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EMOTION IN CONFLICT FORMATION AND ITS TRANSFORMATION: APPLICATION TO ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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A growing body of research suggests that conflict can be beneficial for groups and organizations (e.g., De Dreu & Van De Vliert, 1997). This paper articulates the argument that to be in conflict is to be emotionally activated (Jones, 2000) and utilizes Galtung's (1996) triadic theory of conflict transformation to locate entry points for conflict generation. Application of these ideas is presented through exemplars that demonstrate the utility of addressing emotions directly in the management of organizational conflicts.

Recent academic and popular press has brought attention to the importance of emotion and emotional management in our personal and professional lives (e.g., Ashkanasy, Hartel, & Zerbe, 2000; Fineman, 1993, 2000; Goleman 1995, 1998). These sources suggest that in order to effectively manage our interpersonal relations at home, with friends, or in the office we must overcome Western biases that have privileged the cognitive and "rational" and learn to appreciate the embedded nature of emotions in our everyday encounters. A number of business leaders have noted that success in business requires a certain amount of intuition and the ability to read other people's emotions and respond appropriately, as well as the ability to come to terms with our own emotional experiences (Goleman, 1998).

Academic scholars have echoed this importance, indicating that emotion plays an important role in the workplace that goes beyond the concept of emotional labor (e.g., in service industries where employees are expected to be cheerful and helpful in all circumstances, Hothschild, 1983). A number of scholars have called for greater attention to the role of emotional experience and expression in the work

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place and its impact on organizational outcomes (Putnam & Mumby, 1993; Rafaeli & Sutton, 1989).

Coming from the field of conflict management, we contend that it is no coincidence that the same Western biases that view emotions as "irrational" and counterproductive have also resulted in a normative belief that conflict is bad or dysfunctional. While academic research has debunked this myth by demonstrating the utility of conflict for achieving productive outcomes such as more vigilant problem solving (Janis, 1972), more effective task completion (Amason & Schweiger, 1997; De Dreu, 1997; Jehn, 1995, 1997a, 1997b), and improved relationships (Van De Vliert, 1997), the fact remains that many people prefer to avoid or hide conflict (Kolb & Bartunek, 1992). In this paper we suggest that the biases against emotion and conflict are the same. We offer the argument that to be in conflict is to be emotionally charged, and that part of the reason conflict is uncomfortable is due to its accompanying emotion. This may be especially true in the workplace, where organizational norms explicitly or implicitly tell us what we are supposed to feel (and the emotional expression that is appropriate). We therefore believe that in order to manage conflict more effectively, organizational members must follow the lead of recent literature and attend to the role of emotions in conflict and conflict management. We further contend that doing so will open up opportunities for using generative conflict management strategies in the workplace. Generative strategies serve to stimulate conflict for long-term gain rather than suppressing conflict or leaving it to simmer in the wake of short-term strategies that do not address all components of the conflict.

In order to make this point, the paper describes the components of emotional experience and presents the argument that to be in conflict is to be emotionally activated (Jones, 2000). After identifying insights of this treatise for the organizational context, Galtung's (1996) triadic theory of conflict transformation is then articulated to provide entry points for generating organizational conflict. Unpacking Galtung's theory reveals that conflict management often deals only with the most obvious or overt aspects of conflict. The upshot is that ignoring the entire conflict structure results in a failure to transform the conflict, thus is inadequate for constructively managing conflict. In the final section of the paper we synthesize these ideas to illustrate a generative approach to conflict management. We reiterate that our discussion in the final section is based on the assumption that stimulating or generating conflict is often necessary for healthy organizations (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997).

Conflict—Emotionally Defined

In this paper, we operate from a conception of conflict distinct from most scholars in the conflict management field and articulated recently by Jones (2000)—that human conflict does not exist in the absence of emotion. In defining emotion, we focus on emotional experience rather than grapple with the long-standing debate over what emotion "is" (see Ekman & Davidson, 1994 and Lewis & Haviland, 1993, for good discussions on the nature of emotions, or Jones &

Bodtker, 2001, for a more thorough explication of emotional experience). Consistent with most contemporary emotion research, we identify three basic components of emotional experience: behavioral/communicative, physiological, and cognitive.

