

Motives of side-taking by lay third parties

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Abstract

This study is conducted to get a better understanding of what motivates the side-taking reactions of lay third parties in a conflict. As the studies of Gross, Mason & McEachern (1958) and van de Vliert (1981) show, side-taking is one of the most common reactions of a third party to a conflict. The third party of interest in this study is the lay third party. Lay third parties are defined as: 'those who are confronted with an interpersonal conflict among others; but do not have an intention for how to handle the conflict'. The assumption of this study is that side-taking is motivated by a moral motive, a relationship motive and a self-interest motive. To test this assumption 18 structured interviews were conducted, in which respondents had to report a work conflict in which they were outsiders, and in which they took sides with one of the conflict parties. Results show that the side-taking behaviour of the respondents was motivated by morality, relationships and self-interest, with morality being the most important motive.

Samenvatting

Deze studie is uitgevoerd om een beter begrip te krijgen van de motivaties van derde partijen om partij te kiezen in een conflict. Zoals de studies van Gross, Mason & McEachern (1958) en van de Vliert (1981) laten zien, is partij kiezen één van de meest voorkomende reacties van een derde partij in een conflict. De derde partij van interesse in deze studie is de 'lay third party'. Lay third parties worden gedefinieerd als 'diegenen die geconfronteerd worden met een inter-persoonlijk conflict tussen anderen; maar geen intentie hebben in hoe om te gaan met het conflict'. De aanname van deze studie is dat partij kiezen gemotiveerd wordt door een moreel motief, een relatie motief en een zelfinteresse motief. Om deze aanname te testen zijn er 18 gestructureerde interviews afgenomen, waarin respondenten een werk conflict moesten rapporteren waarin ze buitenstaanders waren, en waarin ze partij hebben gekozen voor één van de conflict partijen. De resultaten laten zien dat het partij kiezen van de respondenten werd gemotiveerd door moraliteit, relaties en zelfinteresse, waarbij moraliteit het meest belangrijke motief is.

Motives of Side-taking

At Eric's organization a new office is available. Two of Eric's workmates, Mark and Spencer, both want to have this office. Mark insists that he should get the new office because he has shared his current office with a colleague for years while Spencer already has his own office. Spencer on the other hand argues that he should move in the new office because he works longer for the organization than Mark and therefore deserves a better and beautiful work situation. Mark and Spencer complain to Eric that the other side is too selfish, and want Eric to show some support. Eric is then in the dilemma: Which side will he choose?

People are confronted with conflict every day. There are indeed no conflict free families, organizations, countries or nations. According to van de Vliert (1997) "individuals are in conflict when they are obstructed or irritated by another individual or a group and inevitably react to it in a beneficial or costly way" (p. 5). In the above mentioned example Mark and Spencer are in conflict because they obstruct and irritate each other by requiring the same resource and not giving in to each other. As Rubin, Pruitt and Kim (1994) pointed out, in many conflicts the disputants are not willing to give in to each other and then the conflict often escalates to the point of stalemate – a point at which disputants come to regard the conflict as intolerable, as something that should be ended as soon as possible. When a conflict is in the stage of stalemate, win-or-lose will first become one of disputants' main concerns (Rubin et al., 1994). To assure that they can win out over their opponents, they will try different strategies. One of them is to get support from a third party. In the following part, I will discuss the different roles that third parties play in a conflict.

Third party roles in a conflict

According to the Thibaut and Walker Procedural Framework (1975, in Sheppard 1984) third party roles can be distinguished on the basis of third-party function in control over conflict process and decision. Process control is referred to as “control over the development and selection of information that will constitute the basis for resolving the dispute”, and decision control as: “the degree to which third parties may unilaterally determine the outcome of the dispute” (Ross and Conlon, 2000). Based on those two types of control, four types of third parties can be identified. Table 1 lists the four types of third parties and the degree to which they can control over the process and decision.

Table 1. *Decision and process control of third parties*

			Decision control	
			Low	High
Process control				
Low	Lay third party	Arbitrator		
High	Mediator	Hybrid		

The mediator and the arbitrator are the two best known roles that third parties play in a conflict. A mediator assists the disputants in achieving a voluntary settlement and does not have the power to impose a solution or settlement on the disputants. An arbitrator on the other hand, has a control over the final decision, and can impose a settlement. After a hearing, in which the disputants state their positions on the conflict issues, call their witnesses and give supporting evidence, the arbitrator evaluates the evidence and issues a binding settlement (Conlon and Meyer, 2004).

Besides the two “popular roles”, Ross and Conlon (2000) identified a third one: a hybrid role for third parties, which combines the high control over process and decision. This

can be a “med-arb” role (mediation followed by arbitration) or an “arb-med” role (arbitration followed by mediation).

The fourth role of the third party is introduced by Yang, van de Vliert and Shi (2009), namely the role of lay third party. It was defined as someone who is confronted with an interpersonal conflict among others, but does not have an intention for how to handle the conflict. It means that a lay third party can control over neither conflict process nor the final decision. An example of this type of third party is Eric.

Lack of control over process and decision makes the lay third party an ideal target to use in this study. First, the lay third party does not have any obligation or responsibility to react to a conflict in any particular way, by using lay third parties this study captures the whole range of possible reactions of third parties to an interpersonal conflict among others. Next, I will discuss the reactions, especially the side-taking reaction of lay third parties.

The most frequent reaction by lay third parties: side-taking

When confronted with a conflict among others, third parties can react to it in various ways, such as helping the disputants reach a compromise, helping the disputants avoid or resolve the conflict, or taking sides with one of the disputants (van de Vliert, 1981).

Among all above mentioned reactions, side-taking is considered to be used more frequently than other kinds of reactions due to three reasons (Yang, van de Vliert, Shi & Huang, 2008). First, the information asymmetry assumption refers to the asymmetric way in which lay third parties perceive the information from disputants, due to their previous relationships with the disputants. This asymmetric information perception primes lay third parties to trust, sympathize and thus support one of the disputants more than the other. Second, the situational pressure assumption states that lay third parties, contrary to mediators or arbitrators, do not have decision or process control over the conflict. Lay third parties are

actually pressured by the disputants to take sides, thus making side-taking more salient than other options. Third, the coalition formation assumption is also related to the lack of control over the conflict by lay third parties. Because lay third parties do not have any decision or process control over the conflict, side-taking might be the only way for lay third parties to show their influence.

The statement that side-taking occurs most often among lay third parties has been supported by some empirical evidence as well. Gross, Mason and McEachern (1958) studied four situations in which school superintendents had to deal with contradictory expectations from individuals and groups about how to behave. The four situations were the 'personnel hiring and promotion situation', the 'time allocation situation', the 'teacher salary recommendations situation', and the 'budget recommendations situation'. Gross et al. asked the superintendents in interviews how they dealt with these conflicting expectations. In total the superintendents made 232 side-taking choices among 297 reported role conflict cases (78.1%), in comparison with compromising behaviour (19.9%) and avoiding behaviour (2%). Van de Vliert (1981) studied 1115 role conflict situations and reported side-taking behaviour in 669 cases (60%), in comparison with compromising behaviour (31.7%) and avoiding behaviour (8.3%).

All in all, it seems clear that side-taking is the most common and frequent reaction taking by lay third parties when confronted with an interpersonal conflict among others.

The focus of this study

Although side-taking is the most important reaction for lay third parties to handle a conflict, there are few studies conducted on this topic, with an exception of work from Yang and his colleagues

In recent years the side-taking behaviour of lay third parties has received some attention (e.g. Yang, van de Vliert & Shi, 2007). In those studies situational factors that trigger side-taking reactions have been examined extensively. As a complement to their research, in this study I will explore lay third party side-taking from the perspective of individual differences. The research question of this study can be formulated as: What are the psychological factors that trigger individuals to take sides in a conflict? In other words: What are the motives of side-taking by lay third parties?

Before turning to answering this question, I would first like to point out why it is worthwhile to study the side-taking motives.

Contribution of this study

This study makes at least two contributions to the field of conflict management. First of all, everyone needs allies in their lives, no matter whether it is about their personal issues, work-related topics, or even in political opinions. Whether or not a coalition can be formed is indeed dependent on the outsider, that is the lay third party as defined in this research. Knowing why a lay third party takes sides will contribute to the understanding of coalition formation. Second, as pointed out by van de Vliert (1981), one of the consequences of taking sides by a lay third party is to get the conflict intensified or even escalated. Knowing why lay third parties take sides can be a good starting point to understanding the escalation process of conflict, which in turn helps to develop effective conflict interventions.

Next I will discuss the concerns that lay third parties have in a side-taking dilemma, based on that, I reason the four types of side-taking motives by lay third parties.

