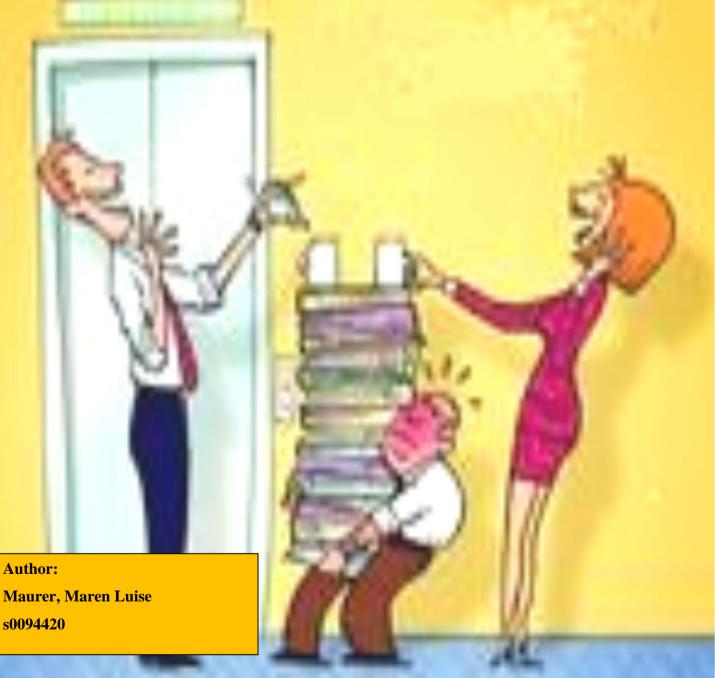**Why don't we agree on what we see?:**

The influence of status differences and need to belong on group members' perceptions of the level of intragroup conflict.

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Titel	Why don`t we agree on what we see?: The influence of status differences and need to belong on group members` perceptions of the level of intragroup conflict.
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Foreword

Abstract

Previous research about conflict in teams has provided the insight that different team members may perceive different amounts of conflict in their team, and, that this asymmetry in the perception of conflict had a significant negative influence on the performance and creativity of the team and the satisfaction and intention to stay of the individual team members.

In this study I investigated possible antecedents of conflict asymmetry on 20 teams who were employed at clinics and doctors' surgeries. I examined whether members of the same team perceive different amounts of conflict depending on their status in the group or their need to belong to the group. I found that status had an influence on the perceived level of conflict of each individual team member, in the manner that people higher in status think others see lower levels of task as well relationship conflict than they do. In addition, I found that frustration correlated significantly with perceived conflict such that people who are more frustrated perceive higher levels of conflict in their team compared to those who are less frustrated.

Content

1. Introduction

Teamwork is becoming standard in more and more life situations, particularly in organizations. It is unavoidable that now and then conflicts may arise within those teams. In this context Boulding (1963) defined conflict as perceived discrepancies or incompatibilities by a member of a certain group. By the time that one of the members or parties of a group is annoyed with or feels hindered by somebody else of the group conflict is existent (Van de Vliert, 1997). This phenomenon is an inevitable process that occurs when people work together (Giebels & Euwema, 2006).

Past research has suggested that conflict in work teams has negative effects, such as reduced team productivity and lower satisfaction (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). This is due to the fact that conflict in workgroups causes antipathy and tension (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Giebels & Euwema, 2006). In addition, this may be based on the fact that conflict can draw attention from group members, which may lead to a loss in work focus as well as a reduction in their cognitive capacity (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Giebels & Euwema, 2006). Empirical research confirmed the negative effect of a conflict on both team productivity and satisfaction, and the harmful effect to organizational functioning (Jehn, 1995; Pondy, 1967; Saavedra, Earley & Van Dyne, 1993). Furthermore, it is detected that conflict is negatively linked to the intention of a group member to stay in the group (Jehn, 1995). Thus, conflict can induce both material and non-material harm.

However, there is not only the perception that conflict is negative and harmful. In an ongoing debate about whether conflict can be beneficial or not, there is the assumption that under specific circumstances conflict in groups may also have certain advantages. For instance, empirical research has shown that conflict can yield to more creativity (Giebels & Euwema, 2006). Particularly task conflicts are associated with positive outcomes (Simons & Peterson, 2000). Jehn (1995) defined task conflicts as "disagreements among group members about the content of the tasks being performed, including differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions" (p.258). In more detail, task conflicts can lead to a higher quality of decision making (Janssen, Van de Vliert & Veenstra, 1999; Schulz-Hardt, Joachims & Frey, 2002) whereby the motivation and efficiency can be enhanced (De Dreu, 2005). Moreover, task conflicts can lead to a better relationship among the members of a workgroup (Giebels & Euwema, 2006).

In addition to task conflicts, relationship conflicts have been identified as another type of conflict. Relationship conflicts are "interpersonal incompatibilities among group members, which typically includes tension, animosity, and annoyance among members within a group" (Jehn, 1995, p. 258). Poor decision making is a frequent result of relationship conflict (Simons & Peterson, 2000). Other critical outcomes are that relationship conflict has shown to have negative effect on group satisfaction, the affinity of other group members and the intention to stay in the group (Jehn, 1995). However, a meta-analysis of De Dreu and Weingart (2003) on the associations between relationship conflicts, task conflicts, team performance and team member satisfaction did not find any major differences between a relationship and a task conflict. Yet it showed negative correlations between both relationship conflicts, team satisfaction and team performance and between task conflicts, team satisfaction and team performance. Thus it is likely that relationship conflicts as well as task conflicts may only under very particular circumstances lead to positive consequences. For instance, more recently it has been shown that trust mediates the effect of relationship conflict and partially the effect of task conflict on performance (Rispens, Greer & Jehn, 2007).

A major shortcoming of past research referring to conflicts in groups is that in many cases research was conducted based on the assumption that different members of the same group do all perceive the same amount of conflict. Consequently, past research disregarded the possibility that different members of a team may have different perceptions of the amount of conflict being actual existent in the team. However, more recent research on conflicts within groups outlines that conflict asymmetry within groups is frequently existent (Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Jehn & Rispens, 2008). Conflict asymmetry within groups means that members of one group have different perceptions of the level of intragroup conflict. Hence, they do not all perceive the same amount of conflict in the group (Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Jehn & Rispens, 2008).