Components of Emotional Experience

The behavioral element of emotion is the way emotional experience gets expressed. Emotional expression consists of the verbal and nonverbal behaviors that we intentionally and unintentionally communicate. Most emotional expression occurs nonverbally through facial expressions, vocal qualities, and body posture. We can also share our emotions through talk, although under-developed emotional vocabularies make this form of expression less reliable (Salovey & Sluyter, 1997) and less common. Cultural display rules guide us in the expression of emotion appropriate to the context.

The physiological component of emotion is the bodily experience of emotion; it is the way emotion makes us feel and thus is what makes emotional experience so compelling, so "real." Because emotional experience requires a sense of "self" (see Lewis, 1993; Greenspan, 1997, for more thorough explanations), the experiential feeling of emotion is inextricably linked to identity. Importantly, conflict involving identity heightens the need to attend to face concerns.

Lastly, the cognitive element of emotion urges us to consider the important role that the mind plays in emotional experience. Appraisal theories of emotion (e.g., Frijda, 1986; Lazarus, 1991; Mandler, 1975; Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988) suggest that we come to experience a particular emotion as the result of assessing or appraising our situation in a specific way. The main criterion in such appraisals is that the event is relevant to us in some way (e.g., one can feel offended by behavior unrelated to them because it assaults their morality, or one can be amused at a stranger's foible being thankful it is not they). In general, negative emotions are the result of a perceived interference or blockage with one's goals or expectations while positive emotions result from goal fulfillment or the perception of unexpected gains or benefits.

Research on appraisal theories of emotion reveals that appraisals, as a group, predict emotions; that different emotions are associated with different patterns of appraisal (Dillard, Kinney, & Cruz, 1996); and that some emotions involve more complex appraisals (e.g., shame) than others (e.g., disgust) (Ortony, Clore, & Collins, 1988).

The fact that cognitive interpretation of a situation (e.g., appraisal) is central to what emotion a person will experience is monumental to understanding organizational conflict. Among other things, it suggests that one's attributional tendencies or biases will influence the nature of conflict and one's emotional orientation to it. For example, if I fail to make a deadline and I see you, my coworker, as intentionally interfering with my ability to do so, then I can "legitimately" blame you for the failure and I can "legitimately" feel indignant towards you. Appraising my situation in this way provides me with a script (involving both cognitive and emotional elements) for handling the conflict. Because you voluntarily transgressed against me, I

feel no burden to cooperate in resolving the conflict. Indeed, I feel I have the right for revenge; I want to see you punished. Whether my attribution of your behavior/intention is correct or not makes little difference in my initial orientation to the conflict. However, it may become pivotal in constructively managing the conflict.

In addition to having expressive, physiological, and cognitive components, emotions need to be seen as socially constructed phenomena. The meanings of emotional experience and emotional expression are largely determined by social and cultural values, beliefs, and practices (Oatley, 1993). Different cultures are more or less expressive in general, are more or less comfortable displaying certain emotions (like anger), and use different behaviors to express particular emotions (crying to indicate anger; smiling to indicate discomfort) (Jones & Bodtger, 2001). And, not only does culture specify which emotions ought to be expressed (and how) in particular situations, it dictates what emotions are to be felt. Hothschild (1983) refers to "feeling rules" to explain how cultures define what we are allowed to feel. The implications are more profound than merely knowing to cry and feel sad at funerals and to smile and feel happy at weddings (as is expected in most Western cultures). It suggests that when one experiences emotion that is not deemed suitable for the occasion, one is at risk of being socially and/or professionally sanctioned or even pathologized (James, 1989).

Thus, emotions are complex phenomena with implications to all of social life. We now address how emotion is essential to conflict formation and how such an understanding provides insights into conflict management.

Much of the previous social science research on emotion and conflict has defined emotion loosely as mood or affect and examined its impact on conflict orientation, collaboration, negotiation, or group decision-making (e.g., Amason & Schweiger, 1997; Baron, Fortin, Frei, Hauver, & Shack, 1990; Barry & Oliver, 1996; Harinck, De Dreu, & Van Vianen, 2000; Jehn, 1995, 1997a; Pinkley, 1990). These authors typically conclude that affective conflict (conflict rooted in personal relationships and frustration) leads to ineffective problem solving and sub-optimal group performance. Barry and Oliver (1996) take a different approach to the question, developing eighteen propositions regarding the impact of positive affect on negotiation outcomes.

