

Conflict

Conflict

➤ Conflict Defined

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

Transitions in Conflict Thought

Traditional View of Conflict

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

Causes:

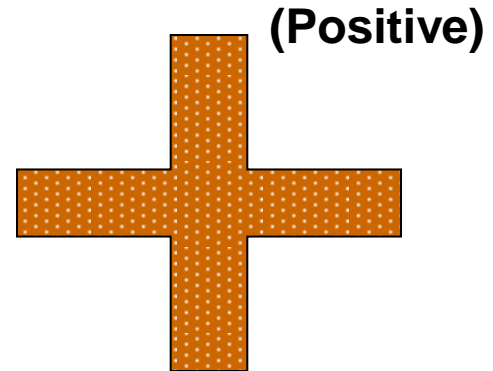
- Poor communication
- Lack of openness
- Failure to respond to employee needs



Functional versus Dysfunctional Conflict

Functional Conflict

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



(Negative)

Dysfunctional Conflict

Conflict that hinders group performance.

Types of Conflict

Task Conflict

Conflicts over content and goals of the work.

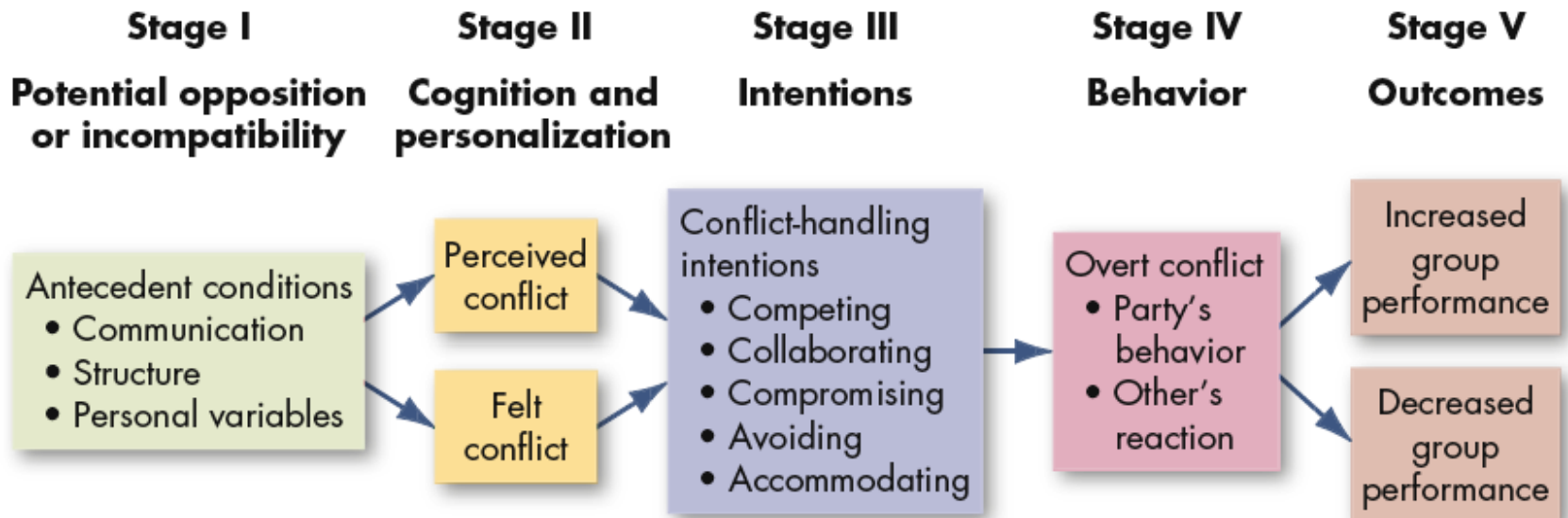
Relationship Conflict

Conflict based on interpersonal relationships.

Process Conflict

Conflict over how work gets done.