In general, conflict asymmetry is considered to have a negative influence on group performance. During their research regarding management teams and production units (workgroups), Jehn and Chatman (2000) figured out that groups with members having different views on conflicts within the group are functioning worse than teams with less conflict asymmetry. In some instances it may even be less harmful when all group members perceive high levels of conflict than when they perceive different levels of conflict (Jehn & Chatman, 2000). In addition, Jehn, Rispens and Thatcher (in press) detected in a study on

organizational workgroups that conflict asymmetry leads to a reduction in group performance and creativity. In addition, Jehn et al. (in press) found that when individuals perceive more conflict than their group members reported, they performed worse and were less satisfied.

To summarize, recent studies have shown that conflict asymmetry has a negative influence on group performance. However, the reasons why there may be conflict asymmetry within groups and why members of the same group perceive different levels of conflicts intensiveness have hardly been researched and examined. Therefore it is important to have a more sophisticated look on the conflict level in groups and thus it is relevant to examine why group members do have different perceptions of the conflict level within their group.

Past research has found that situational (George & Jones, 2007; Walton & Dutton, 1969) as well as individual factors (Bono, Boles, Judge & Lauver, 2002) affect people's perceptions of conflict. For this reason I investigate both types of factors. Due to the fact that previous research has shown that one source of conflict, between both individuals and groups, is caused by differences and inconsistencies in the organizational status (George, et al., 2007; Walton, et al., 1969), I investigate whether differences in status, as a situational factor of influence, lead to conflict asymmetry in groups. Often, team leaders are not aware that their perception of the situation is not shared among all team members which may lead to different perceptions of conflict (Jehn, et al., in press). However, as mentioned above, not only situational factors seem to influence the perception of conflict, past research has also revealed that individual factors, such as differences in personality lead to different perceptions of conflict (Bono, et al., 2002).

Personality in this context refers on the one hand to the tendency of a person to enhance one's own status. In previous intragroup conflict research it has been found out that in groups with members being highly engaged in status self-enhancement the level of conflict affecting the entire group was higher than in groups with non-status-enhancers (Anderson, Beer, Chatman, Srivastava & Spataro, 2006). Status self-enhancement means that individuals award themselves a higher status within a group than the group concedes to them (Anderson, et al., 2006; Anderson, Ames & Gosling, 2008). Thus it may be the case that individuals who enhance their status share not the perception of the conflict level with those who do not enhance their status.

On the other hand personality in this context refers to the *'Need to belong'*. Need to belong is an intrinsic motivation considering the desire of people to belong to a group, as well

as the longing for being socially accepted and acknowledged by others which is not equally developed for everyone (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Individuals with a high need to belong are generally better in identifying and accurately decoding verbal and non-verbal social cues and they have, in general, a greater overall empathic accuracy (Pickett, Gardner & Knowles, 2004). These facts may have an influence on the perception of conflict of the individuals high in need to belong.

Consequently, it is important to study the influence of both the differences in status and in personality of the different group members with regard to their perception of the conflict level within the group.

1.1 Status differences and perceptions of the intragroup level of conflict

Status is defined as "the prominence, respect, and influence individuals enjoy in the eyes of others" (Anderson, et al., 2006, p.1094). Moreover, status is a social role which can provide individuals with power (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). In this context power is explained as "the ability to provide or withhold valued resources or administer punishments" (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002, p.1362). One important characteristic of power is that it is dependent on the context, as it is typically bound to a certain group or relationship (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). Just like power, status can provide individuals with the possibility to have control over resources and punishments. Thus, persons having high status within a group can commend or convince other group members to exclude other individuals from the group (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002) and they are in general considered to be more important and influential than individuals with a lower status (Anderson et al., 2006). Furthermore, status and power covary in natural settings (Boldry & Gaertner, 2006), thus high-status persons are anticipated to have power on the basis of their role (Lee & Tiedens, 2001). By reason of these facts, I emanate in this study that the characteristics of high-power individuals also apply to high-status individuals.

Research has also shown that people owning high power (in conflict situations) are more expected to act in compliance with their desires than people with less power (Van Kleef & Côté, 2007). Additionally, people with high power have a greater predisposition to express their true feelings and attitudes, as well as encountering more positive than negative emotions and appreciating more rewards and fewer threats than low-power individuals (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). Furthermore, previous research exposed that people with a higher level of

power have a greater agreement between their inner experience and their outward expression of emotion (Keltner, Van Kleef, Chen & Kraus, in press). They are more in favour to express and show their attitudes and disagreements during a discussion to others. In opposition to people with high power in a group, people with low power will rather repress their true attitudes and opinions (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). There may be different reasons for this phenomenon. On the one hand, people with low power have in general rarely the possibility to speak, but on the other hand even when they get the chance to make a statement they often keep their opinions to themselves (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). So individuals with low power do also frequently alter their behaviour with respect to individuals having more power. Thus it seemed that their behaviour may be more ambiguous which may lead to a higher liability to conflict.

Hence, individuals with lower status and power do more often hold back their true feelings, attitudes and disagreements with others than high-power and high-status individuals. Therefore, low-power individuals are more likely to perceive negative emotions, such as anger, more frequently. This higher perception of negative emotions and the repression of feelings, attitudes and disagreements may lead thereto that group members with low status and power perceive more conflict than people with high status and more power, due to the fact that their inner experiences and their outward expressions do not match very well. And that by contrast, high-status people have a more balanced character and feel less conflict, as their inner experiences and their outward expressions do match much better. In addition, individuals with low power seem to pay more regard to high-power individuals and recover for this reason more information to make exacter social judges than high-power individuals (Anderson, et al., 2002). Thus it may be possible that they perceive therefore higher levels of conflict than high-power individuals.