Lay third party concerns and their side-taking motives

When confronted with an interpersonal conflict among others, the first reaction of a lay third party will be to collect information (van de Vliert, 1981). Since information collecting can reduce people's uncertainty (Lanzetta, 1963, in Mills, 1965), it is pointed out that collecting information is a characteristic reaction when confronted with a cognitive conflict (Spitzer, 1964; Cohen, Brehm & Latané, 1959). I assume that, in a side-taking dilemma, lay third parties are especially interested in three types of information: the issues of the conflict, the disputants, and the consequences of the conflict. I will now discuss each of these information aspects separately.

Concern about the issues

When lay third parties focus on the issues of the conflict, they want to know what the disputants are arguing about. In Western culture people tend to think in opposites, if it is not good, it must be bad; and if it is not bad, it must be good. This tendency to divide the world in two opposing forces; right versus wrong and good versus bad, and to ignore any middle ground, can be called the two-valued orientation (Hayakawa, 1965). This two-valued orientation becomes even more marked when a person is subjected to strong pressure from the disputants to take sides (van de Vliert, 1981). It thus seems possible that when lay third parties start to think about the issues of the conflict, the judgement of wrong or right, reasonable or unreasonable is triggered.

According to the uncertainty management model, the world is an uncertain place. For example, in this time of economic crisis many people are not certain about their job security and news of layoffs reaches us almost every day. The model argues that this daily uncertainty is threatening to people, and managing this uncertainty plays an important role in people's lives. The model further proposes that the experience of fairness can have an improving

impact on uncertainty by making things seem more certain, by making uncertainty more tolerable, or both (van den Bos, Poortvliet, Maas, Miedema & van den Ham, 2005).

Van den Bos et al. (2005) conducted five experiments, showing that particularly under conditions of uncertainty people react strongly toward issues related to fairness. An example is the experiment beginning with an salience manipulation of uncertainty. After making uncertainty salient to the respondents, the respondents had to imagine that they would apply for a job vacancy and that the selection process consisted of nine parts. The fairness of the procedure was manipulated by letting half of the respondents think that all nine parts were graded (fair procedure), while the other half thought that only one part was graded (unfair procedure). The dependent variable was measured by anger toward treatment, asking respondents how angry, hostile, furious and infuriated they felt about the way they were treated. The results showed that when people had been thinking about their being uncertain, their ratings of anger toward the treatment were significantly influenced by variations in procedural fairness, meaning that the fair procedure caused less anger than the unfair procedure.

Thus to reduce the uncertainty of the side-taking decision, one can imagine that the lay third party will focus on fairness judgments to reduce this uncertainty, and side with the moral conflict party.

Brewer (1981) came up with the notion of moral aggression, which refers to the intense negative reactions that people sometimes experience when they feel that they have been treated in an unfair, unjust or untrustworthy way. The experience of this intense negative reaction has been associated with the experience of strong anger with the desire for retribution, retaliation and revenge (Kramer, 2004). In line with this reasoning, one can imagine that when third parties feel that the claims from one disputant are not reasonable, or

the arguments are not applicable, moral aggression leads them to side against the disputant and thus support his/her opponent.

Lay third parties' focus on morality in conflict is also evident in the research of Yang, et al. (2009). In their study, Dutch and Chinese participants were presented with a scenario about a side-taking dilemma and then they needed to indicate their preference for side-taking with each of the disputants. One disputant was described as having negative sanction power but having less legitimacy in his/her claims, and the other disputant was described in terms of having more legitimacy in his/her claims and having less sanction power. The results showed that both the Chinese and Dutch participants favoured side-taking with the legitimacy party over side-taking with the sanction party.

All above mentioned evidence suggests that when the conflict issue is concerned, the wrong-right judgement, which is rooted in a lay third party's moral system, is activated. This moral motive leads lay third parties to side with those whose arguments are right, reasonable and applicable.

Concern about disputants

During the information collecting, lay third parties also try to figure out who are making the conflict. Lay third parties, unlike formal third parties, often have a continuing relationship with the disputants (such as supervisor, colleague or friend), the concern of relationships with disputants becomes significant when they focus on who are making the conflict.

According to the social balance theory (Heider, 1958), the reaction of a third actor to a negative attitude between two other actors is dependent on his/her relationship with these actors. According to the theory there can be balanced and imbalanced configurations between

three social actors. Imbalanced configurations cause tension and makes social actors change their social arrangements to reduce imbalance and thus tension.

For example, if party A and party B are having a disagreement then they will have a negative attitude toward each other. When a third party C has a good relationship with party A, the social balance theory predicts that party C will develop a negative attitude towards party B to maintain a balanced configuration. When confronted with an interpersonal conflict among others a lay third party will also perceive a negative attitude between the disputants. Because of the good relationship the lay third party has with the close disputant, he/she will develop a positive attitude towards this disputant and a less positive or even negative attitude towards the other disputant, which makes siding with the close disputant more likely.

This positive attitude towards the close disputant also perpetuates itself by the mechanisms of selective perception and selective memory (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Rubin, Pruitt & Kim, 1994). Once the positive attitude towards the close disputant has formed, selective perception and selective memory lead the lay third party to only look for information that confirms the original attitude. The consequence is that the lay third party will easily accept the arguments of the disputant, which makes side-taking with the close disputant likely.

Lay third parties' intention to take sides with the close disputant is also evident in Yang, et al.'s study (2007). In this research, Dutch and Chinese participants had to read a scenario about a side-taking dilemma and indicate their side-taking preference. In the scenario one disputant was described as a close family member and the other disputant as a work acquaintance. The results showed that the participants prefer to take sides with the disputant with whom they have a closer relationship.

I thus suggest that the concern of who are the disputants will lead lay third parties to focus on their pre-existing relationships with disputants. This means that the pre-existing

relationships between lay third parties and disputants will trigger the lay third parties to side with those who have a closer relationship with them.

Concern about the consequences

The third kind of information that lay third parties collect is related to the consequences of the conflict: what could be the results, and how could the results have an influence on them? When lay third parties start to think about the consequences of their side-taking action for themselves, they relate the conflict results to themselves. They do not longer see themselves as outsiders to the conflict, but as an insider that is affected by the consequences of the conflict. This shift from first seeing themselves as outsider to seeing themselves as an insider primes the lay third party to think about their on self-interests.

That self-interest starts to play a role as soon as lay third parties relate the conflict results to themselves is evident in a research conducted by Babcock, Loewenstein, Issacharoff & Camerer (1995). Subjects first read the case material about a claim for damages, and then they needed to make judgements about what would be a fair settlement. In condition A they were aware of their self-interest before they made their judgements (they knew if they were the defendant or the plaintiff), while in condition B they were not aware of their self-interest because they only knew their roles (defendant or plaintiff) after making the judgements. The results showed that when the subjects knew that they were the plaintiff they judged a much higher settlement as fair and they judged a much lower settlement as fair when they knew that they were the defendant, serving their self-interest by doing so. This self-serving bias was not evident in condition B in which the subjects did not know their roles, and thus were not aware of their self-interest.

The self-interest motive is also implicitly indicated in the research of Yang et al, (2009). They studied the side-taking behaviour of lay third parties with different orientations:

moral and expedient orientations. Moral orientation is based on a desire to fulfil legitimate expectations whereas an expedient orientation is based on a desire to be self-protective. The participants read a side-taking scenario and indicated their side-taking preferences. The results showed that for those lay third parties who are weakly moral and strongly expedient oriented, a greater preference for siding with a sanction party was followed upon an increase in expected negative sanctions.

According to Gray's theory of behaviour and brain functions, the self-interest motive can be activated by two general motivational systems that underlie behaviour and affect: the behavioural inhibition system (BIS) and the behavioural activation system (BAS) (Carver & White, 1994). The BIS is an aversive motivational system which controls the experience of anxiety in response to anxiety relevant cues. It is sensitive to signals of punishment, non-reward and novelty and inhibits behaviour that may lead to negative outcomes. Once this system gets activated it causes inhibition of movement toward goals. The BAS on the other hand controls appetitive motivation. It is sensitive to signals of reward, non-punishment and escape from punishment. Once this system gets activated people begin movement toward goals.

Carver and White (1994) tested this theory by creating situations in which subjects either expected a punishment or a reward. In the anticipated punishment situation subjects high in BIS sensitivity were more nervous than those low in BIS sensitivity. In the anticipated reward situation subjects high in BAS sensitivity were happier than those low in BAS sensitivity.

Relating the above findings with lay third parties' side-taking motives, it means that lay third parties will pay attention to both their own gains and their own losses in choosing which side to take. Sanction avoiding can motivate lay third parties to take sides with the

disputant who can punish them. Reward approaching can activate lay third parties to take sides with the disputant who can give them a reward.

