema, Beetz, Driessen, & Menke, 2007). The role of managers as third parties seems to be one important factor to minimize these detrimental effects. In Chapter 3 we examined the moderating role of several leaders' third-party behaviors on the relationship between conflict types and employee well-being. Our findings showed leaders' forcing behavior as a third party amplifies the relationships between all three conflict types (task, process, and relationship conflicts) and the experienced conflict stress by employees. Furthermore, leaders' third-party avoiding behavior specifically amplifies the relationship between task conflicts and conflict stress, whereas problem-solving behavior suppresses the association between relationship conflict and conflict stress. These findings indicate the relevance to differentiate between the three types of third-party behavior of leaders as well as to differentiate between the three types of conflict the parties experience. This implies that these two contingency factors, conflict type and type of outcome, are important to consider when examining the process and outcomes of leaders' third-party behavior. It supports the assumptions of the prescribing models of Nugent (2002) and Elangovan (1995) and stresses the significance for leaders to adjust their own behavior to the specific conflict context. More specifically, it implies that leaders need to take into account the conflict type and the desired outcome when choosing a third-party intervention. Thus, if interested in employees' well-being, leaders should refrain from forcing and avoiding behavior. Which would imply we suggest that a problem solving approach by the leader is always best, when employee well-being is the focal point. However, our contingency model suggests that other circumstances require a different strategy than problem solving. The findings in Chapter 4 point towards the relevance of the level of escalation of and/or obstruction due to the conflict. An escalated conflict is much harder to deal with and problem solving might be hard to employ (Glasl, 1981). A highly escalated conflict between two employees needs to be solved in a fast manner to refrain detrimental consequences for other team members or the work. In such a case leaders need to enforce a decision that helps to end this situation.

Employees' perceptions, expectations, and evaluations of leaders' behaviors

A relevant aspect in the emergence and outcomes of leaders' third-party behavior is the way in which the leader gets involved in the conflict. One way to get involved is to be asked by (one of) the employees to intervene. We revealed that this request by employees often appears only after they failed to solve the conflict on their own. Employees told us that they are generally hesitant to involve the leader, firstly because they fear to be negatively evaluated by the leader. They believe that leaders may not value it when employees ask for help and are not able to solve their own conflicts. This reflects a societal work related norm in the Netherlands, where this study was conducted, and may vary in other cultures. Secondly, employees fear that the leader may confront the other party with the issue without them being present. In that case they would not be able to explain their perspective or to witness the reactions of the other party. Again, it should be noted that these results are found among an almost exclusively Dutch sample and that the wider ecological validity should be tested. Notably, expectations towards leaders vary in different cultures (Euwema, Wendt, & Van Emmerik, 2007; Hofstede & S ndergaard, 2001; House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002).

Another finding is about employees' perception of word-action mismatch of the leader in the sense that - at least in the view of the employee - the leader is not acting as promised. Mostly this concerned a leader who promised to intervene in the conflict by confronting the other party but did not. We consider this behavior as an indirect way of avoiding the conflict, which can be seen as an addition to the earlier described form of (overt) avoiding in dyadic conflict (e.g., De Dreu et al., 2001). This new type of third-party behavior was not reported before in the literature about leaders' third-party behavior. However, it relates to Simons' (1999) broader concept of leaders' behavioral integrity that is defined as 'the perceived degree of congruence between the values expressed by words and those expressed through action' (Simons, 1999, p. 90). Leaders' behavioral integrity, in turn, is related to the attitudes and job performance of employees

(Leroy et al., 2012). Being in conflict – an emotional or even threatening situation – and experiencing incongruence between a leader's words and actions may harm employees' performance, their trust in the leader, and employees' well-being to a high degree. Furthermore, it underscores the time aspect in the situation of a leader in employees' conflict, namely that the involvement of the leader may take more than one single action but consists of a sequence of actions. That is, it is likely that if an employee experiences a conflict he or she speaks to the leader alone about this situation. The leader may promise to intervene, and may even have the initial intention to do so, but in the end does not "deliver". There might be a variety of reasons for this, for example because others shed new light on the issue, because the leader is unable to find a suitable occasion to discuss it, or simply forgets about it. Arguably, this non-intervention is only tangible after a period of time.

