SUBSTANTIVE AND RELATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICT BEHAVIOR

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In this observation study the theory of conglomerated conflict behavior is tested. The impact of seven conflict behaviors on substantive and relational conflict outcomes is examined through multiple independent observations of 103 Dutch nurse managers handling a standardized conflict. Results show that process controlling is most important for achieving substantive outcomes, whereas problem solving, confronting, and forcing are most important for relational outcomes. In addition, substantive and relational outcomes are positively related. Implications for managerial practice and training are discussed.

KEYWORDS: Theory of Conglomerated Conflict Behavior, Conflict Behavior, Observation Study, Substantive Outcomes, Relational Outcomes

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The aim of this study is threefold. The first goal is to partially test the recently developed theory of conglomerated conflict behavior. This new theory states that effectiveness of conflict behavior can only be assessed by accounting for the occurrence and covariation of the behavioral components used in interpersonal conflicts (Van de Vliert, 1997; Van de Vliert, Euwema & Huismans, 1995). The theory contrasts with traditional approaches of conflict behavior, particularly with those based...
on the conflict management grid (Blake & Mouton, 1970; Rahim, 1992; Thomas, 1992). The latter theories claim that conflict behaviors, such as problem solving and forcing, are mutually independent, in both their manifestations and their consequences. Until now, the theory of conglomerate conflict behavior has been empirically tested in only a few studies. The present study tests this theory in the specific context of hospitals. The second goal of this study is to examine the effectiveness of conflict behavior with respect to substantive and relational outcomes separately, whereas previous studies did not differentiate between these two types of outcomes. Finally, this study aims to improve insights in the reciprocal relationship between substantive and relational outcomes.

**Conglomerated Conflict Behavior**

Conflict behavior is an individual’s reaction to the perception that one’s own and another party’s current aspirations cannot be achieved simultaneously (Deutsch, 1973; Rubin, Pruitt & Kim, 1994). Until the 1990s, the literature on interpersonal conflict in organizations predominantly and implicitly suggested that, at least within a single conflict episode, each party uses only one mode of conflict behavior that is more or less effective. However, more recent research suggests that the use of multiple modes of conflict behavior is actually much more common. Several authors report mixtures of forcing, problem solving and accommodating, or advocate these combinations, for example in the principle of firm flexibility (Fisher & Ury, 1981) or in the classic case of ‘logrolling,’ where one stays firm at a highly valued issue, while simultaneously giving in regarding lower valued issues or procedures (e.g., Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Knapp, Putnam, & Davis, 1988; Munduate, Ganaza, Peiro, & Euwema, 1999; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Putnam, 1990; Rubin et al., 1994; Van de Vliert, 1997; Van de Vliert, Nauta, Giebels, & Janssen, 1999; Yukl, Falbe, & Young Youn, 1993).

This combination of styles is not restricted to cognitive conflicts or negotiations. In a study with police sergeants handling escalated, affective conflicts, we observed a relative high amount of forcing combined with confronting, and to a lesser extent problem solving behavior within one conflict episode (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). In a comparable study, Munduate, Ganaza, Peiro, and Euwema (1999) observed and analyzed the behavior of 258 Spanish and Dutch managers in affective conflicts with superiors and subordinates. Typical patterns of conflict styles were found. Most managers used a combination of dominating and integrating, with only small amounts of other styles. A minority used compromising, in combination with integrating and to some extent dominating as well. None of the managers restricted the behavior to purely one style.

Conglomerate conflict theory assumes that mixed modes of conflict behavior are common indeed. We have coined the term *conglomerated conflict behavior* for the combination of various degrees of several modes of conflict handling within a conflict episode (Van de Vliert, 1997; Van de Vliert et al., 1995). The main reason why people actually combine different styles, instead of using one single mode, seems that conflict situations are often mixed motive situations. According to Thompson and Nadler (2000), parties strive both for own outcomes, and try to reach a mutual agreement at the same time, typically combining cooperative and competitive behaviors. To cite Deutsch (1973; p. 21) in this respect: “Most situations of everyday life involve a complex set of goals and subgoals.”

The theory of conglomerate conflict behavior can best be contrasted with two other approaches of conflict behavior. These approaches can be described as communication theories of conflict behavior and general models of conflict styles.

The theory of conglomerate conflict behavior is less detailed in the analysis of behavior than many approaches of conflict behavior based on interpersonal communication theories, in which the
sequences of specific acts are studied in relation to (de-)escalation and conflict or negotiation outcomes (e.g., Weingart, Prietula, Hyder, & Genovese, 1999). Conflict episodes usually consist of many speaking turns, which can be analyzed in sequence and interaction. The conglomerate conflict theory does not primarily focus on this micro level, but tries to determine the behavioral ‘Gestalt’ during the whole episode, or phases within one episode.

In addition, the theory of conglomerate conflict behavior is more complex than other models and taxonomies based on Blake and Mouton’s (1970) conflict management grid. Usually, five modes of conflict behavior, namely forcing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising and problem solving, are described. Most theorists in this tradition use dual concerns (for example concern for own and other’s goals), to determine the different behaviors. However, the behavioral styles resulting from these concerns, are presented as unique and independent, as if a person uses only one ‘conflict mode,’ for example forcing. Also, the effects of these modes are typically reported separately for each mode, without considering possible covariating effects (Van de Vliert, 1997). The theory of conglomerate conflict states that the components of conflict behavior should be considered as interrelated. That is, mixed motives result not in simple, but in complex behavior, that is best analyzed as a mixture of components. Interpersonal conflicts really are complex situations, in which different motives and concerns about own goals, the relation with the other, others’ goals (Sorenson et al., 1999), as well as short and long-term objectives (Thomas, 1992) direct behavior. Therefore, the perspective taken here is that conflict behavior is indeed complex, and the ‘Gestalt’ or specific mixture of behaviors creates the effects of this behavior (Van de Vliert, 1997). Also, the theory of conglomerate conflict expands the analysis of behavior from five to seven components, adding two active behaviors to the five modes just mentioned: process controlling and confronting. The main reason is that the five-part taxonomy has been criticized for under representing relatively assertive modes of conflict behavior. Confronting refers to straightforward actions of demanding attention to one’s own discontent by launching the conflict issue. Process controlling is directed at dominating procedures, including setting the agenda and the rules of the game (Van de Vliert & Euwema, 1994; Van de Vliert et al., 1995). For definitions of the seven components of conglomerated conflict behavior, we refer to Table 1. The combined use of these behavioral components results in conflict outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Behavioral Component</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Forcing</td>
<td>Contending the adversary in a direct way</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Avoiding</td>
<td>Moving away from the conflict issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Confronting</td>
<td>Demanding attention to the conflict issue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Compromising</td>
<td>Settling through mutual concessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Accommodating</td>
<td>Giving in to the opponent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Problem solving</td>
<td>Reconciling the parties' basic interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Process controlling</td>
<td>Dominating the procedures to one’s own advantage</td>
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1 = least effective; 7 = most effective.