Pearson and Porath (2005) mentioned that status does also impact incivility. They found that people with high power have more possibilities to behave in an uncivil way and to get out of it without punishment. High-status individuals can for example cut lower status individuals off in their tasks or dialogues, keep them waiting or talk to them in a dismissive tone - without apparently being punished for their behaviour (Pearson & Porath, 2005). So, a high status can allow a group member to humiliate individuals with lower status (Pearson, Andersson & Porath, 2000). Due to the feeling of helplessness by the low-status individuals to do anything against this uncivil behaviour of higher-status individuals and the paternalism by

higher-status individuals, it is likely that lower-status individuals perceive in this situations a higher level of conflict and frustration.

Powerful people embrace the goals of their organizations to legitimate and enhance their power and therefore they concentrate their attention only to those things that help to achieve those goals and ignore the others (Overbeck & Park, 2006). This selective attention and selective focus can lead to the situation that powerful people stereotype others and it can further lead to an inattentive social advertence which is indicated by cognitive sloth and shortcuts (De Dreu & Van Kleef, 2004). This behaviour leads powerful people to be less willing to listen carefully to the information of other group members (De Dreu & Van Kleef, 2004). Hence, there is a high probability that this aspect of inattention by higher-status persons leads thereto that low-status individuals perceive higher levels of conflict due to the reason that their needs and comments get disregarded by high-status individuals.

To summarize, it is less likely that individuals with low status will express their true feelings, attitudes and disagreements to other members of the group than high-status individuals. Low-status individuals do also generally perceive more negative emotions. Furthermore, there is a higher likelihood that they become victims of uncivil behaviour than high-status individuals and that their needs and comments will often be disregarded by higher-status individuals. Over and above they seem to pay more attention to others than high-power individuals and have therefore more information about them to make more precise social judgments. These facts may lead thereto that low-status and low-power individuals perceive higher levels of conflict in their group than individuals with a high status and more power.

Hypothesis 1: Group members with a low status (power) perceive higher levels of conflict in their group than group members with a high status.

1.2 Status self-enhancers and perceptions of the intragroup level of conflict

After having worked together for a certain time, some people start to feel superior and think they are more important than others to an organization's operation and consequently they believe that their status and/or prestige is higher than the status and/or prestige of the others they are working with (Duffy, Shaw & Stark, 2000; George & Jones, 2008). *Status self-enhancers* are individuals that have a more positive and higher perception of their own status within a group than this group actually concedes as true (Anderson, et al., 2006; Anderson, et

al., 2008). These, sometimes unrealistic, over-optimistic self-perceptions can emerge from too positive illusions that people have about themselves (Taylor & Brown, 1988). According to the positive illusions perspective, positive self-perceptions, overstated perceptions of control and unrealistic optimism vary from person to person, hence distinguishing human thought and behaviour. Nevertheless, these positive illusions are important for the mental health of a person, which may lead to creative and productive work and to happiness (Taylor & Brown, 1988). However, this perceived higher status of some people can also result in little consideration for the needs of others (George & Jones, 2008).

In previous research on intergroup conflict it has been found that the level of conflict affecting the entire group was higher in groups with members being highly engaged in status self-enhancement (Anderson et al., 2006). Furthermore, it was detected that conflicts in groups with high status self-enhancers may lead to lower group performance as a higher conflict level causes a disproportionate and disrupted group environment, which makes it more difficult to perform in an effective and efficient way (Anderson et al., 2006; Anderson, Ames & Gosling, 2008). However, it has to be remarked in this context that it may be that the above mentioned higher level of conflict is only perceived by some members of the group and not by the entire group.

Referring to the point of view that many status self-enhancers are calling unjustified for social privileges and exercise misappropriate control over other team members, there is the assumption that those people who enhance their social status are likely to be rejected by their group. Their behaviour is regarded by the other group members as a threat (Anderson et al., 2006). Thus, status self-enhancers are less liked by the other team members and are, consequently, less integrated in the group (Anderson et al., 2006). It is expected that team members who do not engage in status self-enhancement generally perceive higher levels of conflict than status self-enhancers. This is based on the fact that status self-enhancers often disregard the needs of other team members and frequently take advantage of social privileges that the others consider as unjustified (Anderson et al., 2006). Therefore, harsh reactions and low social acceptance are a common consequence (Anderson et al., 2006). In addition, many people who engage in status self-enhancement command overly positive self-evaluations and evoke distancing interpersonal reactions by other people due to negatively evaluated behaviours as the expression of hostility and exhibiting an awkward interpersonal style (Colvin, Block & Funder, 1995). Moreover, status self-enhancement is positively related to

narcissism, thus, people who engage in status self-enhancement engage also in narcissism (Anderson et al., 2008; Colvin et al., 1995). Narcissism is defined by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental disorders (1994) "as a pervasive pattern of grandiosity, self-focus, and self-importance" (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001, p.177). Hence, people who engage in narcissism are often inured to other emotions, desires and needs (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Thus, they show less emphatic accuracy and interpersonal sensitivity (Ames & Kammrath, 2004; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Further, they demand a particular attendance of the other people but are not inclined to return the accommodations of others. People who are narcissistic are also not likely to be empathetic but rip others interpersonal off (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Due to the fact that status self-enhancers are frequently narcissistic and therefore rather insensitive with regard to the emotions of others, their desires and needs, it is likely that self-enhancers are not aware of provoking other group members with their behaviour. Consequently, it is highly probable that they feel no or less conflict. In contrast, people who do not enhance their status often feel irritated and provoked by the fact that their needs are disregarded and that many status self-enhancers call for unjustified social privileges. As a result, it is thought that they perceive higher levels of conflict than status self-enhancers.

Due to these facts, I expect that group members who are not or less engaged in status self-enhancement do perceive higher levels of conflict than group members who are engaged in status self-enhancement.

Hypothesis 2: Status self-enhancers perceive lower levels of conflict in their groups than people who do not enhance their status.