The Conflict Process



Stage I: Potential Opposition or Incompatibility

➤ **Communication**

- Semantic difficulties, misunderstandings, and “noise”

➤ **Structure**

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

➤ **Personal Variables**

- Differing individual value systems
- Personality types

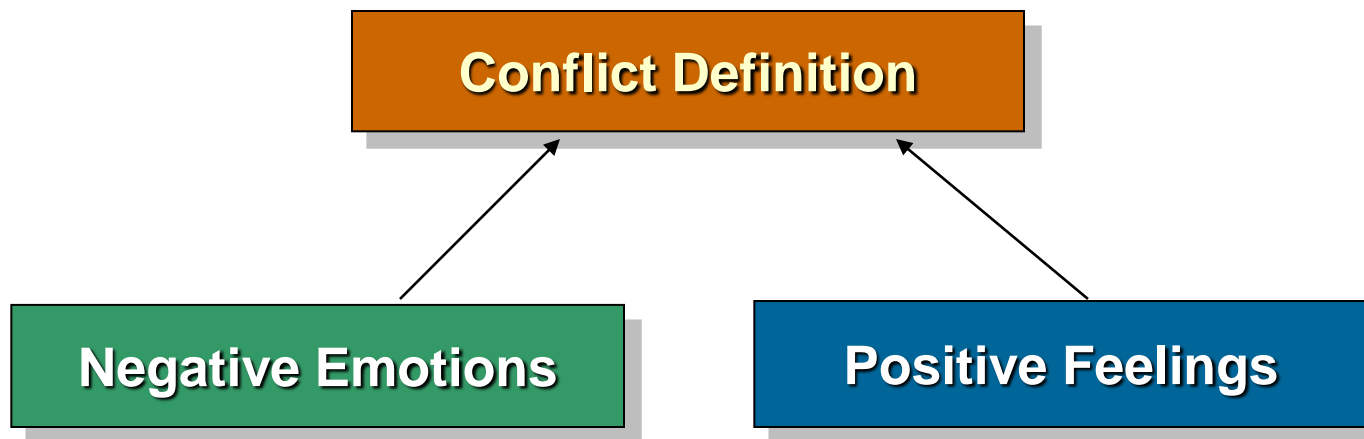
Stage II: Cognition and Personalization

Perceived Conflict

Awareness by one or more parties of the existence of conditions that create opportunities for conflict to arise.

Felt Conflict

Emotional involvement in a conflict creating anxiety, tenseness, frustration, or hostility.



Stage III: Intentions

Intentions

Decisions to act in a given way.

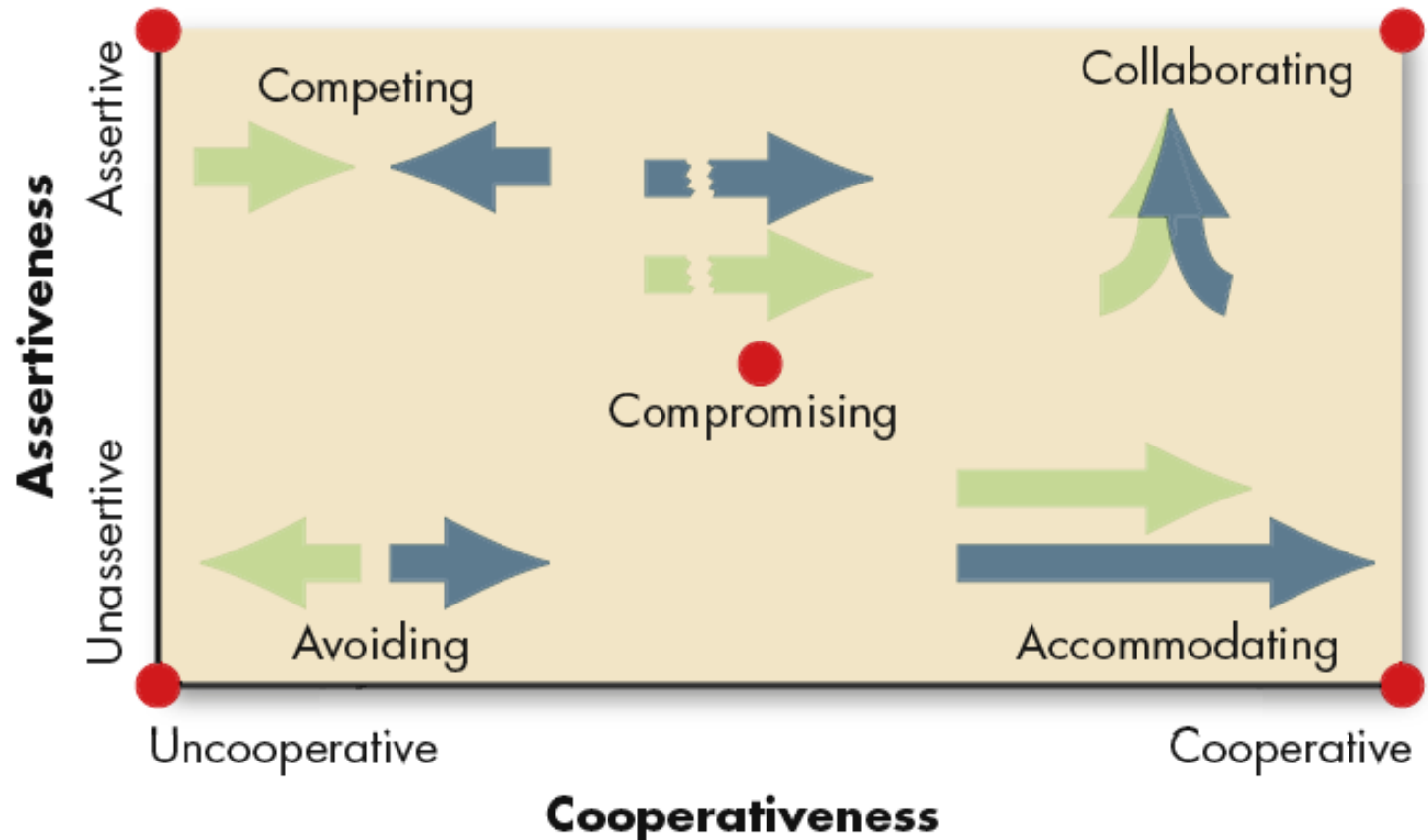
Cooperativeness:

- Attempting to satisfy the other party's concerns.

Assertiveness:

- Attempting to satisfy one's own concerns.

Dimensions of Conflict-Handling Intentions



Source: K. Thomas, "Conflict and Negotiation Processes in Organizations," in M.D. Dunnette and L.M. Hough (eds.), *Handbook of Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, 2nd ed., vol. 3 (Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1992), p. 668. With permission.

EXHIBIT 15-2

Stage III: Intentions (cont'd)

Competing

A desire to satisfy one's interests, regardless of the impact on the other party to the conflict.

Collaborating

A situation in which the parties to a conflict each desire to satisfy fully the concerns of all parties.

Avoiding

The desire to withdraw from or suppress a conflict.

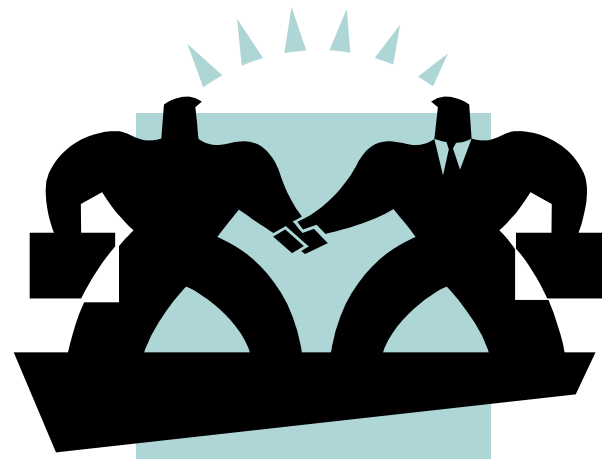
Stage III: Intentions (cont'd)

Accommodating

The willingness of one party in a conflict to place the opponent's interests above his or her own.

Compromising

A situation in which each party to a conflict is willing to give up something.