Effectiveness of Conglomerated Conflict Behavior

The theory of conglomerate conflict behavior not only analyzes and describes conflict behavior, but also predicts behavioral effectiveness. In the context of a conflict, effectiveness refers to the extent to which the conflict behavior produces desired outcomes. Dyadic effectiveness is the extent to which the components of conflict behavior produce desired outcomes for the conflicting individuals together, by mitigating or overcoming the conflict issues, by improving the mutual relationship, or both (Thomas, 1992; Tjosvold, 1991). This definition clearly distinguishes two dimensions of dyadic effectiveness, namely substantive outcomes (such as a reached agreement or a compromise, specific concessions and promises made by parties), and relational outcomes (such as strengthened affective and interactive social bonds, mutual trust and understanding, and willingness to cooperate in the future).

Unfortunately, previous studies on conglomerated conflict behavior have not differentiated between these two types of outcomes. For example, Munduate et al. (1999) combines substantive and relational effectiveness in one overall measure, reporting that effectiveness is highest when managers combine forcing, problem solving and compromising in a specific episode. Van de Vliert and colleagues (1995) also use one integrated measure of effectiveness in their earlier mentioned study among police sergeants. Therefore, it is unclear in what ways and to what extent the behavioral components influence substantive and relational outcomes respectively, though it seems reasonable to assume that there are differential effects. We will address the relevance of differentiating between substantive and relational outcomes in a separate paragraph. First, we focus on the overall effectiveness of behavioral components and the possible effects of the behavioral components on the substantive and relational outcomes separately.

So far, the unique contribution of the seven conflict styles has been addressed in only one study (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). Van de Vliert and his colleagues (see also, Euwema, 1992) videotaped 116 Dutch police sergeants handling a standardized conflict about deviant behavior by either a subordinate or a superior (actually a confederate). They then had observers assess the occurrence of the aforementioned seven components of each sergeant’s conglomerate conflict behavior, as well as the dyadic effectiveness of the total interaction.

Assuming that the seven conflict behaviors are not independent, the relationship between each conflict style and effectiveness was examined using the other conflict behaviors as covariates. This procedure resulted in a rank order estimate of each behavioral component’s unique contribution to the dyad’s behavioral effectiveness (see Table 1). This ‘ladder of effectiveness’ ranges from forcing, avoiding, and confronting as least effective, through compromising and accommodating, to problem solving and process controlling as most effective. Within this conglomerate, the forcing component contributed negative, while problem solving and process controlling made a positive contribution to explaining variance in conflict outcomes (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). The unique contribution of the other components to the conflict outcomes was marginal or nonsignificant. This may have several causes, one being the lack of differentiation between substantive and relational outcomes. One may argue, for example, that confronting behavior did not make a unique contribution to explaining variance in effectiveness because it simultaneously had a positive effect on substantive outcomes (as the conflict issues became very clear and open, so solutions could be worked out), while simultaneously confronting had a negative effect on the interpersonal relation, increasing the tensions by paying attention to conflicting issues (see for example Euwema, 1992).

In general, we argue that behavioral components have different effects on substantive and on relational outcomes. The theoretical effects of the seven behavioral components will be briefly dis-

cussed here. Please keep in mind our perspective that different types of conflict behavior are usually components of a complex conglomerate. Only for reasons of clarity, we will discuss the effects of these components separately. The components are discussed in the order of the ‘ladder of effectiveness,’ starting at step one: forcing.

Forcing, or fighting, contending and seeking to prevail at the expense of the adversary is likely to result in a negative relationship between conflict parties (Van de Vliert, 1997). For example, forcing is negatively related with concern for the other party, which will usually not improve the relationship (Sorensen, Morse, & Savage, 1999). In contrast, studies on the impact of forcing on substantive outcomes show mixed results. Although it has been found in some studies that individuals can achieve substantive outcomes through forcing behavior (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997; Rahim, 1992; Thomas, 1992), other studies have suggested that substantive joint outcomes decrease with increased forcing (e.g., Van de Vliert et al., 1995). Gross and Guerrero (2000) demonstrate dominating behavior as relationally inappropriate, while hardly effective at all. We therefore conclude that the effect of forcing on substantive outcomes is zero, or mediocre, and that forcing will impair the social relationship.

H1: Within the conglomerate, forcing will have no significant effect on substantive outcomes, and will be negatively related to relational outcomes.

Avoiding is most often associated with negative substantive outcomes (De Dreu, 1997; Hocker & Wilmot, 1998), as issues are not resolved, and usually become more serious over time, in case of interdependence between the parties. Gross and Guerrero (2000) found that avoiding as a conflict style is seen as situationally and relationally inappropriate, as well as ineffective, when it comes to achieving personal and dyadic outcomes. Avoiding as the dominant style often results in ‘chilling,’ with disputants becoming increasingly cold and withdrawn. All authors argue that avoiding can be effective in the short run, but has negative effects in long term. Also, these conclusions are based on avoiding being the dominant style. In combination with other conflict behaviors (such as forcing), avoiding of specific issues can contribute to effectiveness. For example, in case of temporarily leaving the conflict scene, to cool down or to reconsider ones position, avoiding can contribute to effectiveness (Van de Vliert, 1997). This makes it difficult to predict the effects of avoiding within a behavioral conglomerate. In the ‘ladder of effectiveness,’ avoiding had a negative position, but hardly made a unique contribution to the outcomes. In combination with other behaviors, one is tempted to conclude that the impact of avoiding is limited.