Method

Interviewees

Eleven students with a part-time job and seven employees with a full-time job participated in the interview. Of those 18 interviewees 8 were female (44,4%) and 10 were male (55,6%), their age ranged from 19 to 57 years (mean age = 28.2 years). Five of the interviewees had a middle school education, 1 finished a professional education and 12 received a higher education. The years of work experience ranged from 2 months to 25 years (mean = 4.4 years of work experience), and all the interviewees fell into the job category of front-line worker.

Procedure

I first developed an interview scheme following suggestions from Ben Emans (1990). The questions in this interview scheme were structured according to the information gathering process done by lay third parties. Interviewees were asked to report on the issues of the conflict (e.g. what the conflict was about); who are the disputants (e.g. the relationship the interviewees had with the disputants); and the consequences of the conflict (both for the disputants as for the interviewees). The final questions concerned which side they took and giving the reasons of what motivated them to choose sides.

I pre-tested the interview scheme on pilot interviews. In total 4 pilot interviews were conducted. After the pilot interviews it appeared necessary to alter some of the questions and

to add new questions. In the pilot interview we explained to the interviewee which kind of side-taking experience he/she would have to report and then asked the following question:

‘Can you now report the side-taking experience at your workplace which you remember most clearly?’ Because we noticed in the pilot interview that some of the interviewees reported the wrong kind of side-taking experience we added two extra questions after we explained which kind of side-taking experience the interviewee should report: ‘Did you understand the kind of side-taking experience that I am referring to?’, and ‘Have you ever had such a side-taking experience at your workplace (you were an outsider and you did not have the obligation to help the conflict parties out)?’

We further split up the question ‘Can you now report the side-taking experience at your workplace which you remember most clearly’, into the following two questions: ‘Can you now tell me, in about 3 sentences, what the conflict was about?’, and ‘Could you tell me now how the conflict developed from the beginning to the end?’ This was done because the answers to the original question were too elaborate, and interviewees already started answering questions that we had not even asked them yet. For this reason we first asked the interviewees to tell in just a few sentences what the conflict was about, and later on in the interview we asked them to elaborate some more on what the conflict was about.

We also split up the question ‘What was your relationship with the disputants in the conflict?’, because some of the interviewees elaborated about their work relationship with the disputants and other interviewees elaborated about their personal relationship with the disputants. The question was thus split up into the following two questions: ‘What was your work relationship with the disputants?’, and ‘What was your personal relationship with the disputants?’

We changed and split up the question ‘What were the consequences of the conflict for you?’, into the following three questions: ‘Did you think about the consequences of your side-

taking for the disputants before you took sides? What would they be?', 'Did you think about the consequences of your side-taking for yourself before you took sides? What would they be?', and 'Did you think about any other consequences of your side-taking before you took sides?' We did this because we did not only want to know what the consequences of the conflict would be, but also what the consequences of their side-taking behaviour would be, and if the interviewees had thought about that at all.

We also added another two questions into the interview scheme: 'Were there any rules/regulations or norms/values that were violated during the conflict, if yes, which rules/regulations or norms/values were violated?', if yes, please describe them'; and 'Do you have any comments about the interview?'. The first question was relevant to our assumption that side-taking is motivated by a moral motive. The second question gives the interviewees a chance to express their opinions about the interview, and to collect extra information about the interview process. For the formal interview, potential interviewees were contacted through e-mail for participation.

In total 27 persons who were acquainted with the interviewers were contacted. In the e-mail I explained the purpose of the study and assured that the interview would be anonymous and confidential. Participants were asked to confirm their participation by e-mail, in which a suitable time and place for the interview was indicated. Of the 27 contacted persons 24 actually participated in the interview (response rate = 88.9%). Of the 24 interviews 6 were removed for data analysis. The main reason for this rejection was the superficiality of their answers; the duration of these interviews was less than 10 minutes (mean duration of interviews = 17 minutes), and the interviewees did not provide a clear answer to the questions. This may be due to the inexperience of the interviewers.

Interview procedure

We conducted structured interviews following the constructed interview scheme. We began the interview with a short introduction in which we explained the purpose of this interview; and assured the interviewees that the interview would be confidential. We explicitly asked whether the interviewee was willing to cooperate.

The actual interview started with some general questions about the demographics of the interviewee; gender, age, educational level, what kind of job they have, and how many years of work experience they had. We then asked the interviewee to recall a work-related conflict in which they handles by means of taking sides. Specifically, the conflict that they reported needed to match the following criteria: 1) the interviewee was an outsider, who was not involved in the conflict; 2) the interviewee was not responsible or obligated to help the disputants out; 3) the reaction of the interviewee to the conflict was side-taking.

We first came up with a short question about the issues of the conflict: ‘Can you now tell me, in about three sentences, what the conflict was about?’. Followed by the questions: ‘Could you tell me how the conflict developed from beginning to end?’, ‘Were there any rules/regulation or norms/values that were violated during the conflict?’, and ‘What arguments did the disputants have in the conflict?’ Next we asked the following questions about the disputants: ‘Who were the disputants in the conflict?’, ‘What was your *work relationship* with the disputants?’, and ‘What was your *personal relationship* with the disputants?’ We then moved on to the consequences of the conflict with the following questions: ‘Did you think about the consequences of your side-taking for *the disputants* before you took sides, if yes, what did you think these consequences for the disputants would be?’, ‘Did you think about the consequences of your side-taking for *yourself* before you took sides, if yes, what did you think these consequences would be for yourself?’, and ‘Did you think about *any other consequences* of your side-taking before you took sides, if yes, what other

consequences of your side-taking did you think of?’ The final questions concerned the actual side-taking behaviour and the motives of the interviewee: ‘Whose side did you take?’ and ‘Why did you take sides with him/her?’ We ended the interview by asking if the interviewee had any comments about the interview and thanking the interviewee for the interview (see Appendix A for the entire interview scheme). The interviews were recorded on an mp3 device.

Data-analysis

I constructed a coding scheme to analyse the transcripts. The analysis steps were guided by content analysis (e.g. Kassirjian, 1977; Hara, Bonk & Angeli, 1999; Aberbach & Rockman, 2002). The coding scheme was divided into 7 categories, following the line of questioning in the interview:

1. The first category was about the demographics of the interviewees such as age, education level, job and work experience.
2. The second category was the rules and norms category in which the raters had to indicate if there were rules or regulations about the conflict that were mentioned by the interviewees.
3. The third category was the interviewee’s perception of the arguments that were used by the disputants in the conflict; both parties had clear arguments, only one party held clear arguments or neither of the parties had clear arguments.
4. The fourth category was the type of conflict, in which three conflict types were distinguished; the process conflict, the task conflict and the relationship conflict (Jehn & Chatman, 2000).
5. The fifth category was the relationship that the interviewees had with the

disputants. Those relationships were divided into three categories: type of work relationship, type of personal relationship and quality of work relationship.

6. The sixth category was about the consequences of the conflict for the disputants, the interviewees, and the conflict situation.
7. The seventh category was about their reaction: whose side did the interviewee choose, and why the interviewee took sides with one of the disputants (see Appendix B for the entire coding scheme).

Each of the interviews was coded independently by two raters. The inter rater agreement was 89% and in cases of disagreement, consensus was reached through discussion.

Results

The results will be reported in the same order as the questions presented in the interview: I first report the conflict issues, relationships with disputants, and consequences of the conflict. Then I analyse the correlation between those three types of information with side-taking motives and behaviour.

Concern about the issues

When talking about the conflict issues, 12 interviewees reported a process conflict (66.7%) and 6 interviewees reported a task conflict (33.3%), relationship conflicts were not mentioned by any interviewee. Examples of a process conflict and a task conflict are respectively case 13 and case 1 (see Appendix C for an overview of the conflict cases)

Rules/regulations and norms/values

In total 17 interviewees (94.4%) mentioned rules/regulations or norms/values. Six of them (35.3%) mentioned that rules/regulations were being violated, and 12 interviewees (70.6%) mentioned that norms/values were being violated. An example of a conflict in which a rule/regulation was being violated is case 13:

So there was a disagreement about how to determine how well the containers needed to be tightened. Then you can see if it is tightened well enough according to the rules, according to the procedures, and then it is tightened properly or notAccording to the supervisor of my internship the rules were violated by the employee, while the employee thought that he was doing it right.

An example of a conflict in which norms/values were being violated is case 9:

In my opinion it isn't ok to say to a student 'you have to give a negative judgement', that's something you just don't do. And anyway with clients, because that's what students actually are, talking bad about other employees, I don't think that's ok....That she didn't tell her directly but through the students, so actually she made her look bad with her boss through the evaluation, and not even directly. I think that's a bit childish and you don't do that anymore at our age.