Theoretical contributions

The research presented in this thesis has three important theoretical implications. First, it puts forward a holistic framework (L3P-model) that describes the entire process of third-party behavior by leaders (see Figure 5-1), secondly, it provides categories to describe leaders' third-party behavior, and thirdly, it contributes to the broader questions of how organizations deal with conflicts. We discuss these contributions in the next section.

Theoretical contributions of the L3P-model

The proposed L3P-model describes factors that influence the emergence, the perspectives, and outcomes of leaders' third-party behavior. This model takes into account that parties in the conflict differently perceive and evaluate leaders' third-party behavior (e.g., Bollen et al., 2012). Moreover, we explicitly take employees' expectation as a factor that influence the conflict process and outcomes. The model helps us in different ways. First, it helps to identify and categorize relevant factors that play a role in the emergence and outcome of leaders' third-party behavior. The scientific works until now is fragmented and

shares little definitions and approaches. With the model we provide a more systematical approach to examine the subject. A shared and systemically approach contributes to identification of shared or complementary findings in the field. Moreover, we provide a promising categorization of leaders' third-party behavior that can reduce the variety of typologies that exist till date.

Secondly, it indicates how different aspects are interrelated. As the two empirical studies in this thesis show, the interrelation between the aspects is significant in determining outcomes of the conflict and leaders' third-party behavior. For example, the study in Chapter 4 reveals that employees indicate the level of obstruction due to the conflict as a significant factor that triggers them to ask the leader for help. This suggests that employees foremost involve leaders in severe or escalated conflicts. This in turn requires specific third-party attitudes, techniques, and processes in order to reach desirable outcomes (Butts, 2016). Examples are a leader's accessibility, ability to calm parties, acknowledgement of emotions, ability to build trust, and clarity about mutual expectations (Butts, 2016).

We found another relationship in the case of words-action mismatches of leaders. This inconsistency in words and actual behavior triggered distrust of the employee in the leader and diminish the leader's behavioral integrity. Due to this decreased trust the conflict is likely to evolve into an additional conflict between employee and leader. Which, in turn, underscores the specific role of leaders as third parties compared to professional third parties that are exclusively dealing with the conflict (e.g., mediators), and it underscores the complexity to handle the conflict effectively. For professional parties the conflict is the only relationship with the disputants, leaders instead have an ongoing relationship with their employees and deal with them in different other occasions than the conflict. Thus, in accordance with the findings in this thesis, we advocate to use the L3P-model to study leaders' third party behaviors instead of relying on frameworks that are merely based on legal settings or are developed for professional third parties. Examining the effectiveness of leaders' third-party behavior needs to take into account interrelations such as the quality of the relationship between involved

parties. Meaning that a particular leader's third-party behavior has different outcomes depending on the quality of the relationship. For example, an employee with a high quality relationship with the leader likely perceives the leader's forcing behavior towards one solution less threatening than an employee with a low quality relationship with the leader.

And third, the L3P-model helps to identify gaps in the literature. By categorizing existing and upcoming research in the model, the aspects and relationships that need further examination are identifiable. We find the examination of antecedents of leader's behavior is scarce till date; increased work on this aspect, and especially on employees' attributes would contribute to the definition how leaders' third-party behavior emerges and what this implies for the choice and outcomes of this behavior. Another gap is the leader's perspective of the own role in employees' conflict; the leader's role-concept about when and how to intervene is meaningful in the discussion of the emergence of their third-party behavior. How do leaders define their own role and obligations in conflict, and what aspects are relevant to leaders when deciding which third-party behavior is most effective? Answers to these questions help to further understand the different (role) perceptions in the conflict and these answers give information to adequately design advices, coach and train leaders. A last gap to reduce in our view is the role of the leader in influencing the team context. This concerns questions such as what is the leader's indirect third-party behavior; can he or she increase trust between employees to diminish escalation and detrimental outcomes of conflicts? How can leaders help employees to deal with conflicts themselves? Answers to this questions help to define the whole scale of aspects a leader has to take into account and it gives a variety on behaviors to facilitate leaders in their work. Moreover, prior research concerning leaders' third-party behavior mostly focuses on the outcomes that are affected by the leader's behavior (e.g., fairness and justice perception, well-being). However, factors that might trigger leaders' behavior and employees' and leaders' perspectives, as well as how the conflict process actually develops, are studied less extensively. That is surprising, because recent work indicates that these factors influence the