H2: Within the conglomerate, avoiding will neither have a significant effect on substantive outcomes, nor on relational outcomes.

Confronting behavior, i.e. demanding attention to the conflict issue, did not make a significant contribution to conflict outcomes, within the conglomerate (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). As argued above, this may have been caused by the fact that confronting has a positive effect on substantive outcomes, while simultaneously having a negative effect on the relational outcomes. Several authors emphasize the importance of confrontation for achieving substantive outcomes. Confrontation is used to define and analyze conflict issues (Fisher, 1997; Turner & Pratkanis, 1997; Walton, 1987). On the other hand, this confronting behavior easily puts strains on the interpersonal relation, and may contribute negatively to relational outcomes (Euwema, 1992; Van de Vliert, et al., 1995). This may even be an important reason why people hesitate to confront others with conflict issues in the first place (Euwema, 1992).
H3. Within the conglomerate, confronting is positively related to substantive outcomes, and negatively related to relational outcomes.

Compromising implies searching for intermediate positions, satisfying only some of both parties needs. Some authors describe compromising as ‘half hearted problem solving,’ whereas others see it as a distinct strategy, making conditional promises and threats (De Dreu, Evers, Beersma, Kluwer, & Nauta, 2001; Van de Vliert, 1997). Within the ‘ladder of effectiveness,’ compromising worked out positively, but hardly made a unique contribution to (the combination of substantive and relational) outcomes. Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) argue that a compromise is associated with a strong conciliatory tendency, coupled with moderate concern for self. Compromising was found to be relatively high on relational appropriateness, though hardly effective or situationally appropriate (Gross & Guerrero, 2000). This suggests that compromising primarily contributes to relational outcomes, and less to substantive outcomes.

H4. Within the conglomerate, compromising is unrelated to substantive outcomes, and positively related to relational outcomes.

Accommodating, giving in to the other parties’ wishes, did not have a unique contribution to outcomes within the ‘ladder of effectiveness’ (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). Accommodating is not likely to produce much substantive outcomes, as the quality of decision making decreases with increasing accommodating behavior by one or both of the parties (Mastenbroek, 1989; Papa & Canary, 1995). Some authors suggest that accommodating contributes to the interpersonal relationship (Papa & Canary, 1995; Rahim, 1992). Gross and Guerrero (2000) argue that obliging is seen as neither relational nor situationally appropriate, nor effective, and conclude that this behavioral style is relatively benign. The unique contribution within the conglomerate therefore will be hardly visible.

H5. Within the conglomerate, accommodating will have no significant effect on substantive or relational outcomes.

Problem solving or integrating has been demonstrated to have positive effects on both substantive and relational outcomes. Paying attention to each others’ goals and needs strengthens the relationship and contributes to better conflict outcomes (Bach & Wyden, 1969; Tjosvold, Morishima, & Belsheim, 1999). Integrative behavior is usually seen as appropriate and the most effective style (Gross & Guerrero, 2000). There is no indication that problem solving contributes more to substantive or relational outcomes (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997).

H6. Within the conglomerate, problem solving will be positively related to substantive and relational outcomes.

Process controlling, dominating the procedures to one’s own advantage, was found to be most effective in the ‘ladder of effectiveness,’ even more than problem solving. Process controlling seems to provide a way to prevail without creating a disagreeable impression in the eye of the opponent (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). Giving direction and clarity through process controlling, is well known to contribute to both substantive and relational outcomes in mediation by a third party. Comparable positive effects can be expected if one of the parties manages the process by offering structure, setting the agenda and engages the other party to work through the conflict. Putnam and Wilson

H7. Within the conglomerate, process controlling will be positively related to substantive and relational outcomes.

To conclude, we hypothesize that the unique contribution of behavioral components to the effectiveness of interpersonal conflicts differs for substantive and relational outcomes. Not all components will contribute in a unique way to both outcomes. We expect that substantive outcomes are most dependent on process controlling (+) and problem solving behaviors (+), followed by confronting (+). Relational outcomes will particularly be a function of process controlling (+), problem solving (+), and compromising (+), as well as forcing (-) and confronting (-).

Relationship between Substantive and Relational Effectiveness

Not surprisingly, conflicts within organizations often occur between persons closely working together on interdependent tasks to achieve positively interdependent objectives (Euwema, 1992). In such cases, generally, a positive covariation between substantive and relational outcomes may be expected, simply because the interdependence-driven work relationship leaves little room for issue-dynamic and social-emotional consequences to diverge (Deutsch, 1973; Walton, 1969). However, it is also possible that substantive and relational outcomes of certain behavioral conglomerates exclude each other. For instance, the price of a tough but substantively successful problem solving process may be that the opponents involved are rather dissatisfied and fancy the idea of continuing to work together less than before (Schweiger, Sandberg, & Ragan, 1986). Also, the gain of a fair but undecided fight that leaves the issues on the table may be that it brings the parties closer together by enhancing the affective unity and stability between them (Bach & Wyden, 1969; Coser, 1956). In this latter example, substantive outcomes may be low, whereas relational outcomes are high.

An important problem with earlier studies in the area of conflict behavior is that they usually treated not only different conflict modes, but also substantive and relational outcomes as mutually independent phenomena (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1970; Rahim, 1992; Van de Vliert, 1997). Amason and Schweiger (1997) have demonstrated that substantive issues need to be addressed in an open and good climate. Many studies demonstrate the value of cognitive conflict, that is confronting substantive issues, and solving them. However, simultaneously, it is necessary to limit the relational harm done by a conflict. A growing body of literature supports the importance of relational outcomes, necessary to achieve substantive results in an interpersonal conflict. This is true for organizational conflict (De Dreu & Van de Vliert, 1997; Walton, 1969), as well as interpersonal conflict and negotiations (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Mastenbroek, 1989). For interpersonal conflicts in organizations, this implies that substantive and relational outcomes (a) need to be differentiated, and (b) will be positively related.

H8. Relational outcomes are positively related to substantive outcomes.