1.3 'Need to belong' and perceptions of the intragroup level of conflict

The *'Need to belong'* is a basic human predisposition which is formed to different extents for different people. It is "a pervasive drive to form and maintain at least a minimum quantity of lasting, positive, and significant interpersonal relationships" (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p.497). Generally, people, to whom it is important to belong to a certain group, have a high need to belong and they are more empathetic to interpersonal cues of people with whom they interact. This is in contrast to people with a low need to belong (Pickett, Gardner, Knowles, 2004). Moreover, in order to meet their high need to belong, it is expected that people with a high need to belong are more cooperative than people with a low need to belong. This assumption is supported by the study of De Cremer and Leonardelli (2003) who

actually observed that people with a high need to belong are more cooperative in groups than people with a low need to belong. This is also in line with the thesis of Baumeister and Leary (1995) who suggested that a consequence of belongingness needs is that "the apparent possibility of social attachments seems to shift people away from the self-oriented mode toward a more cooperative, collectively beneficial mode of responses" (p.519).

Pickett, Gardner and Knowles (2004) showed that people with a high need to belong do pay more attention to other members in their group. Thus a high need to belong is linked with a greater interpersonal sensitivity, due to the fact that individuals high in need to belong adapted themselves constantly to social cues which signify acceptance or exclusion (Pickett et al., 2004). Consequently, people with a high need to belong are generally better in identifying and accurately decoding verbal and non-verbal social cues and in having a greater overall empathic accuracy (Pickett et al., 2004). Therefore, there is a high probability that these people directly realize upcoming or existing problems.

People with a high need to belong are likely to have a stronger network of close social ties (for example co-workers) than people low in need to belong (Brehm, Kassin & Fein, 2002). Hence, there is the assumption that based on this stronger social network people with a high need to belong are usually happier and more satisfied with their life (Brehm, Kassin & Fein, 2002; Diener, Shu, Lucas & Smith, 1999). Coney and Downey (1991) suggested that low social support may „often signify the presence of a negative, conflictive relationship" (p.412) and vice versa, thus that high support may imply the lack of conflict in a stronger relationship. This opinion was supported by research results of Abbey, Abramis and Caplan (1985) who found negative correlations between social support and social conflict. Additionally, people high in need to belong are in general more satisfied with their life, and, may even be healthier than people low in need to belong (Brehm, Kassin & Fein, 2002). Another reason for the better health condition of people high in need to belong may be based on the fact that stronger social ties and a higher perceived support, which people high in need to belong have, influence health and mental health positively (Thoits, 1995). I think that people high in need to belong perceive conflict not as intense as people low in need to belong, due to the fact that they are in general more satisfied and have stronger social support by others which imply, according to Coney and Downey (1991), less conflict.

The following hypothesis is based on the assumptions that people high in need to belong are both more cooperative among each other and more sensitive to social cues. They

usually do also pay more attention to the mood of other group members. Those characteristics may possibly allow them to reduce the negative consequences of conflicts and to perceive lower levels of conflict. Further, people who are in general more satisfied with their life, who have stronger social ties and who are more agreeable, as people high in need to belong, perceive conflict often not as strong as people who are not satisfied and have no strong social ties.

> *Hypothesis 3a: Group members high in need to belong perceive lower levels of conflict in their group than group members low in need to belong.*

However, it may be the other way around, thus that people high in need to belong generally perceive higher levels of conflict in their group than people low in need to belong. This may be due to the fact that people high in need to belong are more sensitive to social cues than people low in need to belong (Pickett et al., 2004). This may lead thereto that they perceive more and earlier conflict than people who are lower in need to belong and who are often more insensitive to others' vocal tones and facial emotions (Pickett et al., 2004). Thus it may be possible that people high in need to belong recognize earlier that there exist conflicts than people low in need to belong who are not as sensitive to social cues as people high in need to belong.

In addition, due to the fact that people high in need to belong may feel internally conflicted about their personal self-interest and their belongingness to their group (De Cremer & Leonardelli, 2003) they may also perceive a higher over-all conflict level, than people low in need to belong.

> *Hypothesis 3b: Group members high in need to belong perceive higher levels of conflict in their group than group members low in need to belong.*

1.4 'Need to belong' and the mediation of frustration on the perceptions of the intragroup level of conflict

People with a high need to belong incline to cooperate more than people with a low need to belong and this tendency to cooperate may lead to frustration (De Cremer et al., 2003). This frustration may arise due to the fact that people with a high need to belong may feel an inner dispute between their belongingness to their group and their personal self-interest (De Cremer et al., 2003; Komorita & Parks, 1994). They want, on the one hand, to act

in agreement with their high need to belong, on the other hand Komorita et al. (1994) showed that all people have the tendency, mainly in large groups, to distance oneself from the group and to settle for their personal self-interest. Thus this felt dispute can lead to frustration, which is in one line with presumption that when one's goals or motives are threatened people become frustrated (Frijda, 1994). Another reason why people who cooperate out of a high need to belong may be more frustrated, is that they want the cooperation to be mutual. Yet, people high in need to belong cannot be sure of the cooperation of the other team members (De Cremer & Leonardelli, 2003). Thus, if other team members do not cooperate, people high in need to belong may feel disapproved of the others and in addition they last with less support (De Cremer & Leonardelli, 2003). These things may lead to a disbelief about the will of the other team members to retaliate.

These arguments bring about the assumption that frustration can be a mediator between a high need to belong and perceived conflict in groups. Thus, people high in need to belong are more likely to feel frustrated on the basis of their decisions to cooperate than people low in need to belong, and this higher level of frustration may be the reason why they perceive higher levels of conflict in the workgroup than those low in need to belong.