Researchers have also studied the impact of specific emotions on the negotiation process. Using an experimental method to examine anger and compassion, Allred, Mallozzi, Matsui, and Raia (1997) found that negotiators who felt high anger and low compassion for each other had less desire to work with each other in the future and achieved fewer joint gains. Daly (1991) examined the impact of anger on merger and acquisition negotiations, finding through interview data that anger hinders effective decision-making, partly because anger may lead to changes in goal orientation that emphasize punishment or retaliation. Pillutla and Murnighan (1996) also conducted a large-scale experiment to study the role of anger and spite in explaining rejections of ultimatum offers. They found anger to provide a better explanation of rejection than perceptions that the offers were unfair. Adler, Rosen, and Silverstein (1998) have addressed the role of anger and fear in negotia-

tions and the importance of emotional management to optimal negotiation outcomes.

Looking more specifically at conflict processes and escalation, Pruitt, Parker, and Mikolic (1997) used an experimental method to examine the effect of annoyance on conflict escalation. They found that physical escalation was associated with blame and feelings of frustration and anger, while verbal escalation was associated with negative perceptions of the annoyer's character. Not surprisingly, membership in the same group moderated conflict escalation.

In the field of communication, researchers have examined the impact of emotional communication (e.g., empathic perspective-taking) in hostage negotiations (Rogan & Hammer, 1995) and affect as a moderator of outcomes in divorce mediation (Donohue, 1991; Jones, 1985, 1988). The findings of the latter research have been consistent with those of other marital and family conflict researchers who have found that negative affect, defined as nonverbal displays and paralinguistic cues, has a negative impact on problem solving among marital partners and in parent-child relationships (e.g., Forgatch, 1989; Prager, 1991). Gayle and Preiss (1998) may be the only researchers (outside the realm of workplace aggression and violence) to specifically examine the impact of emotion in organizational conflict. Through analysis of the recollected conflict narratives of 174 participants, these authors concluded that unresolved conflicts were remembered with increased levels of intensity and emotional responses to conflict impacted future organizational relationships.

A common theme among this diverse research is that emotion is examined as a discrete variable that has some moderating effect on the conflict process, outcome, and/or future relationships. Our contention is quite different. That literature acknowledges the coincidence of emotion and conflict; we are suggesting an inextricable union. That is, we argue that conflict is an emotionally defined and driven process, and that recognizing this fact fundamentally alters one's approach to conflict management. Jones (2000) has cogently articulated this argument through the development of five basic principles. We summarize those principles and identify just a few of their implications for the organizational context.

Principles of Conflict and Emotion

Principle 1: Conflict is Emotionally Defined. Conflict is emotional in terms of its onset, the social meaning it inheres from the conflict parties, and the strategic options each has for dealing with the conflict. Conflict is marked (perceived) by a triggering event. Jones insightfully points out that events that trigger conflict are events that elicit emotion (although the opposite need not be true). Recall that appraisal theories of emotion suggest that emotion arises from the appraisal that an event is interfering with one's goals or interrupting one's plans. As such, we do not realize we are in conflict until we recognize that we are emotional about something. Furthermore, the particular emotion(s) that get(s) elicited impact(s) the definition of the conflict for the parties (e.g., if one becomes angry, they have interpreted the event differently than if they become happy). And one's "definition" of the emotion in the conflict influences their strategic orientation to it (i.e., their perception of the

options they have for dealing with the conflict). These options for action or emotional expression may be further constrained by the social context, which may result in increased emotional arousal. Thus, identifying disputants' emotions helps conflict managers understand how they have defined the conflict. They gain an understanding of the disputants' strategic orientation to the conflict and how they may be poised to deal with the conflict. And identifying emotional triggers provides information about which emotional script a disputant is likely to invoke.