Arguments

When asked what arguments the disputants had in the conflict, 12 of the 18 interviewees (66.7%) indicated that both disputants had clear arguments and 6 interviewees (33.3%) indicated that only one of the disputants had clear arguments. Conflicts in which both disputants had no clear arguments were not mentioned by the interviewees. (See Appendix D for an overview of the concerns about the conflict issues)

Concern about the disputants

We coded the type of work relationship, the type of personal relationship and the quality of the work relationship the interviewees had with the disputants.

The type of work relationship was coded into symmetrical versus hierarchical. In a symmetrical work relationship the interviewee had the same status inside the organization as the disputants, while in a hierarchical relationship the status of the interviewee and disputants was not the same. Nine of the 18 interviewees (50%) had a symmetrical relationship with both of the disputants, one interviewee (5.6%) had a hierarchical relationship with both of the disputants (meaning that both disputants had a higher status than the interviewee), five interviewees (27.8%) had a symmetrical relationship with one disputant and a hierarchical relationship with the other disputant, and three interviewees (16.7%) had a hierarchical relationship with the one disputant and a symmetrical relationship with the other disputant.

The quality of the work relationship was coded into symmetrical good, symmetrical bad and unsymmetrical. Twelve interviewees (66.7%) had a symmetrical good work relationship with both disputants, 6 disputants (33.3%) had a better work relationship with one disputant than with the other disputant, and none of the interviewees had a bad work relationship with both of the disputants.

The type of personal relationship was coded into acquaintances, a close relationship or no personal relationship at all. Seven interviewees (38.9%) were acquaintances of both of the disputants, four interviewees (22.2%) had a closer relationship with one disputant than with the other, two interviewees (11.1%) were acquaintances of the disputant with whom they sided and had no personal relationship with the other disputant, and five interviewees (27.8%) had no personal relationship with either of the disputants (See Appendix E for an overview of the different relationships the interviewees had with the disputant).

Concern about the consequences

We coded the consequences of the side-taking behaviour of the interviewees within three domains: the consequences of their side-taking for the disputants, for themselves and the for the conflict situation. Those consequences were rated in terms of good, bad, and no consequences.

The consequences of their side-taking behaviour for the disputants

Four interviewees (22.2%) mentioned good consequences for both disputants, three interviewees (16.7%) mentioned bad consequences for both disputants, two interviewees (11.1%) mentioned no consequences for one disputant and a bad consequence for the other disputant, one interviewee (5.6%) mentioned a good consequence for one disputant and a bad consequence for the other disputant, and eight interviewees (44.4%) did not mention any consequences for the disputant.

The consequences of their side-taking behaviour for themselves

Two interviewees (11.1%) mentioned good consequences for themselves, 12 interviewees (66.7%) mentioned bad consequences for themselves, and four interviewees (22.2%) did not mention any consequences for themselves.

The consequences of their side-taking behaviour for the conflict situation

Five interviewees (27.8%) mentioned good consequences, three interviewees (16.7%) mentioned bad consequences and ten interviewees (55.6%) did not mention any consequences for the conflict situation (See Appendix F for an overview of the consequences of the side-taking behaviour of the interviewees)

Side-taking reaction

When asked with whom the interviewees took sides, 14 interviewees (77.8%) gave a direct and clear answer with whom they took sides. However, not all interviewees answered this question just by mentioning with which disputant they had taken sides. Two interviewees (11.1%) elaborated on that answer. They answered by first indicating that they took sides with one of the disputants, and then indicating that the opinion of the other disputant should be taken into account as well. For example the interviewee in case 1. When asked about his side-taking behaviour the interviewee said the following:

I took sides with the guidance counsellor, because I realised that he was right, the work pressure would get less. But I also thought that we should take a look at the arguments that my colleague had, because those were facts that were important. So I gave some suggestions about how to take into account the valid arguments my colleague had. I was thinking that when I would not say that, or would not indicate that my colleague was also a little bit right, that it would seem like I unambiguously sided with the guidance counsellor, whereas I did not feel I had sided unambiguously with the guidance counsellor.

Another two interviewees answered when asked what the consequences of their side-taking action would be for themselves that they tried not to get too involved in the conflict. For example case 11. When talking about the consequences of his side-taking the interviewee said the following:

I am familiar with this kind of situation. As soon as I get myself involved it will become my problem, and I thought that I would have to try to limit this. When I get involved in this kind of problems than usually the reaction of my colleagues is “ah xxx (the interviewee) is involved now, he will handle it”. So I thought in advance that I

would have to make sure that this kind of reaction would be limited as much as possible.

These results suggest that the interviewees sided with the disputants in three different ways: directly taking sides with one of the disputants, indicating their preference for one of the disputants but also considering the importance of the opinion of the other disputant, and directly taking sides with one of the disputants but making sure not to get too involved in the conflict.

What motivated interviewees to take sides?

The motives for side-taking were identified by the answers the interviewees gave us to the question: ‘Why did you take sides with him/her?’. Looking at the words and phrases used in these answers, I identified 14 interviewees (77.8%) who gave an answer that indicated that they took sides because they thought that the disputant was right. Phrases that were used are: “Because I totally agreed with her viewpoint”, “I just simply thought that she stood in her right”. “Well, for the biggest part I thought she was right”, “Because, according to me, he was right”, and “Because I think she was right”. Five interviewees (27.8%) were identified that used phrases and words that indicated they took sides based on what they thought was fair. Examples are: “Because I think it is unfair that someone has to work that many hours and suffers because of it, maybe not physical, but certainly mentally” (case eight), “Because it was promised to her for a very long time” (case five), and:

Because it is her work and if somebody else wants to do that work, that is fine, I mean you work there for the entire summer holiday, so I agreed with the girl on that part, and I also told her that. But I think you should agree with each other on that, you can not just take away the hours of somebody else, that is just underhand (case ten).

Nine interviewees (50%) mentioned that they had taken sides with the disputant because they had a closer relationship with that disputant. Phrases that were used are: “I think I have also chosen her because I have more of a friendship relationship with her”, “Well, of course, when you do not like somebody than it is easier to turn against someone”, “Because I want to make sure that my work relationship does not get interrupted”

One interviewee said the following when asked why he had taken sides with that disputant: “To announce my own, well not frustration, but displeasure”. This indicates that he took sides based on his self-interest.

Based on these given answers of what motivated the interviewees to take sides, I recognize four reasons: 1) the disputant was right, 2) it was fair, 3) they had a closer relationship with the disputant, and 4) it benefited their own self-interest. Following is a discussion of each of these four reasons (See Appendix G for an overview of the reasons for side-taking)

Because he/she was right

In arguing the wrong-right issue, ten of those fourteen interviewees (71.4%) repeated the arguments that the disputants had used in the conflict. An example is case 7. When asked what the arguments of the conflict parties were, the interviewee said the following: “Well, my boss thought that she should not have rung up an incorrect price and my colleague thought that my boss should not have yelled to her and especially not in front of a customer”. When asked why the interviewee had sided with the cashier she said the following: “In principle the boss has the right to say something about it, that just has to happen, but not in front of the customer and not in that way”. This suggests that interviewees wrong-right judgement in terms of side-taking is directly shaped by the arguments that the disputants mentioned.

Five of the 14 interviewees (35.7%) interpreted disputants' arguments by relying on their own norms and values. An example is case 15. When asked why the interviewee had taken sides with the waitress she said: "Because I think that when a boss hires somebody for a certain job, he/she should give the same chances to all employees". This argument was not mentioned when we asked what the disputants' arguments were. This finding highlights the fact that the wrong-right judgment can also be formed in terms of interviewees' perception of disputants' arguments.

Only 1 of the 14 interviewees (7.1%) mentioned explicit rules when he explained the reasons for his side-taking. This was case 13. When we asked him why he took sides with the manager he said:

Because my current job position at the company requires me to study these rules. In these rules it is stated that the clincher has to be screwed in the container with a certain amount of force and a certain length. The rules state how you have to measure if the clincher is screwed in the container far enough, and according to that way of measuring my supervisor was right.

This result indicates that the wrong-right judgement is triggered by explicit rules and regulations.

Because it is fair

Five of the 18 interviewees (27.8%) said they had taken sides because of fairness. All of the 5 interviewees mentioned their own norms and values when explaining why they thought it was fair. It thus concerned perceived fairness in stead of objective fairness stipulated by rules or regulations. An example is case eight. When asked why the interviewee took sides with the manager he said: "Because I think it is unfair that someone has to work that many hours and suffers because of it, maybe not physical, but certainly mentally".