> *Hypothesis 4: Group members high in need to belong are more frustrated which is why they are more sensitive to perceive higher levels of conflict in their group than group members low in need to belong.*
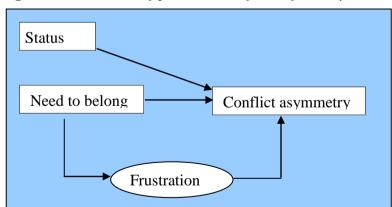
Figure 1 *Antecedents of perceived conflict asymmetry.*

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Participants were people employed at a cosmetic clinic, a clinic or in a doctor's surgery. The sample consisted of 68 participants, that is 82% of the participants who were written to. In total 11 cosmetic clinics, seven clinics and two doctors' surgeries took part which is 81% of the clinics who were contacted. Every cosmetic clinic and every doctor's surgery were seen as one group, so that the hypotheses were tested on the members of 20 workgroups. On average the participants were 40.08 years old (SD = 12.01 years) and 81% of the sample were women. 90% of the participants were German, 3% were Turks, 2% were Italian and 6% had another Nationality. The participants worked in all areas of the cosmetic clinics and doctors' surgeries, thus as doctors (n = 14), nurses (n = 11) and medical secretaries (n = 23) or as something other (n = 20). The average size of the named workgroups was 7.18 (SD = 3.75) and the named groups` size ranged from 3 to 20 people per group. The participants worked on average 5.21 years in their team (SD = 5.42) and they worked on average 6.50 years on their workplace (SD = 6.30). The highest education with a diploma is for 35% the „Realschulabschluss", for 21% the „Abitur", for 19% the „Fachhochschulabschluß" and for 24% the university diploma.

2.2 Procedure

Cosmetic clinics, clinics and doctors' surgeries in the whole of Germany were contacted via letters. In the first step 19 cosmetic clinics, which work together on one project, were contacted. Due to the fact that only 11 cosmetic clinics agreed to participate, in the second step other clinics and doctors' surgeries were written to, until 20 clinics agreed to participate. Reasons, why those clinics were requested, were that their teams had more than two team members, that the team members perceive themselves as a team and that they act within a related work environment. When they agreed to participate in the study, they received the nine-page questionnaires via the post. Every clinic and doctor surgery received the questionnaires for the whole group, but every participant sent his/her questionnaire back individually to ensure the anonymity of the participants' answers.

2.3 Measures

Participants were requested for filling in the questionnaire and to name their initials and the name of their clinic or doctor's surgery to enable the statistical analysis.

Participants` ***need to belong*** was estimated with the 10-item Need to Belong scale from Leary, Kelly, Cottrell and Schreindorfer (2005). Participants had to indicate how strongly they agreed with 10 different statements (e.g. „Being apart from my friends for long periods of time does not bother me.") on an scale ranging from 1 = „Strongly disagree" to 5 = „Strongly agree". The items were summed up, after reverse-scoring of the necessary items, to get one need to belong scale, whereby a lower score stands for a lower need to belong (Cronbach`s alpha = 0.78).

To measure *status*, the participants appraised their self-perceived status in their workgroup with the two items „How much status (i.e., respect, prominence) do you have among people in your workgroup?" and „How much power and influence do you have among people in your workgroup?" (Cronbach`s alpha = 0.87) (Anderson et al., 2006). In addition, the two items correlate significantly at the $p < 0.01$ level ($r = 0.79$). After that they judged the status of every other team member with the item „How much status (i.e., respect, prominence) does X have among people in the team?" whereby X referred to each of the other team members. Participants had to name the initials of the other team members and to write the judged status of every team member after his/her initials. All items were rated from 1 = „Very little" to 7 = „A lot".

After that, the ***status enhancement*** was calculated. Therefore the own rated status of the individuals („How much status (i.e., respect, prominence) do you have among people in your workgroup?") was compared with the perceived status of the individuals by the other team members („How much status (i.e., respect, prominence) does X have among people in the team?"). Thus the peer (team members)-rated averaged status was compared with the individual-self-rated status. If there was no difference between the individual-self-rated status and the peer (team members)-rated averaged status, individuals were seen as non-status-enhancers. If there was a difference of 0.5 or more between individual-self-rated status and the peer (team members)-rated averaged status, individuals were seen as status self-enhancers. And if the difference between individual-self-rated status and the peer (team members)-rated averaged status was – 0.5 or less, individuals were seen as status self-reducers, thus as people who appreciated their own status lower than the other team members. Those terms were

anchored by 1 = „Status self-reducer", 2 = „Non-status-enhancer" and 3 = „Status self-enhancer".

The level of ***frustration*** of each team member was measured by two items of the frustration scale from Peters, O`Connor & Rudolf (1980). But in contrast to Peters et al. I asked about the frustration in the workgroup and not about the frustration on the job (e.g. „Working in this group is a very frustrating experience."). The items were anchored by 1 = „Not at all" and 7 = „Very much" and the responses on the items were added up so that a low score indicates less frustration. Cronbach`s alpha was excellent with $\alpha = 0.85$.

Task conflict and ***relationship conflict*** were measured with Jehn`s (1995) ten-item Likert-type scale of intra-group conflict. Participants rated each of the ten questions from 1 = „None" to 7 = „ A lot". Six of the ten questions measured task conflict (e.g., „How much friction is there among members in your work unit") and four items measured relationship conflict (e.g., „How much are are personality clashes evident in your team"), which were then summed up for each conflict type. Cronbach`s alpha was excellent for task conflict ($\alpha = 0.91$) as well as for relationship conflict ($\alpha = 0.88$). Factor analysis with oblique rotation showed clearly two different factors with eigenvalue over 1 and factor loadings of 0.73 and more. Thus the two factors satisfied the differentiation in two conflict types.

In addition to task and relationship conflict, the perceived directional asymmetry of each participant for task and relationship conflict was measured, using items from Jehn`s and Greer's (2007) scale of perceived asymmetry. The items were anchored by 1 = „complete disagree" and 7 = „completely agree". Three items measured the ***directional (other) task conflict asymmetry*** (e.g., „Other team members experience more work-related disagreements existing within this team than I do.") and three items measured the ***directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry*** (e.g., „Other team members experience more relationship-related conflict than I do."). The conflict asymmetry was measured on the basis of the individual level, thus how each participant experienced the level of conflict and not how the team perceived the conflict level. Cronbach`s alpha for directional task conflict asymmetry was 0.91 and for directional relationship conflict 0.94. The two factors satisfied also the differentiation in two conflict types due to the fact that factor analysis with oblique rotation showed two different factors with eigenvalue over 1 and factor loadings of 0.61 and more.

Control variables. It was controlled for gender and group size due to the fact that past research has showed that gender as well as the size of the group may have an influence on

individuals' perception of conflict (Pelled, 1996; Hjerto, 2006). Group size was measured by asking the individuals to report the number of their group by filling in a blank.