An interesting question related to the entwinement of substantive and relational outcomes is the effect of one outcome on the other. Exploratory analyses will be conducted to examine whether substantive outcomes are stronger predictors of relational outcomes, or vice versa. Amason and Schweiger (1997) argue it is important to understand more of the dynamics through which behaviors result in positive or negative outcomes. One of these dynamics is the effect of behavior through sub-

tantive outcomes on relational outcomes, and the other way around, through relational outcomes on substantive outcomes.

METHOD

Overview

A laboratory study method was chosen to enable systematic observations of realistic conflict behavior. We selected a potential group of participants, an organizational research context, and a relevant conflict issue. After training confederates to perform a sequence of conflict behaviors, we recruited the participants and videotaped their transaction with a confederate. Finally, we had three different teams of neutral observers assessing

a. the occurrence of the seven types of conflict behavior,
b. the substantive and
c. the relational outcomes of the conflict.

Design and procedures of this study were to a great extent comparable to our previous study with police officers (for extended explanations and motivations, see Van de Vliert & Euwema, 1994; Van de Vliert et al., 1995).

Participants

One hundred and three senior nurses from Dutch hospitals were chosen as participants, because, as first-line supervisors, they occupied a conflict-prone position in their organization. The age of the 57 female and 46 male participants ranged from 22 to 54 years (Mdn = 36 years), and their experience in the present position as senior nurse ranged from less than 1 year to 25 years (Mdn = 5 years).

Conflict Simulation

The participants attended regular curricula for nurses in lower and middle management functions. They volunteered to participate in the simulation as the first part of a two-day course in communication and conflict management. It was guaranteed that the videotapes of the simulated transaction would be used only for purposes of their own training and for research. Furthermore, it was emphasized that participants’ organization would not be informed about their performance. Afterwards, all participants agreed to the use of their videos in this study. On arrival at the training center, the experimenter explained to the participants the crucial function that the individual role-plays would fulfill during the training. He concluded as follows: ‘It is important that you act as naturally as possible in this role play, so that you and we can get a reliable picture of how you handle the conflict. Especially, don’t try to behave how you ought to behave, but act just as you would do if you were facing this situation at work.’

By way of preparation for the opponent, the experimenter casually introduced the confederate to the participant on the way to the experimental room. On arrival, he had the participant read a conflict scenario, answered possible questions, and inquired about the participant’s view of the conflict issue and the intended transaction. All nurse managers said that they would discuss the issue with

the offending party. The participant was then brought into a second room, in which the confrontation took place, for about 15 minutes on average.

**Manipulation of (Hierarchical) Positions**

To be able to compare the conflict behavior with our previous work, we wanted to compare two types of conflict for the senior nurse, either with a (more powerful) physician, or with a (less powerful) nurse. In Dutch hospitals physicians have a high status and power position compared to senior nurses. However, senior nurses are typically responsible for patient care. In this domain they do have a leading position, and physicians have to follow instructions by nurse management regarding different aspects of patient care. It is therefore likely, that senior nurses will confront nurses and physicians alike, when it comes to violation of regulation with regard to patient care.

**Conflict Issue**

Different authors have highlighted the importance of type of conflict, when behavior and effectiveness of conflict are considered. Cognitive or task related conflict is under conditions associated with more productive relations and work, while affective or relationship conflict is mostly detrimental to effective working relations and productivity (De Dreu, 1997; Jehn, 1997). The problem is however, that task conflicts easily result in personal conflicts (Friedman, Tidd, Currall, & Tsai, 2000). This chance is particularly high, when the issues are important to parties, and personal gains or losses are at stake. Work-related disagreement or criticism is often interpreted as a personal attack, resulting in more affective conflict (Amason & Schweiger, 1997). Typical example is criticism of work performance amongst colleagues. Most people are very sensitive for criticism and experience this as unfair or unjust. This is easily experienced as a personal attack and eliciting defensive or aggressive responses (Fitness, 2000). These types of conflicts might start as task conflict, but result often in affective conflicts. Furthermore, these conflicts occur in relations with superiors, subordinates, as well as with colleagues.

To find a realistic issue for this study, we started with participative observations for five days in hospitals and interviewed twenty-four nurse managers on their conflicts with both nurses and physicians. We needed a conflict issue that was a really serious matter for senior nurses (they should really want to make a point of it), regardless of whether they were female or male, and regardless of whether this issue dealt with a physician or a nurse. This preliminary study yielded two issues experienced as highly realistic. Subsequent testing with role-playing resulted in the selection of the following issue.

The senior nurse finds an elderly patient highly upset, complaining about either a female or male physician or nurse, who has treated the patient in a rude manner. The patient asked for more medicine, but did not get it, and was told to accept the pain and stop nagging. Though the patient started to cry, the accused other just left the room.

**Confederates**

We selected two females and two males as confederates. As gender composition may have an effect upon conflict behavior (Euwema & Van de Vliert, 1994), we choose to vary this systematically. The confederates met four criteria. First, they all had some experience with work in health care, thus being familiar with the specific culture. Second, they were between 35 and 40 years of age.
age, thus reflecting the average age of our participants. Third, to guarantee professional ability, we exclusively worked with professional performers graduated at the Dutch Academy of Dramatic Art. Fourth, we enlisted a professional training center in Amsterdam to locate confederates who had experience in training managers using role-plays.

Confederate’s Escalating Behavior

Unaware of the goals of the study, the confederates were trained to confront the participant with the aforementioned conflict issue in an intensifying way. The confederate started with trivialization of the incident (neither task- nor people-oriented issue), using sentences like: “Oh, I didn’t notice she was crying and I don’t think that’s much of a problem. That patient is just making trouble.” The confederate then continued with disagreement about the underlying organizational policy (task-oriented issue): “I can’t do a proper job if I have to pay serious attention to all interruptions by patients.” The confederate ended with a personal attack on the behavior of the senior nurse in this matter, using expressions like: “you were not there, you don’t know what happened. And now you are telling me what I should do?” or “Don’t you have better things to do than picking on me? Get your priorities straight!” (See Van de Vliert et al., 1995, for a motivation of this fixed route of escalation).

Within each of the three conflict stages, the confederate had to react to the participant in a natural way. The instruction was to reciprocate behavior as much as possible, particularly when the participant started to accuse, shout, threaten, exchange information, or explore possible agreements. The confederate was free to choose an appropriate point in time to shift from one stage to the next. Each confederate alternated the roles of a nurse and of a physician.