Principle 2: Conflict is Emotionally Valenced. While emotion is always present in conflict, intensity levels of emotion are likely to vary throughout the conflict process, which will impact interaction and the course of the conflict. In the first place, emotional intensity may differ for each of the parties in conflict, influencing their interaction dynamic. And intensity may be indicative of the importance and meaning of conflict issues for each. Emotional intensity also bears on the distinction between emotional experience and emotional expression, raising the important issue of the communication (expression) of emotion.

Among the insights for organizational conflict are that emotional intensity signals the salience of the conflict issues, which allows us to make inferences about a party's orientation to the conflict. In addition, emotional intensity may create the impetus for engaging conflict. Strategically then, a third party may need to trigger emotional intensity so that conflict is engaged, or they may need to decrease intensity to prevent emotional flooding (a condition whereby one becomes so overwhelmed with emotion they are unable to process information clearly, Gottman, 1994). We can also examine the link between intensity or felt emotion and emotional communication. In short, we should not assume a direct connection between what is being experienced and what is being expressed, emotionally. Not only do individuals differ in their ability to encode (correctly express) emotions, but emotions can be, and often are, strategically expressed (e.g., exaggerated, feigned, or masked).

Principle 3: Conflict Invokes a Moral Stance. The experience of emotion is fundamentally evaluative in nature; events are interpreted as being good or bad, right or wrong, fair or unfair, etc. Judgments such as these are value-based and therefore invoke one's moral sense, which influences one's orientation to the conflict, including their relationship with the conflict parties and the conflict issues. Not only is one's emotional communication indicative of their moral framing, it also provides insights into the kinds of resolutions that would restore justice for that party. Therefore, we should recognize that disputants' emotional responses provide access to their ideology regarding the conflict. In recognizing how one morally frames conflict, we gain an understanding of what a party may need to happen for resolution to occur. For instance, opportunities to resolve conflict or manage tensions will be different if one is morally offended by a co-worker's actions rather than merely inconvenienced. Indeed, recognition by the "offender" of the moral "offense" may be all that is needed to restore the relationship (Umbreit, 2001).

Principle 4: Conflict is Identity Based. This principle links emotion and emotional communication with identity issues. As pointed out earlier, emotion

cannot be experienced without the sense of self. Put another way, we become emotional because something personally is at stake for us. Thus, conflict in which identity is highly salient is more likely to be characterized by more intense and potentially more volatile emotions. In this way, identity related conflict is potentially more destructive. Importantly, identity issues include both individual and social group identity. The insight we gain from this understanding is that emotional responses reveal identity needs and face concerns of disputants. On one hand, escalating identity-based conflict can be very risky because these conflicts are the most likely to become destructive and/or intractable (in part because they tend to lead to emotional flooding). On the other hand, invoking or revealing identity issues may be what is needed to trigger latent conflict, to move it from a stagnant or avoidant state to an active state where it can be more effectively managed.

Principle 5: Conflict is Relational. Moving beyond the necessity of interdependence between conflicting parties, conflict is relational in the sense that emotional communication conveys relational definitions that impact conflict. The preconceived nature (definition) of the relationship between the parties frames the meaning of the emotional communication, and subsequent emotional communication creates (e.g., challenges or reaffirms) the relational definition. Key relational elements are power and social status; when one senses that their power (and/or their social status), vis-a-vis the other, is being challenged, conflict is likely to be triggered. In some instances, the challenge itself may become the conflict issue. In others, the apparent discrepancy in relational definitions (e.g., "I thought you saw me as an equal; it appears you perceive yourself to be superior") may trigger conflict. Thus, identifying these issues can be invaluable in deciding how to approach conflict management.

Given these assumptions and our goals, we'd be remiss not to point out that the organizational literature does not depict organizations as emotion-friendly environments. The culture of many business organizations privileges rational and professional behavior and presumes that emotion is a threat to rationality and productivity (James, 1989, 1993; Putnam & Mumby, 1993). When emotions cannot be suppressed, organizational members tend to rely on private support networks (usually women) for advice or a sympathetic ear (Kolb, 1992). By illustrating that these functions are private and informal, theorists argue that emotions are kept hidden and devalued as part of organizational life (James, 1989, 1993; Putnam & Mumby, 1993).