2.4 Analyses

All hypotheses were tested at the individual level using hierarchical linear regressions. All analyses were done with SPSS 15.0 (SPSS 15.0 for Windows, 2007) and were done separately for task conflict and relationship conflict. Furthermore, all hypotheses were not only tested on Jehn's (1995) items of task and relationship conflict but also on directional (other) task and relationship conflict asymmetry. Hypothesis 4, the mediation hypotheses, was tested by means of the three steps of Baron and Kenny (1986). Firstly, the impact of the independent variable on the dependent variable was researched. Secondly, the impact of the mediator on the dependent variable was researched and thirdly, it was researched if the impact of the independent variable is diminished or dissolved when supervising for the mediator.

3. Results

Table 1 shows the correlations between the variables at the individual level of analyses. In general, status was negatively correlated with task and relationship conflict and significant with directional (other) task conflict asymmetry. Need to belong was marginally correlated with task and relationship conflict and was positively correlated with directional (other) task conflict asymmetry as well as directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry. The relationships between status and conflict, and need to belong and conflict are complex and are examined in more detail in the hierarchical linear regression analyses. Note however, that frustration is significantly and positively correlated with task and relationship conflict and with directional (other) task and relationship conflict. Thus it seems that frustration has an influence on the perception of conflict. In addition, frustration was significantly and negatively correlated with status.

Table 1 *Intercorrelations between Subscales.*

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	-	.23	.09	.10	-.01	-.08	-.48**	.05	.21
2. Group size		-	.26*	.17	.24*	.27*	-.23	.14	.57**
3. Task conflict			-	.42**	.42**	.40**	-.11	-.02	.47**
4. Relationship conflict				-	.35**	.29*	-.14	-.01	.35**
5. Asy. task conflict					-	.69**	-.33**	.15	.38**
6. Asy. Relationship conflict						-	.19	.22	.33**
7. Status °							-	-.25*	-.48**
8. Need to belong								-	.12
9. Frustration									-

Note. Gender was coded as 1 = „male" and 2 = „female"; °Own status perception.
* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$

In hypothesis 1 it was predicted that people with a low status perceive more conflict in their group than people with a high status.

Thus, I first regressed status on Jehns (1995) task and relationship conflict items. The results of the hierarchical regression analyses, when controlled for gender and group size, were not significant. Status showed no significant influence on neither the perception of task conflict ($\beta_{tc} = -.05$, $p > .05$) nor relationship conflict ($\beta_{rc} = -.10$, $p > .05$) (see also Table 2). Thus there seems no support for hypothesis 1 in the first test.

Table 2 *Hierarchical Regression Results for task conflict (TC) and relationship conflict (RC).*

Variable	Status			
	Model 1		**Model 2**	
	β TC	β RC	β TC	β RC
Controls				
Gender	.08	.195	.01	.04
Group size	.08*	.06	.08	.05
Main effects				
Status			-.05	-.10
R^2	.07	.03	.07	.04
R^2 change	.07	.03	.00	.01
F	2.31	1.11	1.57	.90
F change	2.31	1.11	.15	.48

* $p < .05$
** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Additionally, I tested whether status affects directional (other) task conflict asymmetry and directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry as dependent variables. I again controlled for gender and group size, which were added in the first step of the regression analyses. In the second step I entered status, and the results show that high status decreased the perception of directional (other) conflict for task conflict ($\beta_{dtc} = -.43$, $p < .01$) and relationship conflict ($\beta_{drc} = -.29$, $p < .10$) (see also Table 3). Thus according to these results high status individuals think others see less conflict than they do, particularly when conflict is about tasks.

Table 3 *Hierarchical Regression Results for directional (other) task conflict asymmetry (DTC) and directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry (DRC).*

| | Status | | | |
| | Model 1 | | Model 2 | |
Variable	β DTC	β DRC	β DTC	β DRC
Controls				
Gender	-.24	-.59	-.88	-1.02
Group size	.096**	.12 **	.08	.11
Main effects				
Status			-.43***	-.29 *
R^2	.06	.09	.18	.14
R^2 change	.06	.09 **	.12***	.05 *
F	2.14	3.33 **	4.75***	3.45 **
F change	2.14	3.33 **	9.41***	3.45 *

* $p < .10$
** $p < .05$
***$p < .01$
****$p < .001$

Hypothesis 2 predicted that status self-enhancers perceive less conflict in their groups than people who do not enhance their status. Two analyses were done, firstly status self-enhancers (n = 14) were compared with non-status self-enhancers and status self-reducers summarised (n = 38) and secondly status self-enhancers (n = 14) were compared with status self-reducers (n = 19). Both types of independent-sample t-test analyses were done separately for task and relationship conflict as well as for directional (other) task conflict asymmetry and directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry.

There seemed no significant differences between status self-enhancers and non-status self-enhancers and status self-reducers summarised as you can see in Table 4. Even between status self-enhancers and status self-reducers there were no significant differences (see Table 5). As clearly shown in Table 5, status self-enhancers on average perceived less conflict than status self-reducers. However, the difference is not strong enough to be significant, thus there is no support that status self-enhancers perceive less conflict in their groups than people who do not enhance their status.

Table 4 *Independent Samples T-Test for status self-enhancers (SE) and non-status self-enhancers + status self-reducers (NSE).*

	Mean			
Variable	**SE**	**NSE**	**t**	**p**
Task conflict	3.44	2.97	-1.26	.11
Relationship conflict	2.20	2.18	-.05	.48
Directional (other) task conflict	3.07	2.98	-.17	.43
Directional (other) relationship conflict 37	3.05	2.90	-.299	.38

  * $p < .05$
 ** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Table 5 *Independent Samples T-Test for status self-enhancers (SE) and status self-reducers (SR).*

	Mean			
Variable	**SE**	**NSE**	**t**	**p**
Task conflict	3.44	3.23	-.48	.32
Relationship conflict	2.20	2.33	.263	.40
Directional (other) task conflict	3.07	3.42	.59	.28
Directional (other) relationship conflict (n =18nse)	3.05	3.31	.46	.32

  * $p < .05$
 ** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Remember that hypothesis 3 predicted two different possibilities. Hypothesis 3a predicted that people high in need to belong perceive less conflict in their group than people low in need to belong. In contrast, hypothesis 3b predicted that people high in need to belong perceive more conflict in their group than people low in need to belong. When tested with Jehn`s (1995) task and relationship conflict items as dependent variables and controlled for gender and group size, the results of the hierarchical regression analyses were not significant. Need to belong showed no significant influence on neither task conflict ($\beta_{tc} = -.12$, *ns*) nor relationship conflict ($\beta_{rc} = -.08$, *ns*) (see also Table 6).