Measures

To prevent problems of biased self- and opponent-reports (e.g., Deutsch, 1973; Thomas & Pondy, 1977; Sillars, 1980; Van de Vliert & Prein, 1989; Rubin et al., 1994; De Dreu, Nauta, & Van de Vliert, 1995), this study used three different groups of neutral observers. In order to assess dyadic effectiveness, the observable outcomes for both parties, of the total transaction, two mixed couples independently rated each videotape (female and male); who were unaware of the goals of the study. The observers were trained to focus on the behavior of the participants and the observable aspects of both substantive and relational outcomes, irrespective of the feelings, and thoughts attributed to the participants.

Substantive and Relational Effectiveness. We asked one female and one male observer to independently rate the substantive outcomes of each videotaped conflict transaction. They did so on the following 5-point scales anchored by very ineffective and very effective: proximity to a solution (very remote—very nearby); chances of recidivism of this conflict (low—high); level of agreement (detailed agreements—no detailed agreements); achievement of an integrative solution (not—completely); contributes outcomes to team performance (for example by discussing treatment in team?) (not—largely); expressed satisfaction with the outcomes (very satisfied—very frustrated); evaluation of the outcomes (very negative—very positive).

We asked the other couple of observers to similarly rate the relational effectiveness on the following 5-point scales anchored by very ineffective and very effective: atmosphere (more unfriendly—more friendly); amount of expressed distrust (increased—decreased); way of interacting (friendly—hostile); energy in interaction (high-enthusiastic—low-fatigued); amount of mutual understanding (decreased much—increased much); personal relationship (got much worse—got

much better); expressed perceptions of each other (very negative—very positive); expressed willingness to cooperate in the future (very high—very low).

Within the two couples of observers, the inter-observer reliability was high for both substantive \( (r = .82) \) and relational effectiveness \( (r = .76) \). Additionally, the internal consistency was very good for the indicators of both substantive \( (\alpha = .98) \) and relational effectiveness \( (\alpha = .91) \). A moderately high positive correlation between the two outcome dimensions \( (r = .57, p < .001) \) shows the overlap as well as the distinctiveness of substantive and relational effectiveness. As a prerequisite to the primary objectives of this study, we will use confirmatory factor analyses to test the discriminant validity of substantive and relational outcomes (see Results section).

**Conglomerated Conflict Behavior.** The three stages of conflict escalation (trivialization, policy disagreement, and personal attack) were used as the units of more specific behavioral analysis. Four other observers (two males and two females) independently assessed when the confederate shifted from the first to the second and from the second to the third stage of escalation. In more than 90% of the cases they agreed on both points of transition; in the remaining cases, consensus was reached through discussion. We then trained them for 15 hours with the help of videotape fragments and observation schemes from our preceding research (see for operationalizations Euwema, 1992; Van de Vliert & Euwema, 1994; Van de Vliert et al., 1995). The observers independently assessed the extent to which each participant’s reactions were characterized by the seven types of conflict behavior. For each type each observer completed a single five-point rating scale anchored by “not at all” (1) and “to a great extent” (5). This rating was done for each of the three conflict stages separately. Afterwards, the observers’ corresponding ratings were combined into one measure for each type of behavior, for purposes of this study. The interobserver reliability coefficients for forcing \( (\alpha = .90) \), avoiding \( (\alpha = .71) \), confronting \( (\alpha = .81) \), compromising \( (\alpha = .55) \), accommodating \( (\alpha = .78) \), problem solving \( (\alpha = .79) \), and process controlling \( (\alpha = .83) \) were good to acceptable for basic research.

**Retest Reliability.** For each of the three conflict stages, the observers produced a pattern of occurrence and a pattern of covariation of the seven types of conflict behavior. Relying on Spearman rank correlation coefficients calculated between the corresponding patterns in subsequent conflict stages, we found that the pattern of occurrence had high test-retest coefficients: \( r_s = .82 \) (stages I-II; \( n = 7, p < .05 \)), \( r_s = .82 \) (stages I-III), and \( r_s = 1.00 \) (stages II-III). Similarly, the pattern of covariation was very stable over the three phases of the conflict: \( r_s = .89 \) (stages I-II; \( n = 21, p < .001 \)), \( r_s = .85 \) (stages I-III), and \( r_s = .85 \) (stages II-III). These indications of high stability justify the analytical use of a senior nurse’s average score on each type of conflict behavior over the three stages of the conflict.

**Construct validity.** The validity of the seven components of the conglomerated behavior was assessed with a procedure developed by Van de Vliert & Kabanoff (1990), which examines the predictability of the pattern of covariation. Spearman rank correlation coefficients were calculated between the set of 21 Pearson correlations in the present study among senior nurses and the set of 21 Pearson correlations in the previous study among police sergeants (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). This analysis indicated congruent validity because the two patterns of correlations were rather similar, \( r_s(21) = .65, p < .01 \).

**Model Testing**

The unique impact of each of the seven behavioral components on substantive and relational effectiveness was simultaneously tested with structural equation modeling (SEM) analyses, using

the AMOS software package (Arbuckle, 1997). The fit of the model to the data was examined with the adjusted goodness-of-fit index (AGFI), and the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Further, the normed fit index (NFI), the incremental fit index (IFI; Bollen 1989), and the comparative fit index (CFI) are utilized. These latter indices are largely independent of sample size and are appropriate to models with confirmatory factor analysis components (Gerbing & Anderson, 1993). In general, models with fit indices >.90 indicate that a model fits closely to the data. Browne and Cudeck (1993) have suggested that a RMSEA value of .05 indicates a close fit, and that values up to .08 represent reasonable errors of approximation in the population.