Even when organizations do recognize emotions, it is in the service of instrumental gain (Hochschild, 1983; Putnam & Mumby, 1993). The research on "emotion work"—how employees manage their emotions by expressing emotion according to organizationally appropriate norms—exemplifies this bias (Fineman, 1993). Organizations also attempt to provide appropriate outlets for emotional expression. These include office parties, breakfasts, or even highly organized tropical vacations (Van Maanen & Kunda, 1989). It is through these rituals that organizations not only provide the means for emotional expression, they attempt to influence the experience of emotion by fostering increased affiliation with, good feel-

ings about, and loyalty to the company. Given these examples, we are left with the impression that emotions are acceptable in the workplace as long as they can be controlled and utilized for productive organizational outcomes.

The position we present here clearly challenges the way emotion ought to be construed in organizational life yet need not require that an organization become comfortable in letting go with abandon the need for control where emotion is concerned. The trick is to recognize the inevitability of emotion where there is conflict and to use that as a tool rather than as a hindrance and something to be avoided.

To recap, understanding emotion in the previous ways suggests that we can better understand the nature of conflict if we identify the emotions a person is experiencing. The causal connection between one's interpretation of their workplace circumstances and how they feel more artfully defines conflict; it gives us a better view of conflict complexity. The question becomes how one can use this new information to better manage organizational conflict. This is where Galtung's (1996) conflict theory provides insights.

Triadic Theory of Conflict Formation and Transformation

As the title suggests, there are three basic components to Galtung's theory of conflict. They include: (A) *Attitudes* (which include both cognitive ideas and emotions), (B) *Behavior* (which involves both overt behavior and potential for aggressive or hostile actions), and (C) *Contradiction* (the values and interests, between parties or within one person, which are incompatible). All three elements are necessary for a full-fledged conflict to exist, and importantly, all involved parties must be consciously aware of each element for a conflict to be fully articulated. What is more often the case is that one or more conflict elements are latent (particularly A & C). These are considered "structural" conflicts; they have full conflict potential but require orchestration of some sort to draw out the latent aspects. Thus, Galtung argues, the objective of conflict analysis is to identify all of the conflict elements and the goal of conflict management is to facilitate conscious awareness of the elements for the disputants (a process he calls conscientization).

Once conscientization is realized, the next pivotal aspect of Galtung's theory is the focus on conflict transformation (not to be confused with the transformative ideology prevalent in the mediation literature) as opposed to resolution. Conflict management aimed at resolution is destined to fail because it strives only to deal with one part of the conflict formation. For instance, goal incompatibility or contradiction (C) is often taken to be resolved when manifest behavior changes (B). However, he argues that until one's attitudes and emotions (A) are addressed and successfully changed (become transformed), the real or underlying conflict will re-emerge. In other words, the inherent contradiction, which exists at the "C" level, has concomitant feelings (e.g., of anger, angst, dissonance) and beliefs (e.g., this is unfair) at the "A" level. It is essential to raise both of these to consciousness (assuming that the behavior is already manifest) in order to transcend the contradiction.

As an example, imagine that the conflicting goal states (C) between two organizational departments involves sharing scarce resources (there is one copier

between them which frequently breaks down due to over-use), and the manifest behavior (B) is name-calling and complaining to one another's supervisors, claiming that the other department is responsible for misusing and failing to repair the copier. The supervisors attempt to resolve the conflict by posting a usage sheet in the copy room, purportedly to heighten accountability, and they impose a policy that requires employees to contact maintenance if the copier breaks down during their use of it. This is an example of a typical conflict resolution approach. But Galtung would argue that until the attitudes of the disputants are examined and dealt with, the conflict between the two departments will arise again, though perhaps in a different form. In other words, taking responsibility for the copier is not the whole issue, nor (perhaps) the real issue. It may be that members of one department feel entitled to organizational resources and expect members of the other department to acquiesce whenever there are simultaneous needs. This stimulates a status war of sorts where attitudes and feelings of superiority (A) are clearly salient.