Table 6 *Hierarchical Regression Results for task conflict (TC) and relationship conflict (RC).*

	Need to belong			
	Model 1		Model 2	
Variable	β TC	β RC	β TC	β RC
Controls				
Gender	.08	.195	.09	.197
Group size	.08*	.06	.08*	.06
Main effects				
Need to belong			-.12	-.08
R^2	.07	.03	.07	.04
R^2 change	.07	.03	.00	.00
F	2.31	1.11	1.61	.76
F change	2.31	1.11	.25	.10

   * $p < .05$
  ** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

Additionally, I investigated whether need to belong was related to directional (other) task conflict asymmetry and directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry. When controlled for gender and group size, which were added in the first and second step of the regression analyses, there was a small, but not significant tendency towards the prediction in hypothesis 3b. Thus a high need to belong seems to increase the perception of conflict. But need to belong showed neither a significant effect concerning directional (other) task conflict asymmetry ($\beta_{dtc} = .26$, *ns*) nor directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry ($\beta_{drc} = .45$, *ns*) (see Table 7). Thus the results of the regression analyses supported neither hypothesis 3a nor hypothesis 3b.

When regarding more detailed the need to belong scale it is obvious that there is a strong tendency in this sample to score high in the need to belong scale, this may be a reason that need to belong showed no influence on neither the conflict scale of Jehn (1995) nor on directional (other) task conflict asymmetry and directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry.

Table 7 *Hierarchical Regression Results for directional (other) task conflict asymmetry (DTC) and directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry (DRC).*

	Need to belong			
	Model 1		Model 2	
Variable	β DTC	β DRC	β DTC	β DRC
Controls				
Gender	-.24	-.59	-.24	-.59
Group size	.096*	.12	.09*	.11*
Main effects				
Need to belong			.26	.45
R^2	.06	.09	.08	.13
R^2 change	.06	.09 *	.01	.03
F	2.14	3.33 *	1.73	3.08 *
F change	2.14	3.33*	.94	2.43

   * $p < .05$
  ** $p < .01$
*** $p < .001$

The mediation hypothesis, people high in need to belong are more frustrated which is why they are more sensitive to perceive more conflict in their group than people low in need to belong (H4), was tested by means of the three steps of Baron and Kenny (1986). In the first step a relationship between need to belong and perceptions of task and relationship conflict needs to be established. However, as noted above, need to belong had no significant influence on task conflict ($\beta_{tc} = -.05$, *ns*) and relationship conflict ($\beta_{rc} = -.03$, *ns*). In addition, no effect was found between need to belong and directional (other) conflict asymmetry ($\beta_{dtc} = .33$, *ns*) nor on directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry ($\beta_{drc} = .54$, *ns*). Hence, the mediation hypothesis was not confirmed. However, a significant influence positive effect of frustration was found on task conflict ($\beta_{tc} = .42$, $p > .001$) as well as relationship conflict ($\beta_{rc} = .35$, $p > .01$).

In addition, frustration positively affected directional (other) task conflict asymmetry ($\beta_{dtc} = .39$, $p > .01$) as well directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry ($\beta_{drc} = .37$, $p > .01$).

These non-significant results may be also, as mentioned above, due to the fact, that there are hardly any respondents who score low on the need to belong scale. Thus those results do not fully confirm the hypothesis that people high in need to belong perceive more conflict in their group than people low in need to belong, when they are frustrated, but those results showed the tendency that it may be the case.

4. Discussion

The research on conflict in groups often assumes that members of the same group perceive the same amount of conflict within their group. Recently, authors started to argue that we should actually pay attention towards differences in conflict perceptions within teams (Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Jehn, Rispens & Thatcher, in press). They found that different group members perceived different amounts of conflict in their groups and that this asymmetry in the perception of conflict had a significant negative influence on the performance and creativity of the group, and on individuals' satisfaction with the group and their intention to remain in their workgroup (Jehn et al, in press).

In this study I investigated possible antecedents of conflict asymmetry, thus, why members of the same group perceive different amounts of conflict. I confine myself to status and need to belong as possible antecedents, due to the fact that past research has shown that differences and inconsistencies in the organizational status are one source which causes conflict between individuals as well as groups (George & Jones, 2007; Walton & Dutton, 1969). In addition, previous research has shown that differences in the personality lead to different perceptions of conflict (Bono, Boles, Judge & Lauver, 2002). Thus it seemed likely that people with a different need to belong perceive the level of conflict differently, due to the fact that high need to belong individuals are in general better in identifying and accurately decoding verbal and non-verbal social cues and have in addition an greater empathic accuracy (Pickett, Gardner & Knowles, 2004).

Based on the facts that high-status individuals seemed to have power on the basis of their role (Lee & Tiedens, 2001) and that they covary in natural settings (Boldry & Gaertner, 2006), I act on the assumption that the characteristics of high-power individuals also apply to high-status individuals. Support for this assumption, came due to the fact that the status and power item correlated significant in this study and had a high Cronbachs` alpha.

I found that people higher in status think others perceive lower levels of task as well as relationship conflict than they do. One explanation for this result may be that high-status individuals think that they are more on the top of everything that is happening. It may even be that they do not know that others also perceive conflict, because people with a lower status and less power will repress their true attitudes, feelings and opinions and they gain less attention of the high-power individuals (Anderson & Berdahl, 2002). In addition, high-status individuals tend to give less social advertence to others (De Dreu & Van Kleef, 2004) thus

high-status individuals are less willing to listen carefully to the information of other, lower-status group members (De Dreu & Van Kleef, 2004). These findings may explain why high-status individuals think that they see more or higher levels of conflict than others and disregard that there may be another point of view.