Interestingly, when we asked him whether there were any rules/regulations or norms/values being violated, this interviewee answered: “Yes, I think there are rules about that. You have national agreements about vacation time and vacation hours”. In spite of this, he did not mention these rules in explaining why he thought it was unfair how the boss treated the manager.

Because of a better relationship with one of the disputants

Nine of the 18 interviewees (50%) mentioned their relationship with the disputant when asked about why they had taken sides. An example in which the work relationship with one of the disputants was a reason for the interviewee to take sides is case 18. The reason that the interviewee gave for his side-taking with the older colleague was: “Because I want to make sure that my work relationship does not get interrupted”. The side-taking reaction of the interviewees became significant when the work relationship was unsymmetrical between the two disputants (n = 6): all the interviewees sided with the disputant with whom they had the a closer work relationship.

A good personal relationship is also important in determining whose side they would take. It functions the exact same way as the work relationships. It is evident by the reaction of one of the interviewees when asked why she had taken sides:

Under no circumstance would I have said anything to ‘disputant one’ because she is my friend, but I also would not start a conflict with ‘disputant two’ for her. When I would have thought that ‘disputant one’ was not right, I just would not say anything and stay out of it.

I also compared the importance of relationship types on side-taking. If the interviewees had the same type of personal relationship and an unsymmetrical work relationship with both disputants (n = 4), they all sided with the disputant with whom they had

the better work relationship. If the interviewees had the same quality of work relationship and different types of personal relationships with the disputants ($n = 4$), they all sided with the disputant with whom they had the better personal relationship. This suggests that relationship type is less important than the relationship quality.

Because of self-interest

Only one interviewee explicitly mentioned self-interest in taking sides. This was the interviewee in case 18. When asked what motivated his side-taking the interviewee said: “To announce my own, well not frustration, but displeasure”. This answer made it clear that the interviewee sided with the disputant who could give him the greatest reward.

Although only 1 interviewee explicitly mentioned self-interest in his motivation for taking sides, 14 interviewees (77.8%) indirectly reported that they had thought about the consequences of their side-taking for themselves. Twelve of these interviewees (85.7%) had thought about the negative consequences and the other two interviewees (14.3%) thought about positive consequences. This suggests that the interviewees were more punishment avoiding than reward seeking in terms of their motivation for side-taking.

Besides reporting that they had thought about the consequences for themselves when asked about it, five interviewees (27.8%) also mentioned clear self-interests in other parts of the interview. For example case 1. During the interview the interviewee said: “I myself had to write 10 action plans. Writing such an action plan is very time consuming, when that time is no longer needed because he has a good plan, then the work pressure gets lower, I am a 100% certain about that”.

Importance of the three motives

The results suggest that the three motives are not equally important in motivating side-taking by lay third parties. All the interviewees who mention more than one reason for their side-taking action (50%) first mention a moral reason for their side-taking, then a relationship reason, and the interviewee who mentioned a self-interest reason for his side-taking mentioned that reason after mentioning the two other reasons.

That the moral motive is more important than the relationship motive is for example apparent in case 2. The interviewer summed up the reasons that the interviewee gave for her side-taking action and the answer of the interviewee clearly showed that not all reasons were evenly important:

Interviewer: ‘So you had two reasons for taking sides with her, because other wise the clients do not get any help and because you have more of a friendship relationship with her’. Interviewee: ‘Yes, but the first reason is more important’

Another example that shows that not all motives are evenly important in motivating side-taking is the answer of the interviewee in case 18 to the question why he had taking sides:

First of all because I thought he was right. Second, because I wanted to make sure that my work relationship does not get interrupted; and third, to announce my own, well not frustration, but displeasure

Discussion

Although there has been a lot of attention for the role of formal third parties in conflicts (e.g. Sheppard, 1984; Ross & Conlon, 2000; Conlon & Meyer, 2004), only recently studies on the role of lay third parties in conflicts have been conducted (e.g. Yang et al., 2006; Yang et al., 2008). As an extension to the work of Yang et al. (2006; 2008; 2009), I explored

in this current study lay third party side-taking from the perspective of individual differences. In particular I investigated the motives of side-taking by lay third parties.

The results show that the interviewees mentioned four reasons for taking sides: 1) the disputant was right, 2) it was fair, 3) they had a better relationship with the disputant, and 4) it served their self-interest. These reasons correspond with the three assumed motives for side-taking. The judgement of right and fair (the first and the second motives) can be placed under the moral motive. The consideration of the relationship with the disputant reflects the relationship motive. The self-interest motive can be distinguished in two directions: reward seeking and punishment avoiding motive.

These three motives are clearly linked to the three important issues that a third party has to consider in a conflict (the issues, the disputants and the consequences). The moral motive is linked to the concern about the conflict issues, the interviewees based their decision of who is 'right' and who is 'wrong' in the conflict, on the conflict issues and the arguments the disputants had. The relationship motive is linked to the concern about the disputants. The results showed that the interviewees take into account their relationship with the disputants, and do not side against a disputant with whom they have a close relationship. The self-interest motive is linked to the concern about the consequences of the conflict. Interviewees consider the consequence of their side-taking action for themselves, and one interviewee took sides with one of the disputants to benefit his own self-interest.

These results help our understanding with a third party intervention by suggesting ways to use coalition formation as a tactic for handling disputes.

Structure of motives

The results from this study suggest that, when confronted with an interpersonal conflict, a lay third party takes sides based on three motives: moral, relationship and self-

interest motives. An interesting question is then raised: Are those three motives equally important in motivating the side-taking reaction? The findings from this study also provide some hints to this question.

First, the moral motive seems to play a magnificent role in lay third party's side-taking. All the interviewees directly mentioned this motive. The extent to which they refer to the issue of "wrong-right" is also significant (77.8% of the interviewees indicated a 'wrong-right' issue in their answer of why they had taken sides). The results also suggest that the judgements of "wrong-right" are not always objective but with a strong subjective colouring. It means that lay third parties take their decision about who is right and who is wrong based on their own norms and values. If this finding can be replicated in future studies, disputants who want to make a coalition with a lay third party may apply this tactic in their persuasion process. For instance the conflict between Mark and Spencer (described in the introduction) who both want the same office, and want Eric to take their side. To persuade Eric to take his side, Marc could emphasize the fact that Spencer already has an office while Mark is currently sharing an office with a colleague, so it would not be fair or right to give Spencer the office. In this way Mark is emphasizing the morality of taking sides with him.

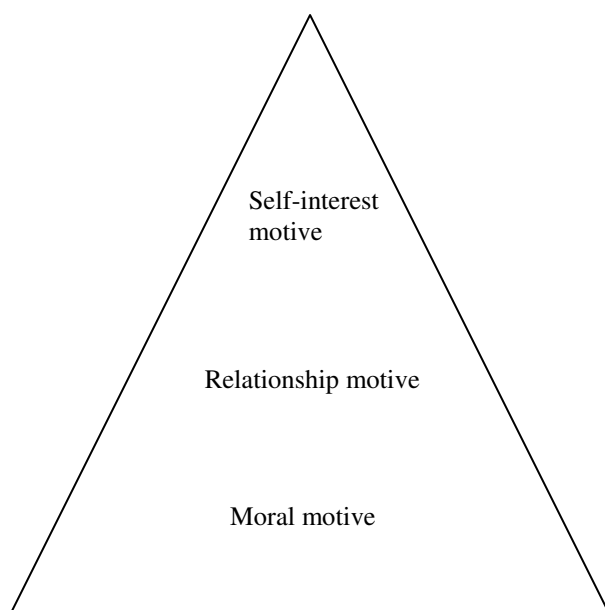
Next to the moral motive, the consideration of the relationship with the disputants is also highlighted by interviewees. Halve of the interviewees mention this reason for side-taking. It seems that the interviewees take this factor into account when taking a side-taking decision, but their decision is not solely dependent on this motive.

The findings also indicate that self-interest is the subtlest motive in triggering a lay third party's side-taking decision. Only one interviewee mentioned a reason for side-taking that can be placed under a self-interest motive. However, one needs to interpret this finding with caution. Taking-sides is an issue in conflict handling (Yang, et al., 2007). Influenced by social values and norms, a lay third party may try to behave "impartially and fair", just as a

professional third party. If this is the case, a lay third party might have built a psychological defence through which their self-interest for side-taking has been filtered when they recalled this side-taking experience. On this point, research by using different methods is necessary in clarifying the importance of self-interest for side-taking.

Comparing this hierarchy with the well known hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1970), it becomes clear that the two hierarchies are not consistent with each other. Maslow puts his so-called deficiency needs - the physiological needs, the safety needs, and the belongingness or love needs - that correspond with the self-interest and relationships motives, at the bottom of the hierarchy; and his so-called growth needs - the esteem needs and the need for self-actualization – that correspond with the moral motive at the top of the hierarchy. By doing so, Maslow states that the deficiency needs are the most important needs and the most important motives for human behaviour. The results of this study show that the hierarchy of motives of side-taking is exactly opposite to the hierarchy of needs, with moral motive at the bottom of the hierarchy, the relationship motive in the middle, and the self-interest motive on top of the hierarchy (see figure 1 below).