The question becomes: how does one facilitate transformation? According to the theory, the key to transforming conflict elements lies, in part, in the complexity of the conflict. Quite simply, complexity is a function of the number of actors and the number of issues involved. The more complex a conflict, the more potential exists for creative, constructive transformations. If a conflict formation is too simple, parties will not be motivated to engage it. The objective in such situations would be to introduce additional actors or make salient new issues to increase the complexity of the conflict formation. For instance, if an employee is turned down for participation on a project even though they were highly qualified, they may not be motivated to address the issue unless they realize that they will not be eligible for a bonus without the experience. Raising this awareness (creating complexity by involving another conflict issue), triggers concomitant attitudes (beliefs and emotions), which is likely to manifest in behavior—creating a fully articulated conflict. Galtung's suggestion to increase complexity resonates well with the notion of generating (as opposed to suppressing) conflict.

However, complexity is beneficial only up to a certain point because the human mind can deal effectively with only about seven cognitive elements. When there are more than 7 elements (e.g., 4 issues/goals and 3 actors, or 2 issues/goals and 5 actors, etc.), the conflict becomes too unwieldy to manage; participants shut down cognitively, reducing the mental confusion by reducing the number of elements in their mind. This is a process of simplification, which in and of itself is not problematic, but becomes so when disputants become polarized in their thinking. The result of polarization is that they see issues as black or white, people as right or wrong, ideas as good or bad. Such either/or thinking dramatically reduces the options for creativity. The tendency towards simplification also occurs when the emotional intensity of conflict rises and conflict parties become too heated, resulting in emotional flooding. The ultimate goal, then, is to balance complexity and simplification. In the next section we provide exemplars to demonstrate this idea of generative conflict using the principles of emotion.

Application: Generating Conflict in Organizations

Using Galtung's theory of conflict formation and transformation as a framework for understanding organizational conflict, we now illustrate a generative conflict approach emphasizing emotion. We provide two exemplars, named for the "solution" suggested in each.

Exemplar 1: The Formal Gripe Session

A customer service department whose organizational members must always be friendly and courteous while dealing with disgruntled customers provides a familiar organizational situation. Dealing with customer relations takes a toll on workers who do this type of "emotional labor." Hochschild (1983) points out that service industry workers become estranged from their "real" feelings because not only are they not permitted to express them, but in order to do their job convincingly, they must take on the role of a happy, pleasant person unfettered by others' demands. The toll this takes on employees over time is akin to a type of soul loss, resulting in resentment, depleted morale, even depression (Hochschild, 1983). While these conditions are likely to lead to personal stress and decreased performance (Murphy, 1995), research also suggests negative long-term effects on the organization such as increased turnover, absenteeism, and falling quality of products and services (Matteson & Ivancevich, 1987).

Conflict Analysis

The first task in looking for ways to generate productive conflict is to identify the existing conflict elements—emotions (A), behaviors (B), and contradictions (C). In this scenario, there are multiple examples within each primary element, making the conflict sufficiently complex (as you will see). We start with behavior (B) because Galtung suggests it is the most obvious element and the one that is most likely to be present if the other two are latent. The "B" aspects in this conflict formation include the collective poor morale of the customer service department, the behavioral manifestations of this poor morale towards the customers (and, if reports were available, we might also see a decline in customer satisfaction and company revenue), and arguably, the alienated selves of the individual workers (a psychically destructive manifestation). Thus, if left untreated, the behavioral aspects of this conflict formation could become destructive enough to severely jeopardize, if not ruin, the organization.

There are also multiple "C" elements in this conflict formation. The incompatible goal states (inherent contradictions) for the employees is a dilemma created by their job descriptions: they have simultaneous needs to appear friendly and understanding of customers' complaints and to express their frustration without fear of repercussion in providing this emotional labor. The incompatible goal state for the organization is fairly obvious: they need the employees they have hired for a specific job to fulfill those job requirements. Having disgruntled employees dealing with disgruntled customers is a disastrous mix. And we could even bring the customers into the formation; they have (legitimate) concerns that, for the practices of better business, ought to be attended to.