effectiveness of specific third-party behaviors to a large extent (e.g., Bollen et al., 2016). We identify antecedents, employees' expectations and specific conflict characteristics and their relationships with leaders' third-party behavior and its outcome as valuable avenues for future research.

Categories for leaders' third-party behavior

As we pointed out, the literature on leaders' third-party behavior shows no consensus regarding a description of leaders' third-party behavior. The description we developed in this thesis of three categories of behaviors (avoiding, forcing, and problem solving) seems to be an adequate overall framework to describe possible behaviors. Moreover, we think this framework is promising in terms of being an answer to the missing consensus in the literature. The framework describes broad categories that include a variety of different aspects. Our framework is similar to recent research that categorizes leaders' conflict behavior (e.g., Gelfand et al., 2012, see also Way et al., 2014; 2016). In these studies leaders' conflict behaviors were described as collaborating, dominating, and avoiding and it shows that these behaviors trigger respectively collaborating, dominating, and avoiding conflict cultures in teams. These studies together with this thesis show the three categories as suitable to describe leaders' third-party behavior.

Leaders' third-party behavior in the broader context

Overall and in line with the proposed model, leaders' behavior in employees' conflict is worth to be considered on a broader level than solely related to the question what the leader should do when confronted with employee conflict. We suggest that leaders can help to prevent conflicts to have detrimental outcomes by influencing the team context. Leaders need to stimulate a collaborating climate with an open conflict norm (Gelfand et al., 2012; Way et al., 2016), and more specific, leaders can help the team to set norms on how to air feelings and frustrations related to conflict and to create an awareness that these feelings matter (Brett, 1984; Jehn, 1997). Another way is to develop employee's

conflict skills (Jones, 2016). A collaborating climate and/or advanced conflict skills will help employees to deal with the conflicts self-sufficiently, to prevent escalation, and probably decreased the need for leaders' involvement. Indeed, Babalola, Stouten, Euwema, and Ovadje (2016) found that employees were better able to deal with conflicts when their leader helped them to refrain from interpersonally harmful behavior. However, it is positive related to employees' ability to deal with conflicts. However, it is likely that leaders will be confronted with employees' conflicts even if he or she enabled aforementioned contextual factors.

Practical implications

Based on this thesis, organizational leaders are advised to develop a sense for detecting conflicts between their employees. A conflict between team members may emerge on a daily basis and it appears that employees have expectations of leaders' behavior in such situations. Leaders need to be aware of (potential) conflicts and of the expectations employees may have regarding third-party behavior. Not acting effectively in a conflict can have detrimental effects for employees and (the quality of) their work. Not acting in line with employees' expectations may have detrimental effects on the conflict process as well as for the trust employees have in their leader. A complicating factor is that (Dutch) employees have the ambition to solve conflicts on their own and only involve leaders when the conflict gets severe and the performance of their work is affected. Leaders should therefore be aware of conflicts in their team to intervene as early as possible since escalated and relationship-affecting conflicts are hard to solve (De Dreu & Vianen, 2001; Edmondson & McLain Smith, 2006). Another point is that leaders need to be aware that they act as they promise to do. It is evident that acting not consistent with own promises harms the employee's trust in the leader (Elgoibar, Euwema, & Munduate, 2016). Based on the current thesis, leaders are advised to employ problem-solving behavior rather than employ forcing or avoiding behavior in order to prevent stress experiences of employees. However, we want to emphasize that there is not one best way to