Figure 1. A hierarchy of motives of side-taking



Wicker, Lambert and Richardson (1984) conducted a study in which they examined the hierarchy in one's goal system. They found that a hierarchy of goals that from bottom to top consisted of 'individual striving' (consisting of goals such as superiority, dominance, and wealth), 'tranquillity seeking' (consisting of goals such as excitement, recreation, and playfulness), 'harmony seeking' (consisting of goals such as self knowledge, wisdom, close friends, and romance), and 'transpersonal orientation' (consisting of goals such as being ethical, helping others, love, and belonging). The self-interest motive corresponds with individual striving and tranquillity seeking, the relationship motive corresponds with harmony seeking, and the moral motive corresponds with transpersonal orientation. Again the hierarchy of motives of side-taking is opposite to this hierarchy of one's goal system.

The results of this study show that the moral motive was the most important motive for the side-taking action of the interviewees, contrary to Maslow (1970) and Wicker et al. (1984) who both state that self-interest motives like physiological needs and need for superiority and dominance are the most important motives for human behaviour. It is however not surprising to find that the moral motive is the most important motive for the side-taking action of interviewees when looking at the emphasize in the social psychology on the importance of morality and social norms and values of fairness. In van den Bos et al. (2005) it is for example stated that social psychologists have shown convincingly that fairness is one of the most important social norms and values in human life. People judge unfair treatment as a violation of cultural norms and values, in other words, unfair treatment violates people's cultural worldviews, while fair treatment on the other hand bolsters people's cultural worldview. Folger (1984) even stated that "the importance of justice cannot be overstated" (in Van den Bos, 2001).

The implications of these results could be that a third party in conflict management who uses coalition formation as a tactic to handle a dispute, should use a focus on morality as

to form coalitions, contrary to using a focus on self-interests, as suggested by Maslow (1970) and Wicker et al. (1984).

It is however also possible that the higher order moral motive is at the bottom of the hierarchy instead of at the top such as in the other two hierarchies because giving a moral reason for side-taking is a social desirable answer. The same goes for the self-interest motive, it is not social desirable to admit that you took sides with a disputant because of your self-interest. This effect of social desirability could be reinforced by the fact that the interviewees were all acquaintances of the interviewers, which could make it even harder for them to admit to a self-interest motive for their side-taking.

Besides the hierarchical structure of the three side-taking motives, the results also suggest that the three motives are interlinked with each other. As the results showed, all the interviewees who mention more than one reason for their side-taking (50%) first mention a moral reason for their side-taking, then a relationship reason, and the interviewee who explicitly mentioned a self-interest reason for his side-taking mentioned that reason after mentioning the two other reasons. This suggests that although the moral motive is the most important motive for side-taking action by lay third parties, it often is not the only motive that motivates side-taking. The side-taking action of the interviewees is often motivated by a combination of two or three of the defined motives of side-taking.

Limitations

Four limitations of this study need to be addressed. First, the interviewees were asked to report a side-taking experience in hind sight. It could have been the case that the interviewees forgot important facts about the conflict or remember things differently than they were. Second, as is mentioned above, it is possible that the interviewees were influenced by social desirability in answering the questions. All the interviewees were acquaintances of the

interviewers. Because of this close relationship with the interviewer, it would be hard for the interviewees to admit to a self-interest motive. Familiarity with interviewees could have made it desirable for the interviewees to be seen as moral people by their friends or family. Third, the inexperience of the interviewers makes it possible that their background knowledge interfered with the interview and coding process. Fourth, the small amount of interviewees makes it hard to generalize this study.

Practical implications for conflict management

This study has practical implications when it comes to coalition formation as a tactic for handling disputes. Forming a coalition is a common tactic for handling disputes, but whether a coalition can be formed is dependent on the outsider, in this case the lay third party. The results of this study show that side-taking by lay third parties is motivated by three motives: a moral motive, a relationship motive and a self-interest motive. These three motives can be used to facilitate coalition formation; however, the fact that the three motives for side-taking seem to be interlinked with each other has to be taken into consideration.

The results suggest that one of the most important ways to facilitate coalition formation is stressing on the moral reasons for taking sides. Every interviewee mentioned a reason for side-taking that can be put under the moral motive. It is however not guaranteed that this tactic will result in coalition formation in every situation. It is, for example, likely that coalition formation will not be successful when one of the disputants is stressing on the moral reasons for taking sides while the other disputant has a very close relationship with the lay third party, and stresses on this relationship as a reason to take sides with him/her. The results show that none of the interviewees sided against the disputant with whom they had a close relationship, as one of the interviewees puts it (case 9):

Under no circumstance would I have said anything to ‘disputant one’ because she is my friend, but I also would not start a conflict with ‘disputant two’ for her. When I would have thought that ‘disputant one’ was not right, I just would not say anything and stay out of it.

The same goes for the self-interest motive. Stressing on the self-interests of lay third parties that could be fulfilled by taking sides, can be a good tactic to form a coalition. However, when the other disputant has a strong moral ground for why he/she should win the conflict, and communicates this strong moral ground to the lay third party, it is not likely that the lay third party will take sides based on his/her self-interest. The likelihood that the lay third party will side based on moral grounds will even be greater when the conflict takes place in a very public setting. The influence of social norms and values to behave impartially and fair, just as a professional third party, could be especially strong in this case.

Thus whether the knowledge of these three motives of side-taking is used to deliberately escalate a conflict by coalition formation, or preventing conflict escalation by preventing side-taking actions of outsiders; third parties in conflict management should always take into consideration all three motives before making a choice of how to handle coalition formation.

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Appendix A
The interview scheme

Name interviewer:

Date interview: Starting time interview

Location/Place:

Instruction for the interviewer.

You must tell this introduction to the interviewee exactly as it is written here:

This interview is held for a research project. We are interested in how people handle a conflict, especially how an outsider reacts to a conflict between two other people. I have an overview of the interview questions (hand over interview scheme) could you please take a look at them? The interview takes about half an hour, and we expect you to answer each question as accurate and elaborate as possible. We will record your answers on tape, this will help us to analyse the interview afterwards. The information which you provide will be treated confidentially and anonymously, and is used for scientific purposes only. Do you have any questions about the interview? When you have a question during the interview you can always ask me. Do you agree to participate in this interview and to answer every interview question as accurate and elaborate as possible?

The questions.

General questions

‘First I will ask you some personal questions’

1. Gender respondent? (cross)

- Male Female

2. How old are you?year (fill in)

3. What is your educational level?

- VMBO MBO
 HAVO HBO
 VWO WO
 Gymnasium

4. What kind of job do you have? (*When answer isn't clear enough ask what they do exactly*)

5. How many years work experience do you have?years (fill in)

‘I will now start with the actual interview’

Questions about the work conflict.

At our workplace we often witness conflicts, disagreements or differences of opinion between colleagues. Two colleagues can, for example, have a disagreement about how to allocate a task. When such a conflict escalates the conflict parties often expect you to take their side, and on the other hand it is not your obligation to help them out. Sometimes, as an outsider, we do take sides to support one or the other.

Back up example.

Suppose that there comes an office available at your work, because a colleague of you is going to work somewhere else. Two colleagues of you both want to have this office, and both think that they have the most right to have the office. One day they are quarrelling about the conflict in front of you. At a given moment they both turn to you expecting you to take their side.

Back up example 2.

Suppose two colleagues of you both don't want to work on Friday's, but only one colleague can have Friday's off. Both colleagues think that they have the most right to get Friday's off. One day they are quarrelling about the conflict in front of you. At a given moment they both turn to you expecting you to take their side.

6. Do you think you understand the kind of side-taking experience I'm referring to?

- Yes No

7. Did you ever have such a side-taking experience at your workplace, in which you were an outsider and you didn't have the obligation to help the conflict parties out?

- Yes No

What I would like you to do now is to focus on one such side-taking experience at your workplace, with which you were confronted as an outsider, and which you remember most clearly. The second half of this interview will refer to that conflict.