RESULTS

Descriptive Results

Before testing the hypothesized model, the discriminant validity of substantive and relational outcomes was examined in a series of factor analyses conducted with AMOS (Arbuckle, 1997). The proposed Two-Factor Model, with correlations between the factors, but with no cross loadings, was found to provide a reasonable fit to the data. This is indicated by the goodness of fit analysis in Table 2. Particularly the indices which are less dependent on sample size have values > .90. Further inspection of Table 2 learns that the correlated Two-Factor Model, discriminating between substantive outcomes and relational outcomes, is a substantial improvement over the One-Factor Model assuming that the two types of outcomes constitute a unitary construct. Because these two models are nested, the chi-square difference statistic can be used to test the improvement in fit (cf. Bentler & Bonnet, 1980). The results showed that the improvement in fit provided by distinguishing between the two constructs in the Two-Factor Model is substantial, Delta \( \chi^2 (1) = 345.92, p < .001 \). Finally, the confirmatory factor analysis found that all items loaded well beyond the \( t = 1.96 \) criterion on the predicted factors in the Two-Factor model. Taken together, these findings strongly support the discriminant validity of substantive and relational outcomes.

Table 3 provides the means indicating the pattern of occurrence of the seven conflict styles and the 21 correlations indicating the pattern of covariation between them. The means of substantive and relational effectiveness and the correlations between these outcome measures and the conflict styles are also shown. Looking at the pattern of occurrence, it is important to notice that the conflict was an open and serious confrontation. Process controlling, forcing, and confronting occurred considerably more often than problem solving, avoiding, accommodating, and compromising, in this order. The seriousness of the conflict is also reflected in the pattern of covariation. For example,
Table 3  
**Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations between the Variables used in this Study, N = 103**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Components</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1. Forcing</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Avoiding</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Confronting</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>-.54**</td>
<td>-.47**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Compromising</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>-.65**</td>
<td>-.20*</td>
<td>.74**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Accommodating</td>
<td>1.59</td>
<td>.44</td>
<td>-.71**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.47**</td>
<td>.69**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Problem solving</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>-.61**</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
<td>.83**</td>
<td>.81**</td>
<td>.55**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Process controlling</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.35**</td>
<td>-.27**</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>-.36**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Substantive</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.43**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Relational</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>-.30**</td>
<td>-.06</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.33**</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.58**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means with unequal subscripts in the first column differ at p < .001 according to a multivariate analysis of variance test. **p < .01, * p < .05.

Table 3 shows strong negative correlations between forcing on the one hand, and the respective cooperative components of accommodating, compromising and problem solving on the other.

The next step was to examine possible non-behavioral antecedents of substantive and relational outcomes. In these analyses, we examined possible influences of both conflicting parties’ gender, their relative hierarchical position, and for the observed nurse manager’s age. Analyses of variance showed that gender of the participating nurse managers and their age showed no significant relationships with conflict styles and conflict outcomes. Two effects were found, however. First, the hierarchical position did influence both behavior and outcomes. When participants had a relatively powerful position (i.e., in conflict with the nurse), they used less avoiding (F(1,101) = 4.77, p < .05), less accommodating (F(1,101) = 3.77, p < .05) and particularly more process controlling (F(1,101) = 38.80, p < .01). Also, they achieved more substantive outcomes than when they had a less powerful position (i.e., in conflict with the physician), F(4, 98) = 3.70, p < .01. The effect on substantive outcomes appeared to be mediated by process controlling. A more powerful position leads to more process controlling, F(1, 101) = 3.60, p < .01, and indirectly to more substantive outcomes. Secondly, an effect of the gender of the actor, (who played either the less powerful nurse or more powerful physician), on behavior was found. In conflict with a male, more avoiding (F1,101) = 6.90, p < .01), and more process controlling was used (F1,101) = 14.4, p < .01). Therefore, it was decided to control for the confounding effects of actor’s gender and hierarchical position in the SEM-analyses.

**Testing the Unique Impact of Seven Conflict Styles**

Hypothesis 1-7 stated that particularly process controlling (+), problem solving (+), and confronting (+) behaviors will be predictive of substantive outcomes, whereas particularly forcing (-), confronting (-), compromising (+), problem solving (+), and process controlling (+) behaviors will be predictive of relational outcomes. These hypotheses were tested simultaneously by analyzing a model including each of these relationships using structural equation modeling techniques. Each conflict style was included as an observed, manifest variable in the model, since inclusion of latent variables with indicators would result in a model with too many observed variables. According to
Bentler and Chou (1987), models with more than 20 variables can never provide a satisfactory fit to the data. The model also included the significant correlations between the conflict behaviors, and a covariation between the errors of substantive and relational outcomes. In addition, in this and the following analyses, the confounding effects of actor’s gender, and relative hierarchical position were controlled for.

The hypothesized model fitted adequately to the data, $\chi^2(29) = 41.59$, $p = .06$, AGFI = .85, RMSEA = .07, NFI = .94, IFI = .98, and CFI = .98. Examination of the t-tests for significance of the path coefficients revealed that six of the eight hypothesized paths were significant, and in the predicted direction. However, the t-value was under the critical level of 1.96 for one structural relationship, i.e. from compromising to relational outcomes. This path was deleted from the revised model. In addition, as suggested by the modification indices, a path from avoiding to substantive outcomes was included. The revised model produced the following statistics: $\chi^2(29) = 36.85$, $p = .15$, AGFI = .86 and RMSEA = .05. Moreover, the sample-size independent fit-indices have values close or equal to 1, indicating a very good fit: NFI = .94, IFI = .99, CFI = .99. Since the revised model has the same degrees of freedom as the hypothesized model, we cannot test formally whether the difference in fit between both models is significant. However, note that the fit indices generally are highly comparable and indicate a close fit between model and data. In both models, actor’s gender and role were significantly related to only one of the conflict styles, namely process controlling (see Descriptive Results).

As can be seen in Figure 1, problem solving ($\gamma = .33$, $p < .01$), process controlling ($\gamma = .47$, $p < .01$), confronting ($\gamma = -.32$, $p < .01$), and avoiding ($\gamma = .18$, $p < .05$), make a unique contribution to explaining variance in substantive outcomes, and explain 30% of its variance. The positive effects of problem solving and process controlling are in line with Hypotheses 6 and 7. However, the negative relationship of confronting and the positive relationship of avoiding contradict Hypotheses 2 and 3. Furthermore, Figure 1 shows that problem solving ($\gamma = .59$; $p < .01$), forcing ($\gamma = -.36$; $p < .01$), process controlling ($\gamma = .26$, $p < .05$), and confronting ($\gamma = -.61$; $p < .01$), all explain a unique proportion of the variance in relational outcomes. The total amount of variance explained in relational outcomes was 29%. The negative relationships between forcing and confronting on the one hand, and relational outcomes on the other hand are consistent with Hypothesis 1 and 3, respectively. The positive relationships between problem solving, process controlling and relational outcomes confirm Hypotheses 4 and 6. In addition, Hypothesis 5 was confirmed as well: within the conglomerate, accommodating has no significant effect on substantive or relational outcomes.