deal with employees' conflict as a third party. These findings are about stress experiences of employees and we cannot exclude beneficial outcomes of these two behaviors for other outcomes, nor can we exclude that forcing have beneficial effects on employees' stress experience under specific circumstances. Examples for beneficial outcomes of forcing behavior may be effects on efficiency, pace of decision-making, or quality of work despite the fact that the employee experiences stress. Stress reducing effects of forcing behavior may occur for example if employees have a personal clash during a meeting and the leader enforces a solution and ends the conflict. The advice for leaders is to carefully weigh which outcome is desired and to what extent a stress experience of the employee is acceptable. When deciding how to act in an employee conflict, leaders need to carefully think about factors such as who did involve him or her, what is the conflict about (e.g., task, process, relationship issues), what are expectations of him or her as a third party (e.g., listen to one party, giving advice to one party, confronting one party with a decision, or getting all parties to the table) and what is important in terms of outcomes (e.g., well-being, efficient decision making, high quality decision, commitment to the decision). These different facets require advanced skills of the leader. Recent works define these conflict managing skills as varying from cognitive, emotional to behavioral skills (cf., Bollen & Euwema, 2015; Poitras et al., 2015). It is therefore important that leaders get organizational help and training in order to develop their ability to employ third-party behavior (Saundry et al., 2015). Organizations need to facilitate leaders by sufficient capacity (e.g., time, support, and training) to deal with conflicts and being supported and/or guided by broader conflict management system in the organization (e.g., Jones, 2016; Jones & Saundry, 2012).

Organizations should also pay attention to the conflict behavior of employees. We found employees trying to manage conflicts themselves and only ask leaders when they cannot solve the issue. At the same time, employees have high expectations about the leaders' third party behavior. This brings forward a dilemma for the leaders: to be expected to intervene in a conflict that they

probably are not aware of, of being involved only in an escalated stage when the conflict is hard to solve (Glasl, 1982). To support leaders in this dilemma, organizations are advised to stimulate a constructive conflict climate wherein open conflict norms exist and conflicts are discussed in an early stage. Furthermore, discussions between leaders and employees of mutual expectations of each other in conflicts help all parties to deal with each other more effectively once a conflict arises.

Strengths and limitations

In this thesis we used different research methods (a systematic literature review, and both qualitative and quantitative designs). This enabled us to focus on the relevant aspects of leaders' third-party behavior from different angles. The systematic literature review was useful in order to get an overview of the relevant studies and to give an indication of what already is known and where research attention is needed to get further insight in this subject. The quantitative study (Chapter 3) enabled us to measure the moderating effects of leaders' third-party behavior on the conflict-outcome relationship. And the qualitative nature of the study described in Chapter 4 was appropriate to explore relatively unknown factors of employee's perspective. Nevertheless, we need to set remarks on the findings of this thesis.

First, we need to take into account that Chapter 3 and 4 were based on Dutch samples. We therefore should be careful in drawing conclusion about other cultural contexts. That is, the constructs of leadership and conflict management may be differently perceived in other cultures (e.g., Kozan & Ilter, 1994). For example, in collectivistic cultures conflict parties are inclined to turn more easily to a third party for help and generally expect a more directive stance of them (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). At the same time, research suggests that employees from a collectivistic culture have a higher preference for interventions that help preserve and restore their relationship than employees from individualistic cultures (Giebels & Yang, 2005).

Secondly, we have to acknowledge the relatively small sample in Chapter 4, although the sample size were appropriate for our aims, which was to explore a relatively unattended subject in the organizational literature. However, it would be advisable to do follow-up research aiming for a larger representative sample. This will help to get a more refined insight into the expectations employees have of leaders' third-party behavior and whether and how this depends on the circumstances.

Another issue we would like to mention is that for the employees' conflicts we studied, we weren't able to include the perspective of the leaders. It would have been interesting to connect the viewpoints of the employees in our qualitative study to the perspective and experiences of the leaders involved in these conflicts as well.