8. Can you now tell me, in about three sentences, what the conflict was about?

Questions to ask about the conflict:

9.1 Who were the disputants in the conflict? *(When the answer is incomplete, ask for the disputants' position in the organization)*

9.2 What was your work relationship with the disputants?

9.3 What was your personal relationship with the disputants?

10.1 Could you tell me how the conflict developed from the beginning to the end?

10.2 Were there any rules/regulations or norms/values that were violated during the conflict?

- Yes No

If yes:

10.3 Which rules/regulations or norms/values were violated? *(When the answer might be incomplete, based on earlier quotes, ask for other possible violations)*

10.4 What arguments did the disputants have in the conflict? *(When the answer might be incomplete, based on earlier quotes, ask for other possible arguments)*

11.1 Did you think about the consequences of your side-taking for the disputants before you took sides?

- Yes No

If yes:

11.2 What did you think these consequences for the disputants would be?

11.3 Did you think about the consequences of your side-taking for yourself before you took sides?

- Yes No

If yes:

11.4 What did you think these consequences would be for yourself?

11.5 Did you think about any other consequences of your side-taking before you took sides?

- Yes No

If yes:

11.6 What other consequences of your side-taking did you think of?

Questions about the reaction of the respondent to the conflict.

12. Whose side did you take?

13. Why did you take sides with him/her? *(When the answer might be incomplete, based on earlier quotes, ask for other possible motivations)*

After the interview:

14. Do you have any comments about the interview?

‘Thank you very much for the interview’

Appendix B
The coding scheme

Categories	Definitions	Indicators
Demographics:		
- gender	Gender of the respondent: 1 = male 2 = female	Speaks for itself
- age	Age of the respondent	Speaks for itself
- education level	Education level of the respondent: 1 = middle school 2 = professional education 3 = higher education	<i>Middle school:</i> VMBO HAVO VWO Gymnasium <i>Professional education:</i> MBO <i>Higher education:</i> HBO WO
- job	Job function of the respondent 1 = worker 2 = supervisor 2 = manager 3 = senior manager 4 = boss/CEO	<i>Worker:</i> One who does manual or industrial labor <i>Supervisor:</i> One who supervises and is in charge of a particular department or unit <i>Manager:</i> One who handles, controls or directs a business <i>Senior manager:</i> One who is at the highest level of organizational management <i>Boss/CEO:</i> The highest-ranking executive in a company or organization
- work experience	Years of work experience from the respondent	Speaks for itself
Type of conflict:		
- process conflict	- a conflict that arises because there are differences in opinion about task strategy and delegation of duties and resources, in other words,	Words like ‘procedure’, ‘steps’, ‘strategy’, ‘method’, and statements like ‘not following the right procedure’, ‘using the wrong

	there are disagreements over group processes, roles and responsibilities. Parties attribute the cause of conflict to institutions or regulations	strategy', 'he/she violates regulations or rules', 'according to regulations, we are right (wrong) in doing...'
- task conflict	- a conflict that arises because there is disagreement about the work that is being done, there are disagreements about ideas and opinions. Parties attribute the cause of the conflict to situations.	Words like 'decisions', 'ideas', 'opinions' and statements like 'making the right/wrong decision', 'he/she had good/bad ideas', 'we analyze the situation in different ways'
- relationship conflict	- a conflict that arises because there is disagreement based on personal and social issues that are not related to work, it typically includes tension, annoyance, and animosity among group members. Parties attribute the cause of the conflict to the conflict partners or the relationships between partners	Words like 'like/dislike', 'friendship' and statements like 'she/he irritates me', 'I don't like him/her', 'I can get along well with him/her'
Relationship with disputants:	The relationship that the interviewee had with the disputants:	
- type of relationship	- <i>work relationship</i> : 1 = symmetric relationship 2 = hierarchical relationship	<i>Symmetric relationship</i> : There is no difference between the position of the interviewee and disputants in the organization, for example 'colleague-colleague' or 'manager-manager'
		<i>Hierarchical relationship</i> : There is a difference between the position of the disputants in the organization, for example 'colleague-boss' or 'colleague-supervisor'
	- <i>personal relationship</i> : 1 = close 2 = acquaintance	<i>Close</i> : For example, family members, relatives or very

	3 = stranger 4 = none	good friends <i>Acquaintance:</i> Someone you know, not very close to you <i>Stranger:</i> Someone you don't know
- quality of relationship	- <i>workrelationship:</i> 1 = symmetrical good 2 = symmetrical bad 2 = unsymmetrical	<i>Symmetrical relationship:</i> The relationship of the interviewee with both of the disputants is equally good/bad <i>Unsymmetrical relationship:</i> The relationship of the interviewee with both of the disputants isn't equally well, for example, with one of the disputants a good relationship, with the other one a bad relationship
Rules and/or norms	Are there rules or regulations mentioned by interviewees? 1 = yes 2 = no	Speaks for itself
Arguments	Interviewees perception of arguments used by the disputants in the conflict: 1 = both parties had clear arguments 2 = only one party held clear arguments, the other did not 3 = neither of the parties had clear arguments	Speaks for itself
Consequences of the conflict for:		
- disputants	1 = none 2 = good 3 = bad	Statements like 'when I would choose his side she wouldn't get the assignment'
- interviewee	1 = none 2 = good 3 = bad	Statements like 'when I would choose her side, he would be mad at me'
- consequences of the conflict situation	1 = none 2 = good 3 = bad	Statements like 'when I would choose his side, then the profits of the organization

would probably grow'

Side-taking:

- whose side did he/she choose?

- 1 = legitimate
- 2 = relationship
- 3 = self-interest

Legitimate:
Interviewee took sides with the disputant who was right

Relationship:
Interviewee took sides with the disputant with whom he/she had the better relationship

Self-interest:
Interviewee took sides with the disputant that had the best consequences for the interviewee

- why did the interviewee took sides with one of the disputants?

- moral motive
- relational motive
- self-interest motive
- other

Moral:
A motive of side-taking which emphasizes what is right or wrong, and leads third parties to side with those whose arguments are right, reasonable, and applicable

Statements about the arguments that the disputants had. Words like 'right', 'wrong', 'moral', 'immoral', 'reasonable', 'unreasonable'

Relation:
A motive of side-taking which focuses on pre-existing relationships which lay third parties have with each of the disputants, leads third parties to support those who have a closer relationship with them

Statements about the relationship the lay third party has with the disputants. Words like 'like', 'dislike', 'friend', 'friendship', 'work together', 'hate', 'love'

Self-interest:
A motive of side-taking which makes lay third parties to pay attention to their own gains and losses in taking sides with each of the disputants. Sides will be taken on basis of maximizing their interest by

Statements about consequences of the side-taking for the lay third party. Words like 'advantage', 'disadvantage', 'reward', 'punishment', 'costs', 'results', 'beneficial'.

supporting the side who will reward them the most, or minimizing losses by taking sides with the one who could punish them most

1 = rewards
2 = punishment

Rewards:
Advantageous consequences of the side-taking for the interviewee, for example a better relationship with the boss, more vacation days

Punishment:
Disadvantageous consequences of the side-taking for the interviewee, for example more work hours, worse relationship with a colleague

Other:
A motive of side-taking which doesn't emphasize who of the disputants is right or wrong, the relationship with the disputants or the consequences of the side-taking for the lay third party

Statements about reasons for the side-taking other than moral, relation and self-interest

Appendix C

An overview of the conflict cases

Case	Organization	Disputants	Conflict	Interviewee sided with
1	Primary school	7 th grade teacher and the guidance counselor of the school	Teachers were experiencing a lot of extra work pressure because they had to write action plans for students who were performing under average. The guidance counselor came up with a plan to lower this work pressure, by developing a standard action plan that could be filled in for every student. The 7 th grade teacher did not agree with this plan.	Guidance counselor
2	'Zorgbelang', a foundation that people can turn to for all their questions or complaints about health care in the Netherlands	One employee of IKG, a department of the foundation that handles phone calls from people with questions or complaints about health care, and one employee who also worked at the IKG department but had also some PR duties	The two employees were arguing about who had to work during the summer holiday. The IKG employee who also had PR duties said that she could only work for one day a week at IKG because she was too busy with her PR duties. This would mean that the other employee had to handle all the telephone calls on her own and she did not agree with this.	Employee of IKG who handles only phone calls
3	Restaurant	Owner of the restaurant and two students working part-time at the restaurant, at the bar	The owner of the restaurant hired an employment agency to handle all things that had to do with the salaries and taxes of his student part-time employees. This employment agency found a loophole in	The two students

the law and did not pay salary taxes for students. So at the end of the year the two students came to the realization that they could not get any taxes back, as was the case when the restaurant owner still handled the salaries himself. They thought this was not fair and wanted the restaurant owner to still pay them a certain amount of money.