Hypothesis 8 stated that relational outcomes are related to substantive outcomes. Also, exploratory, it was tested if one of these outcomes had a stronger impact on the other, than vice versa. This hypothesis was tested by including the path from substantive to relational outcomes and the path from relational outcomes to substantive outcomes. The model fits reasonably well to the data—$\chi^2(28) = 39.79$, $p = .07$, AGFI = .85 and RMSEA = .06, NFI = .94, IFI = .98, and CFI = .98. The explained variance of both outcomes increased to $R^2 = .46$ and $R^2 = .56$ for substantive and relational outcomes, respectively. A formal test comparing a model with free estimates of the relationships between both outcomes versus a model in which both paths were constrained to zero resulted in a highly significant chi-square difference value: $\chi^2(2) = 48.73$, $p < .001$. This means that the relationships between both outcomes should be included in the model, and that relational outcomes explain unique variance in substantive outcomes and vice versa. An additional model, in which the reciprocal relationships between substantive and relational outcomes were constrained to be equal produced fit indices that were highly comparable: $\chi^2 (29) = 40.74$, $p = .07$, AGFI = .85, RMSEA =
Standardized Maximum Likelihood Estimates of the Conglomerated Conflict Behavior Model, N = 103.

\[ \chi^2(29) = 36.85, p = .15, AGFI = .86, RMSEA = .05, NFI = .94, IFI = .99, \text{ and } CFI = .99. \]

The correlations between the conflict styles are not displayed for reasons of parsimony.

.06, NFI = .94, IFI = .98, CFI = .98. Importantly, the test for the difference in fit of both models showed that the effect of substantive outcomes on relational outcomes (\( \beta = .47 \)) was not significantly stronger than the reversed effect (\( \beta = .20 \)), Delta \( \chi^2 (1) < 1, n.s. \). Thus, Hypothesis 8 was supported, while no differences were found in the impact both outcomes have on one another.

**DISCUSSION**

The current research about the dyadic effectiveness of conglomerated conflict behavior is innovative in several respects. To begin with, extending the model of conglomerated conflict behavior (Van de Vliert, 1997; Van de Vliert et al., 1995), this article focuses on the co-occurrence and covariation of distinct conflict outcomes, which can be applied to other domains of behavioral effectiveness as well. In addition, this research assesses the unique contribution of an array of conflict behaviors to both the substantive and the relational outcomes of the conflict. Last but not least, the present study shows the importance of relational outcomes as determinant of substantive outcomes, and vice versa, and provides a better understanding of the indirect effects of behavioral components. Before venturing into a detailed discussion of the main findings, it would be useful to examine some potential criticisms.

The first critical issue worthy of comment concerns The Netherlands as the national context of the experiment. Is it indifferent whether we examine the substantive and relational effectiveness of conglomerated conflict behavior in Nordic, Anglo-American, Germanic, or Latin-European countries? And what about Latin-American and African countries, and the Near, the Middle and the Far East? We believe this context does matter, as amply exemplified by Leung (1997). A solid body
of knowledge can be built only if the worldwide differences in the occurrence, experience, and processing of one’s own and other’s conflict behavior are taken into account. As a consequence, for the time being, research results should be restricted to a set of countries with a similar cultural make-up as the Netherlands, notably including Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Finland (Hofstede, 1991).

Critics might also point out that any relationships observed in this study could be due to the specific organizational situation. Indeed, we used nurse managers dealing with a particular conflict issue (complaints by a patient following norm violations by a colleague) characterized by an escalatory course of action (trivialization, policy disagreement, personal attack). It is likely that other conflict issues and courses of (de-)escalation in other contexts produce different behaviors, a different set of substantive and relational outcomes, and other behavior-effectiveness associations. For instance, there may be conditions where the forcing component in complex conflict behavior by a more powerful party contributes to substantive effectiveness and is independent of relational outcomes. Further studies may shed light on such conditions. Three more methodological limitations of this study need to be mentioned. First, the outcomes were assessed by neutral observers. It is most likely that the participants have a different perception and evaluation of these outcomes than the observers (e.g., Van de Vliert, & Prein, 1989). To understand conflict dynamics better, the self-perception and evaluation of both parties, or, in case of simulations, at least the view of the participant should be included. Secondly, observers focused on the participants’ behavior, assuming standardized behavior of our professional actors. However, controlling for the confederates’ behavior should be recommended in future studies. Finally, the discriminant validity of the model of seven styles is difficult to assess, given the methods used. Multiple observers and multiple observation moments result in a multitude of variables. It was therefore impossible to validate in a reliable way the structure of the data. Given the sometimes rather strong intercorrelations, one may question the construct validity and therefore usefulness of the distinction of seven behavioral components. Future studies are needed, and other methods should be used to assess conflict behavior, to validate this model.

In spite of these limitations, the insightful pattern of results reported here inspires confidence in three conclusions concerning conglomerated conflict behavior, absolute behavioral effectiveness, and relative substantive and relational effectiveness. We discuss them in turn.

**Conglomerated Conflict Behavior**

The model of conglomerated conflict behavior (Van de Vliert, 1997; Van de Vliert et al., 1995) contrasts with the common assumption that a conflicting party uses only one single and pure mode of behavior, replacing it with the assumption that any reaction consists of multiple components of behavior manifested simultaneously or sequentially. The relations between the behavioral components in this study are highly comparable with those, found in previous studies (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). In addition, the model rejects the common assumption that modes of conflict behavior have mutually independent effects, replacing it with the assumption that components of behavior influence each other’s impact on the substantive and relational outcomes of the conflict.