Finally, the “A” elements. In this scenario, these are the most likely to be unconscious or latent. Concerning the employees, we have identified that they are disgruntled. At first glance, we might suggest they are disgruntled with the complaining customers. After all, they listen to their complaints day in and out. However, such an analysis is superficial; it overlooks the complexity of the formation. For there are multiple actors in the conflict, each with their own set of goals that are not getting met, and each with particular behavioral manifestations. The overlooked element in this scenario is the unconscious resentment the employees feel towards the organization for requiring them to perform the emotional labor, an expectation that has never been made explicit. In other words, the emotional demands of the job—the fact that employees are being asked to isolate and dissociate from a part of themselves—has not been made an expressed commodity, even though it exacts a profound price. The commodity being implicitly demanded, but not acknowledged by the organization, is an injustice (belief) “felt” by the employees in the form of unidentified resentment. Thus, until this part of the conflict formation is surfaced and reconciled, the conflict formation will remain in place.

Solution or Transformation

When Galtung speaks of conflict transformation, he does so in two distinct ways (although not explicitly). The first transformation involves the change in orientation to the conflict by the actors involved in the conflict when all of the elements are brought into awareness (through the process of conscientization). This is transformative because, for the first time, the actor is able to see and understand the conflict in its totality; she/he becomes conscious of all elements of the conflict formation. The second type of transformation has already been spoken of; it refers to the idea that in order to significantly alter destructive conflict, the inherent contradiction must be attended to, must be transcended. This cannot happen without full consideration of the other conflict elements because they are needed in the articulation of the contradiction itself. Put into practice, this means that when the essential nature of conflict is truly understood—when the emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects are fully articulated—that conflict formation can be transcended. From a cognitive appraisal (of emotion) standpoint, a full appreciation of the conflict elements facilitates the process of reappraisal necessary to change one’s emotional experience, a process without which constructive and lasting resolution is not possible (Jones & Bodtke, 2001).

Altering the essential elements changes the conflict formation. In Exemplar 1, the solution becomes obvious. First, by raising the consciousness of the underlying resentment and its cause (level A), a conflict analyst is presented with a previously unseen problem in need of a solution: how to resolve employee resentment towards the company for demanding them to do a difficult, unrecognized job. The simple solution is to “recognize it.” The creative solution might be to institutionalize “gripe sessions.” Bringing coworkers together to “bitch and moan” about their jobs may seem counter-intuitive. A more typical (regulative) approach might attempt to appease and motivate employees through incentives and company perks. But that

solution would not encourage the recognition and expression of negative feelings, the necessary “A” element needed to generate conflict.

An institutionalized gripe session can succeed because (a) it provides a legitimate context for employees’ to voice their negative emotional feelings, (b) it does so within the organizational context (e.g., during paid time), which (c) removes the contradiction for the employees. No longer are they being required to perform a duty which is unrecognized; thus the “emotional” labor becomes both recognized and compensated. For the organization the conflict is transformed by removing the inconsistent goal states between it and its employees. Presumably, employees paid and acknowledged for *all* of the work they do will be more likely to deliver high performance without complaining about the nature of their job. An emotional framing of this strategy sees the anger and frustration of the employees as both the trigger of conflict and as one of the conflict issues. The solution of holding gripe sessions surfaces and escalates emotional feelings and expressions underlying latent conflict, allowing conflict to escalate in the service of its transformation.

Exemplar 2: Exposing the Clash

Personality clashes are another common workplace situation ripe with conflict potential. Consider a scenario where two organizational employees work in the same department, share departmental resources and work space, but have little interdependence in their respective jobs. Despite their relative independence, the manager senses hostility between them; they ignore one another in passing, or exchange chilly glances, and they’ve each reported minor “tattling” complaints about the other. Furthermore, their coworkers have commented on how the climate changes when they are both in the same area, and how uncomfortable this makes the workplace. Because of this, one employee has requested a transfer. Although the two have not overtly argued with one another, it seems clear that there is some sort of rift between them. Both parties are valued employees, and transferring one to another department is not plausible. As a manager, you want to address the situation before more dire consequences ensue.

Conflict Analysis

The manifest behavior in this conflict formation includes passive aggression and sabotage on the parts of the two employees towards each other, as well as the hostile work climate their behavior creates for others. The goal incompatibilities in this situation are more apparent at the organizational level. Clearly, the other employees are agitated by the conduct of their coworkers, interfering with their need to have a non-hostile work environment so they can work effectively. Eventually, this will lead to reduced productivity, loss of expertise of those who transfer or quit, and generally, a disenfranchised department. The goal incompatibilities between the two clashing employees can be surmised as the threat of losing their jobs, or the fear of being evaluated negatively by the manager, implicating their advancement in the organization. And, they both see the “other” as creating these threats. There may well be other incompatibilities, but for now, they remain latent.