4	Hotel	Head of the reception and one of the receptionists	The head of the reception had asked every employee if they had any wishes for when to work during Easter. The receptionist said that she could work during both days, so the head of the reception put her in the work roster for the full two days. But when the roster was published the receptionist complained about the fact that she had to work during Easter.	Head of the reception
5	Library	Two administrative employees	Both employees were promised by their boss that they could perform certain tasks. One of the employees already did those tasks temporarily to fill in for another employee, but somehow this tacitly turned into permanently performing those tasks. The other employee worked longer at the library and had asked several times if she could perform those tasks. So this employee started complaining once she realized that the other employee was performing these tasks permanently.	The employee that worked longer for the library
6	A bar	The owner of the bar and a	Customers at the bar were always flirting with the	The waitress

		waitress	waitress and sometimes even touching her and the waitress went to the owner of the bar to ask him if he could say something to the customers about it, because she did not like it at all that the customers were flirting with her and touching her. The owner of the bar got angry when the waitress complained about this to him and said that if she did not like it, she should find a job elsewhere.	
7	Supermarket	Boss of the supermarket and a cashier	The cashier had rung up an incorrect price for one of the products from a customer, and the customer came back to complain about it. The cashier asked her boss if he could come to the register to solve the problem. The boss came to the register and immediately started screaming at the cashier, in front of the customer, because she had made mistake.	The cashier
8	McDonalds	Boss of the McDonalds and the manager of the McDonalds	The McDonalds was understaffed and the consequence was that the manager had to work all the time and was not allowed to take a few days of for a holiday.	The manager
9	UT D-team, a team at the University of Twente that gives information to German students who are thinking of following a study at the University of Twente	Two students from the University of Twente who worked for the UT D-team	One of the students was asked to give a presentation about one of the studies the German students could follow at the university, while the other student was asked last year to give the presentation. This student was mad that she was not asked to give the presentation again. After the presentation the German students could fill in a evaluation form about the	The student who gave the presentation this year

			<p>presentation, and the student who had given the presentation last year told the German students that they had to evaluate the presentation badly. The other student overheard this and was mad about it.</p>	
10	Restaurant	Two waitresses	<p>One of the waitresses just started working at the restaurant, and was hired only during the summer holiday. The other waitress was already working at the restaurant for a longer period, and made some extra working hours by performing some extra tasks, like cleaning the windows. At a given moment the new waitress started to take over these extra tasks because she wanted to make more money, without clearing it with the other waitress. One day the older waitress confronted the new waitress with this, and they got into an argument</p>	<p>The waitress who already worked for a longer period at the restaurant</p>
11	Computer security company	A person that was hired by the company to develop a website and one of the regular employees of the company	<p>The person who was hired to develop the website, started working on it, and after sometime the regular employee of the company decided to check if the website was secure enough. He came to the conclusion that the website was not secure enough, that anyone could get in, and confronted the hired person. The hired person did not agree with the regular employee and did not want to change the website.</p>	<p>The regular employee of the company</p>
12	Rehabilitation centre	Neuropsychologist and a rehabilitation	<p>In a meeting between the neuropsychologist, the rehabilitation doctor and the</p>	<p>The neuropsychologist</p>

		doctor	interviewee, the interviewee said that he had the impression that a patient with whom he had the intake conversation had severe cognitive problems. This was also confirmed by the ergo therapist and the speech therapist. And the disputant asked if the neuropsychologist could get involved in the case. At that point the neuropsychologist became very angry at the rehabilitation doctor because once again she had not asked her to get involved in the case. According to the neuropsychologist she should get involved in a case as soon as it becomes clear that a patient has cognitive problems	
13	Chemical company	Two colleagues, one of them was the supervisor of the interviewee who had an internship at the company	One of the colleagues (the supervisor) saw a container that, according to him, was not closed off properly. He went to his colleague who was responsible for closing off the containers, and told him that the container was not closed off properly. This colleague went with him to the container and it turned out that they both had a very different way of measuring if the container was closed off properly, and they could not agree if the container was closed off properly or not	The supervisor
14	Consultancy organization (assisting organizations that go through major changes)	Two partners who, together with the interviewee, built up this consultancy organization	When they started the company they had agreed that all travel expenses would be for their own account. Now one of the partners had made exorbitant travel expenses and wanted compensation for these costs while the other partner thought she should not	The partner who wanted compensation for the travel expenses she made

			be compensated	
15	Restaurant	The boss of the restaurant and a waitress	When working in the restaurant you did not get regular working hours, some employees start at 10 o'clock in the morning and others start at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and the boss decides who gets which working hours. This particular waitress always had to start at 2 o'clock which meant that she had a lot less working hours than her colleagues who started at 10 o'clock. She went to her boss because she also wanted to have more working hours but the boss was not willing to give her more hours	The waitress
16	Municipality Enschede	Head of the communication department and an employee of this department	The head of the communication department was hired to reorganize this department. So he went to talk to all the employees to see what everyone was doing in the department and to see what the work costs were of every employee. According to the head of the department one of the employees needed to be fired because he was not doing a very good job. So he told this employee that he would be fired, but the employee did not accept this and told the head of the department that he could not get rid of him so easily.	The head of the communication department
17	A company that produces windmills	Head of a department in this company and an employee of this department	The employee was working on some sort of cage for around the windmill and to finish this project successfully he needed information from different departments in the company, but no one was willing to give him this information. When he	Employee of the department

complained about it to the department head, he was told that this was normal and that he needed to be patient. The employee however had reached the point that when he would not get the information he would stop with the project or even quit.

18	BOSE, a company that produces sound systems	Two colleagues	One of these colleagues recently joined the organization and the other colleague had put a lot of time and effort into teaching him everything there was to know about the job. But every time he asked the new colleague to do something this new colleague would say that he should do it himself because he knew better how to do it and it would not take as long because he was familiar with the job. So one day when the colleague asked his new colleague again to do something and the new colleague refused, as always, this turned into a real conflict.	The older colleague, who already worked at the company
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Appendix D

an overview of the concerns about the conflict issues

Case	Conflict type	Violated rules/norms	Arguments
1	task	norms	both clear
2	process	rules	both clear
3	process	none	both clear
4	process	norms	one clear
5	process	norms	both clear
6	task	norms	one clear
7	task	norms	both clear
8	process	rules and norms	both clear
9	process	norms	one clear
10	process	norms	both clear
11	task	rules	one clear
12	task	rules	both clear
13	process	rules	both clear
14	process	rules	both clear
15	process	norms	both clear
16	process	norms	one clear
17	process	norms	one clear
18	task	norms	both clear

Appendix E

an overview of the different relationships the interviewees had with the disputant

Case	Type work relationship	Type personal relationship	Quality work relationship
1	both symmetrical	both acquaintances	better with A than with B
2	both symmetrical	both acquaintances	better with A than with B
3	A symmetrical, B hierarchical	A acquaintance, B stranger	symmetrical good
4	A hierarchical, B symmetrical	both acquaintances	better with A than with B
5	both symmetrical	both acquaintances	symmetrical good
6	A symmetrical, B hierarchical	both no relationship	symmetrical good
7	A symmetrical, B hierarchical	both no relationship	symmetrical good
8	both hierarchical	both no relationship	symmetrical good
9	both symmetrical	A close, B no relationship	symmetrical good
10	both symmetrical	A close, B no relationship	symmetrical good
11	both symmetrical	A close, B no relationship	better with A than with B
12	both symmetrical	both no relationship	symmetrical good
13	A hierarchical, B symmetrical	both acquaintances	symmetrical good
14	both symmetrical	both acquaintances	better with A than with B
15	A symmetrical, B hierarchical	both no relationship	symmetrical good
16	A hierarchical, B symmetrical	both acquaintances	symmetrical good
17	A symmetrical, B hierarchical	A, acquaintance, B stranger	better with A than with B
18	both symmetrical	A close, B acquaintance	symmetrical good

A and B are the disputants in the conflict, A is the disputant with whom the respondent took sides with

Appendix F

an overview of the consequences of the side-taking behaviour of the interviewees

Case	Disputants	Respondent	Conflict situation
1	none	bad	none
2	none	bad	good
3	good	bad	none
4	none	none	none
5	bad	good	none
6	good	bad	bad
7	none	bad	none
8	none	good	bad
9	none	bad	none
10	none	bad	none
11	bad B	bad	bad
12	none	none	good
13	none A, bad B	none	none
14	good A, bad B	none	good
15	good	bad	none
16	bad	bad	good
17	bad	bad	none
18	good	bad	good

A and B are the disputants in the conflict, A is the disputant with whom the respondent took sides with

Appendix G

An overview of the reasons for side-taking

Case	Right	Fair	Relationship	Self-interest
1	x			
2		x	x	
3	x		x	
4	x		x	
5		x		
6	x			
7	x			
8	x	x		
9	x		x	
10		x	x	
11	x		x	
12	x			
13	x			
14		x	x	
15	x			
16	x			
17	x		x	
18	x		x	x