The present study clearly demonstrates the usefulness of this approach for understanding the effectiveness of conflict behavior. The comparison of the zero-order correlations with the coefficients in Figure 1 make clear that important effects of behavioral components are easily neglected if the pattern of covariation is left out of consideration. Many studies in this field still treat conflict modes as mutually independent variables, also in their effects on outcomes. This study in a hospital setting joins a growing series of studies (Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Van de Vliert, 1997; Van de Vliert et al., 1995, 1997; Williams, 1983, 1993; Yukl et al., 1993) that slowly but surely uncovers the risks
of such an approach and offers alternative methods of analysis that fit the complex realities of interpersonal conflict better.

**Behavioral Effectiveness**

As set forth in the introduction, previous research (Van de Vliert et al., 1995) produced a “ladder of effectiveness” ranging from forcing, avoiding, and confronting as least effective, through confronting and compromising, to accommodating, problem solving, and process controlling as most effective (see Table 1). The ladder did not yet distinguish between substantive and relational effectiveness because there was considerable overlap between the two. Should we have followed the same procedure of using a single overall indicator of dyadic effectiveness in the study under consideration, we would have found strong support for the “ladder of effectiveness” [r_c(7) = .90, p < .01]. However, the break down brings to light that substantive outcomes are influenced by other behavioral components than relational outcomes. So, on the one hand, the ‘ladder of effectiveness’ is cross-validated for female and male nurse managers. On the other hand, our replication study underscores the importance of differentiating substantive and relational outcomes. Our expectation that substantive outcomes are mainly the result of process controlling and problem solving was supported. However, contrary to expectations, avoiding had a positive effect as well, while confronting had a negative impact on substantive and relational outcomes. This underscores, first of all, the importance of seeing avoiding as part of a complex behavioral conglomerate. When one is confronting substantive issues, it might be productive to avoid other, less important or more affective issues (Jehn, 1997). Interestingly, acting restrained contributes to positive, substantive outcomes. This might be interpreted in terms of the negotiators’ principles; focus on your major objectives, not on all details (Fisher & Ury, 1981; Mastenbroek, 1989).

Confronting, demanding attention to the conflict-issues is often seen as necessary and inevitably for effective conflict management. Results show a dramatic impact on relational outcomes. This result is even more striking, when we realize the strong positive correlation between confronting and problem solving. So, on the one hand, confrontation is inevitable to solve problems. On the other hand, it puts major stress on the interpersonal relations. In line with the previous remarks on avoiding, the lesson learned here seems that one should be restrictive in confronting conflict issues. Jehn (1997) specifies this, by demonstrating that norms for openness on conflict are most beneficial when the openness is restricted to cognitive conflicts. This seems contradictory to the importance of both feedback and ventilation of emotions in serious and personal conflict. This might indeed be important. However, setting the stage, by confronting the issue with the other party is a delicate move, requiring preparation, which usually in organizations is not well done. Persons in authority tend to criticize subordinates only when upset and angry (Baron, 1989). And furthermore, Allred (2000) criticizes the idea that ventilating anger is beneficial, and offers alternatives for effective conflict management, in which parties do cognitive work, before bringing issues to the table in a confrontative, and easily accusing way.

The negative effect of confronting on relational outcomes is in line with expectations, and so are the negative impact of forcing, and the positive impact of problem solving and process controlling. Compromising did not uniquely contribute to relational outcomes. This might be attributed to the rather strong correlation between compromising and problem solving and the limited use of compromising. The clear negative influence of forcing on relational outcomes is demonstrated. No positive influence on joint substantive outcomes is compensating for this. This challenges previous
findings emphasizing the effectiveness of mixing forcing and problem solving (Van de Vliert et al., 1997).

Results of this study do support the idea that both problem solving and process controlling are most important for effective outcomes (Van de Vliert et al., 1995). An interesting difference between these two components is that problem solving has the strongest impact on relational outcomes, whereas process controlling has the strongest impact on substantive outcomes. Problem solving is indeed more oriented towards the concerns of other as well as self, whereas process controlling is less oriented towards the concerns of the other party, but on achieving outcomes. This might explain the different effects of these two components.

The positive effects of process controlling found in this study are in line with Lind and Tyler’s (1988) comments that process control is instrumental for beneficial outcomes. The conclusions support our previous recommendation (Van de Vliert et al., 1995) that in getting one’s way process controlling should replace forcing efforts. Until now, process controlling is hardly used in conflict studies or in conflict management training. Research and applications are typically limited to the five modes of the well-known conflict management grid (Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1970; Rahim, 1992; Thomas, 1992). By doing so, scholars, consultants, trainers, and clients develop restricted cognitive maps of conflict management. We therefore advocate the paying of specific attention to process controlling as an important behavioral alternative to forcing in achieving substantive outcomes in social conflict.

Though not a focus in this study, the effects of hierarchical position and gender are worth mentioning here. When in a relatively powerful position, participants were more successful in achieving substantive outcomes. They did so by using a combination of less avoiding and accommodating, and relatively more process controlling. Once more, this underscores the relevance of studying this mixture of behavior, particularly in the organizational contexts, where power and gender do have impact on behavior and conflict outcomes.

Substantive and Relational Effectiveness

Dyadic effectiveness is conceptualized here in terms of mitigating or overcoming the substantive conflict issues, and improving the mutual relationship, with explicit attention paid to the covariation between the two kinds of outcomes. It came as no surprise that substantive and relational outcomes are strongly intertwined in the work situation that we simulated. As most conflicts within organizations occur between highly interdependent workers, it is likely that positive relationships between these two outcomes will often exist. It implies that work situations tend to either support or undermine the attainment of both substantive and relational outcomes. Therefore, the challenge in interpersonal conflict really is to achieve both, substantive and relational outcomes. Since long, this approach has been advocated by numerous authors (e.g., Blake & Mouton, 1964, 1970, 1981; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993; Rahim, 1992; Rubin et al., 1994; Tjosvold, 1991; Thomas, 1992; Van de Vliert, 1997, Walton, 1969). Why this “dual concern” is so important, is insightfully illustrated by this study. The strong connection between the two facets of dyadic effectiveness makes it almost impossible to obtain the one without the other. Further research might give us a better insight in the sequence of these two types of outcomes.

Taken together, the value of the present study lies in discovering and mapping the as yet unknown complexity of dyadic effectiveness in terms of improving both joint substantive gains and mutual relationships.

REFERENCES