Future research

The empirical studies in this thesis consist of samples that were suitable for our purposes, however the samples were relatively small and the findings need further confirmation and clarification in other contexts. Hence, we discuss here paths for future research in the area of leaders' third-party behavior. Avenues for future research particularly concern the multiple-angles approach and the specific organizational and relational context of the conflict. Based on the phenomena of perceptual difference (Gibson et al., 2009) and conflict asymmetry (Jehn et al., 2010) it is likely that differences in perceptions exist between employees and leaders about third-party behavior which will likely affect conflict outcomes. It would be interesting to explore whether the employee perceives behavior of the leader in a different way than the leader's intention. For example, a leader who thinks he solves the problem by arranging a meeting with all parties and searches for a solution, and the employees perceived this behavior as enforcing a solution. It would be valuable to determine how these differences emerge and how they affect the conflict process and outcomes.

We also plea for a more in-depth examination of the role of employees' expectations and how these differ from leaders' own role-concept with regards to third-party behavior. Are there essential differences and if so, how could leaders

and employees deal with these differences in order to prevent miscommunication or detrimental outcomes? Another subject that came up in this thesis and needs further clarification is the role of escalation in the process of leaders' third-party behavior. We found indications that escalation triggers employees to ask for leaders' third-party help, this needs to be confirmed and consequences for third-party behavior need to be examined. For example, employees involve leaders particularly in escalated conflicts, and this implies leaders have to be able to deal with these high demanding situations (Glasl, 1982). Is forcing a third-party behavior that leads to beneficial outcomes or at least diminishes detrimental outcomes as prior research suggests (Peterson, & Van Fleet, 2008; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1982)? Another question is whether, employees indeed expect the leader only to intervene in escalated conflicts. We assume that this is not the case; one can think of situations in which not-escalated conflicts wherein employees expect leaders' third-party behavior. For example, conflicts about simple work-related issues such as who should make minutes in a meeting could be a conflict that is easily solved by the leader by taking a decision. The existence of words-action mismatch of leaders in their third-party role is another interesting topic revealed by this thesis. However, it is unclear how this inconsistency emerges, how leaders perceive this, and what specific effects are on the conflict process and its outcomes. Future research can clarify these questions. A last avenue for future research is the quality of the solution that is reached in conflicts with leaders' third-party involvement. Research about the outcomes of third-party behavior till date has foremost focused on employees' perception of fairness, well-being and the quality of the relationships between employees and between leader and employee (see Chapter 2). Objective measures of the quality of the solution as well as objective measures of the effect on employees' performance are missing. It would be interesting how experts or peers in other organization rate the quality of solutions in order to contribute to the discussion of which behavior is most suitable in a certain situation. Examples for objective measures of conflict outcome are productivity, pace, quality of the work, or customer satisfaction. By examining these outcomes, future research helps to identify relevant outcomes to

the discussion of the most effective third-party behavior, given the circumstances and desired outcomes.

Conclusion

In contrast to the relevance of effective conflict management within organizations, the literature about leaders as third parties in employees' conflict is still limited. We found that the type of intervention indeed influences the relationship between employee conflicts and its outcomes. We also found that the three-type typology of avoiding, problem solving and forcing is promising in describing the large variety of possible behaviors. Furthermore, contingency factors such as the type of conflict employees experience are important to take into account by leaders in order to determine whether the three behaviors are ultimately detrimental or beneficial for the involved employees and even entire organizations. In this line of reasoning, we propose a model that includes contingency factors that are relevant for the emergence and outcomes of leaders' third-party behavior. We plead that contingency factors and their interrelations need to be approached systematically in order to define which third-party behavior is desirable in specific situations. The model is also helpful to guide future research. One issue that needs further consideration is the discrepancy between what leaders indicate they would do and what that actually do, at least from the perspective of the employees. Whether or not anticipated or intended, non-intervention seems to be an undesirable choice for leaders, employees, and organizations. All in all, the conclusion of this thesis is that employees' conflicts are clearly part of the leader's job, and that leaders need to be prepared for this task.

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