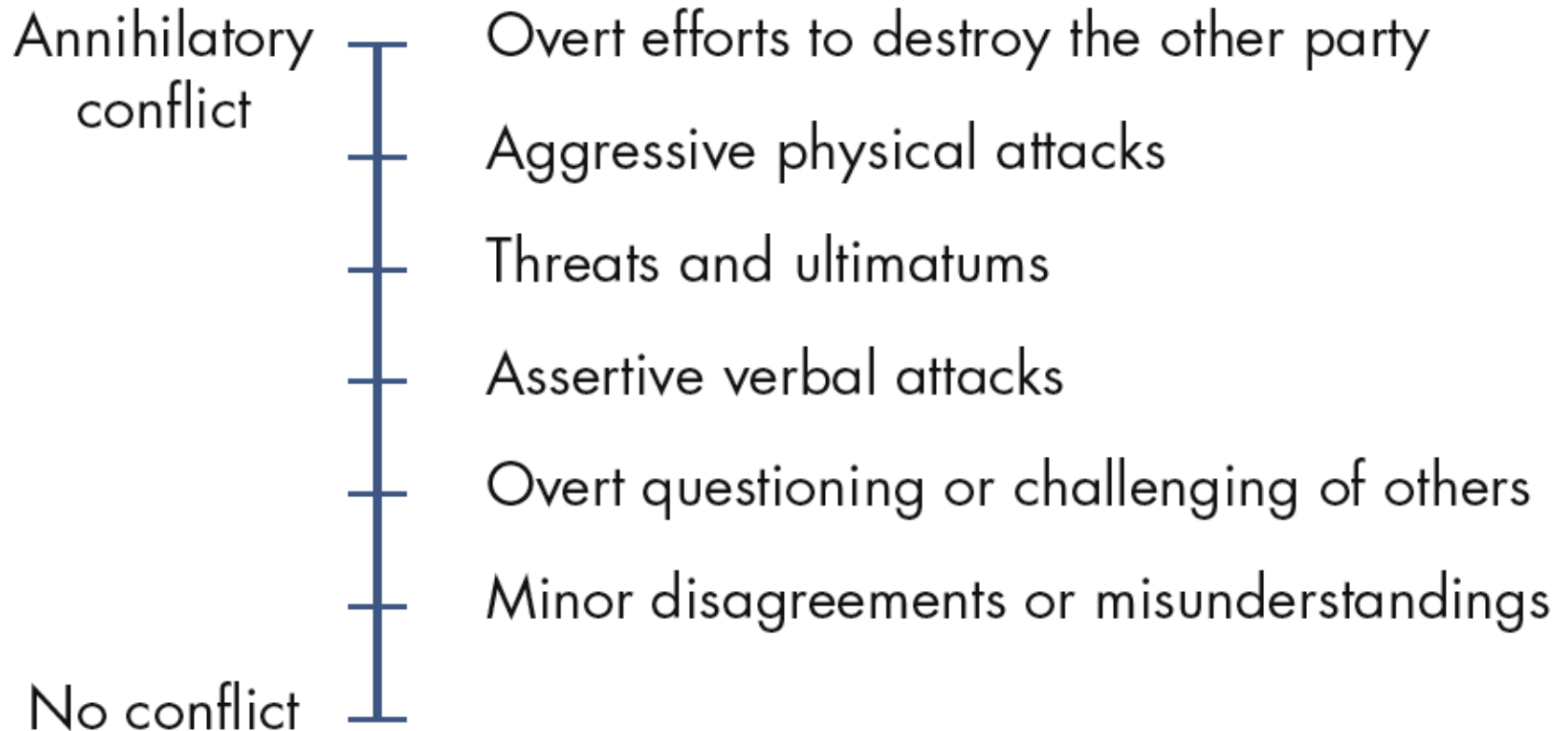
Stage IV: Behavior

Conflict Management

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



Conflict-Intensity Continuum



Source: Based on S.P. Robbins, *Managing Organizational Conflict: A Nontraditional Approach* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), pp. 93–97; and F. Glasi, “The Process of Conflict Escalation and the Roles of Third Parties,” in G.B.J. Bomers and R. Peterson (eds.), *Conflict Management and Industrial Relations* (Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff, 1982), pp. 119–40.

EXHIBIT 15-3

Conflict Management Techniques

Conflict Resolution Techniques

- Problem solving
- Superordinate goals
- Expansion of resources
- Avoidance
- Smoothing
- Compromise
- Authoritative command
- Altering the human variable
- Altering the structural variables

Source: Based on S. P. Robbins, *Managing Organizational Conflict: A Nontraditional Approach* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), pp. 59–89

EXHIBIT 15-4

Conflict Management Techniques

Conflict Resolution Techniques

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

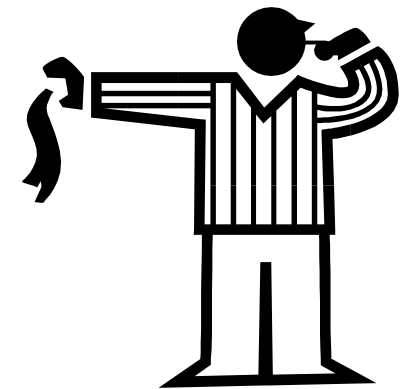


EXHIBIT 15-4 (cont'd)

Source: Based on S. P. Robbins, *Managing Organizational Conflict: A Nontraditional Approach* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1974), pp. 59–89

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Stage V: Outcomes

➤ **Functional Outcomes from Conflict**

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

➤ **Creating Functional Conflict**

- Reward dissent and punish conflict avoiders

Stage V: Outcomes

- **Dysfunctional Outcomes from Conflict**
 - Development of discontent
 - Reduced group effectiveness
 - Retarded communication
 - Reduced group cohesiveness
 - Infighting among group members overcomes group goals