Emotionally, the disputants are contemptuous of one another and are righteously indignant towards each other for being the target of the other's contemptuous demeanor. These emotions and the obsessive negative thoughts which perpetuate them (e.g., "the other is out to get me; they want to make me look bad") are what embroil the two in latent conflict.

The difficulty with this conflict formation is that the behavioral markers are not as obvious as other forms of destructive behavior (e.g., customer complaints, loss of revenue). Indeed, the passive aggressive behavior can be denied or innocently excused. Thus, a manager may not have the evidence she/he typically relies on when broaching problematic behavior. Additionally, personality clashes involve identity issues, which means that emotional intensity is likely to be high, as will the desire to save face—to be seen as a competent employee. As such, the clashing employees may deny any goal incompatibility if directly confronted. And even if the employees are aware of both the behaviors going on and their feelings/thoughts about the situation (awareness of A & B elements), they are likely to remain blind to the inherent contradiction (C). So, how does this conflict become fully articulated?

Solution or Transformation

In this case, because the disputants have had no substantive contact with one another, we might presume that the incompatible goals (the perception that each is blocking attainment of the other's goals) are, in reality, a mistaken perception. However, telling them this is not enough to bring about conscientization. If this is the case, they must discover it on their own; they must claim this knowledge for themselves. In order for them to "discover" the contradiction, they must engage; they must have experience of one another if they are to learn whether their perceptions are accurate. Thus, it seems that this conflict formation would best be served by adding complexity, which can be achieved by bringing in a third party such as the manager. Given the preceding circumstances, a third party gearing to generate conflict would first approach each disputant individually, share with them her/his own perceptions of hostility between the two employees, and ask whether their perceptions were accurate. Doing so achieves two things. Not only does it add complexity to the conflict formation by increasing the number of participants, it also adds complexity by making the rift "public." Heightening conscious awareness of their behavior may also manifest other latent "A" elements.

Secondly, even if the employees deny the rift or any ill feeling associated with it, it sets the stage for the next step in the approach: increasing their interdependence. The logic with this strategy is thus: If either of the employees acknowledges the personality clash, an opportunity to discuss it openly and bring into awareness other conflict elements is created. This does not guarantee that discussion will lead to the discovery of inaccurate perceptions (thus removing the contradiction), but it does begin the process of conscientization. If both parties deny the rift, the manager third party can then assign them to work together on a project, increasing their interdependence. This achieves one of two things for the clashing employees. It may give them the opportunity to have actual interaction through which they dispel

their respective myths of one another (e.g., that each is out to get the other). Or it may create an untenable situation, increasing the emotional experience (anxiety/discomfort) for each employee to the point where they can no longer deny that a conflict exists. In either case, the intervention energizes the stalled conflict formation, if not to transformation through the dissolution of the contradiction, then to a manifestation of conflict elements to a point where the conflict is no longer being denied. If legitimate grievances exist between the two employees, having them on the table provides an opportunity to actively manage them (to begin another approach to conscientization).

Conclusion

There were two objectives in this paper. The first was to extend Jones' (2000) thesis, which inextricably links emotion with conflict processes to the organizational context, and to begin a conversation about implications for organizational conflict management. The second objective was to simulate a theory-to-practice exercise through the presentation of two hypothetical organizational conflict scenarios in order to tease out the application of the ideas. With these objectives we have argued that conflict is a fundamentally emotionally created and driven process. We believe that locating emotion in organizational conflict processes presents opportunities for conflict managers to productively orchestrate conflict. The goal for the conflict manager is successfully speculating under what circumstances and with whom generating conflict may be more desirable than containing it, and how to utilize emotion to do it. Future research should aim to examine the short- and long-term outcomes associated with emotionally generated conflict management approaches in a variety of conflict settings. This would contribute to the existing literature (e.g., Van De Vliert, 1997) that has begun to offer prescriptions for using generative conflict in organizations.

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