I also found a tendency that status self-enhancers perceived in average a lower level of conflict than status self-reducers. These results were not significant, but due to the fact that the sample of status self-enhancers was very small, it may be that there will be a significant difference when it will be tested with more people. The number of status self-enhancers may be low because of the fact that teams are likely to penalise status self-enhancers by proscription and social exclusion (Anderson, Ames & Gosling, 2008; Blau & Scott, 1962; Ridgeway & Berger, 1986). Behaviour of status self-enhancers is likely to cause conflict, violate effective team working and team performance (Horowitz, Wilson, Turan, Zolotsev, Constantino & Henderson, 2006). Secondly, the number of status self-enhancers may be low because the sample scored on average very high on the need to belong scale and it is therefore likely that it is more important for the participants of this study to be socially accepted than to enhance their status, which would lead to punishment by the group and which would not be in line with their high need to belong.

I found no support for the hypothesis that need to belong had an influence on the perception of the conflict level which each member of a group experiences. In addition, there was also no confirmation that frustration mediated the effect of need to belong. These results may be the result of a ceiling effect: every individual in this study indicated a high need to belong, thus there was nearly no distribution of high and low need to belong individuals. One explanation for the high need to belong level in this research group is that according to Baumeister and Leary (1995) women may be perceived as more driven by a "need to belong" than men, and in this sample considerable more women took part. Hence, to identify the effects of the need to belong another study has to take place.

4.1 Study Limitations and Future Research

One advantage of this study was the utilization of established teams of the same professional background. However, this use leads to the limitation that there were a lot more women in the teams than men, which may have influenced the results. Although more women than men work in this social setting, more men than women are doctors in this sample.

Doctors seemed to have, in this sample, a high status, which leads thereto that men therefore have frequently a higher status than women, which may also have influenced the results. This is consistent research in the social identity tradition in which it has been established that women have been found to have a lower average status than men (Swan & Wyer, 1997).

Another limitation within this study was, that the sample was very small and so it is hardly possible to say, if the findings are valid or not.

Future research should attempt to do the analyses not only on the individual level but also on the group level. In groups where a high conflict asymmetry exists, the factors which lead thereto may be more obvious than in groups with a low group asymmetry. In addition, it may be that factors which lead to a low conflict asymmetry will be perspicuous.

Future research should measure directional (self) task conflict asymmetry (e.g., „I perceive more work-related discussion occurring in this team than other members do.") and the directional (self) relationship conflict asymmetry (e.g., „I perceive more relationship-related conflict within this team than other team members."), as well as directional (other) task conflict asymmetry and the directional (other) relationship conflict asymmetry to have the possibility to examine if the framing of the questions influence the results and to establish whether high-status individuals indeed perceive lower levels of conflict than lower status team members.

In addition, future research should not only look what kind of antecedents of conflict asymmetry exist, but also how to minimize the effects of those antecedents. Thus, for example is there a possibility to accommodate the perception of conflict of high-status individuals to the perception of conflict of low-status individuals?

Furthermore, it may be interesting to look if there also asymmetry by the estimation of the status of one team member between the other members exists.

Another area of future research is to examine the consequences of frustration on the conflict asymmetry more intensely. I found that frustration significantly correlates with perceived levels of task and relationship conflict and with directional (other) task and relationship conflict. Future research should identify why some individuals are more frustrated than other team members. The results showed that individuals who are frustrated perceive higher levels of conflict. In addition, it should be investigated if a higher level of perceived conflict may lead to more frustration.

4.2 Practical implications

The findings of this study suggest some essentials for workgroups. As a first step it is important that all team members should realize that other members of their team may perceive different levels of conflict than themselves. Mainly high-status individuals, like team leaders or managers, should ask themselves if it is advisable that they think that they perceive more conflict than the other team members or if others just as well perceive the same amount of conflict. Therefore, it is important that they become more aware of the opinions and feelings of lower-status individuals and do not overlook them, due to the fact that this can lead to more conflict asymmetry which may result in worse group effectiveness and performance. Jehn et al. (in press) found that it is superior that teams name high levels of conflict, while all team members agree with that, than that teams are afflicted with asymmetric conflict perceptions. Thus it is fundamental that all team members are aware if there are differences. Not until all team members attempt to achieve agreement relating the level of conflict in their team, they can be concerned with the problem. When they have realised the differences and engaged in the problem than they can attempt to resolve it and to take actions.

In addition, team supervisors or managers, should be not only responsible for seeing that different team members may perceive different levels of conflict than themselves but they should also pay attention to the perceived level of frustration of the individual team members. Team members who feel frustrated perceive also higher levels task and relationship conflict. Thus if members of the team feel more frustrated than the others this may lead to a higher perceived conflict level which may lead to more conflict asymmetry in this team. Thus it is important that team leaders or managers become aware that a higher perceived level of frustration and/ conflict of some of the team members may lead to worse performance and less effectiveness of the hole team and to a low satisfaction of the individual team members (Jehn et al., in press).

In conclusion it can be said, that status has definitely an influence on the perceived levels of conflict of each individual team member. It may be advantageous if the hierarchical levels in workgroups are as low as possible to avoid different perceived levels of conflict. However, what was obvious in this study, is, that the group size had a significant influence on the conflict level as well as the perception of conflict in the team. The larger the team is, the higher the level of conflict perceived by individual members. This may be due to the fact that

the larger the teams the more place exists for dissimilarities between the individual team members (Bantel & Jackson, 1989). In addition, this may be by the reasons that the members of large teams tend to cooperate less (Dawes, 1975) and therefore that in large teams often more deindividuation exist than in small teams (Hamburger, Guyer, & Fox, 1975). Frustration also plays a role, team members who are more frustrated perceive higher levels of conflict. Hence, for low differences in the perceived level of conflict between the team members, it may be of advantage if the team has a low hierarchy and is not too big.

5. References

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