

When a Friend Becomes a Foe: The Effects of Relational Rifts on Individuals and Groups

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Research on negative relationships typically focuses on existing negativity rather than relationship change. We introduce the term relational rift to describe the situation when the relationship between two individuals turns from positive to negative. We suggest that the impact of relationship change on individuals and groups is more profound than if there is existing dislike. We review the literature on conflict and negative relationships. Further, we present empirical evidence that a socio-emotional rift can produce a more negative effect on individual work behaviors than task-oriented rifts and feelings of trust and willingness to help are deteriorated due to the rift.

INTRODUCTION

Tension was apparent during the January, 2013 questioning of Secretary of Defense nominee, Chuck Hagel, particularly when questioned by former colleague, John McCain. McCain pressed Hagel on several issues and according to reports was very aggressive, even hostile. The history of their relationship is quite interesting. They formed a friendship while working together in the Senate, bonding over similar philosophies and shared experiences in Vietnam. However, their well-publicized disagreement over military strategy in Iraq caused their personal relationship to deteriorate beyond repair. As the Wall Street Journal reported, McCain will have a tough decision to make about the confirmation, tough, in large part, because of “a rift in their personal relationship.” (Murray, 2013, p. A4)

While relationship changes such as this are not all that unusual, we still do not have a clear understanding of either the antecedents or outcomes of such a relationship change. There have been a number of studies that have investigated the outcomes of negative relationships, but the literature is relatively silent on how negative relationships develop. More importantly, there is little research on what happens when a good relationship goes bad. We propose that when a relationship changes from positive to negative, it is far more detrimental to the group than an existing negative relationship. We use the term relational rift to describe this phenomenon. We define a relational rift as a sudden and unexpected break in a previously positive relationship because of a negative action or event caused by one of the individuals. The rift is a type of affective event in that it is a negative affective reaction caused by a precipitating event that has consequences for both individual behaviors and group interactions (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

This topic is of great importance because working in groups has become a necessity in most organizations, and while managers anticipate that groups will experience positive interactions, relationship conflicts often arise which cause negative feelings among group members. For example, Jehn (1995) found that groups with high levels of relationship conflict have lower levels of performance, satisfaction, and intention to stay in the group. Conflict also produces problems for the organization such as lessened communication (Lau & Murnighan, 2005) and disrupted functioning of the organization (Labianca & Brass, 2006).

In this paper we seek to answer the following questions: What are the effects of relational rifts on the interactions within a group? Are individuals in a group who experience a relational rift more likely to engage in counterproductive behaviors and less likely to behave professionally in response to the rift? Does the perception of a betrayal lead to more damaging outcomes than a change due to an accumulation of negative interactions?

We will first review the literature on conflict to build our understanding of rifts. We then extend the existing research by hypothesizing about how these rifts affect individual and group behaviors. We then test these hypotheses and offer the results. Last we will discuss the implications of our findings.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Conflict is defined as a “process in which one party perceives that its interests are being opposed or negatively affected by another party” (Wall & Callister, 1995, p. 517). In the organizational literature, task and relationship conflict have been described as separate constructs (Jehn, 1995; Pelled, 1996; Pinkley, 1990). Task, or cognitive, conflict is characterized by disagreements about the work or assignments being performed by the group. Relationship, or affective, conflict is linked to troublesome interpersonal relationships, such as the hostility or tension felt among group members (Jehn & Mannix, 2001).

In organizational groups, a moderate amount of task conflict helps members perform non-routine tasks better (Jehn, 1995; Pelled, Eisenhardt & Xin, 1999). For example, task conflict in a group prompts members to ask more questions when executing a cognitive task (Shah & Jehn, 1993). With greater task conflict, group members are more likely to explore multiple options in a decision-making task (Eisenhardt, Kahwajy & Burgeois, 1997) and are more likely to engage in process monitoring within the group’s interactions (Jehn & Shah, 1997).

Relationship or affective conflict, on the other hand, is detrimental to group effectiveness (Amason, 1996, Jehn, 1995; 1997; Pelled, 1996). Relationship conflict is an interpersonal conflict among individuals, and it can arise from, among other things, different attitudes, different personalities, and different values. This type of conflict is not considered to result in better problem solving or decision-making. Rather, it often results in feelings of tension, anxiety, and dissatisfaction with the group (Jehn, 1995). Additionally, higher levels of task interdependence, the extent to which members must rely on one another (Van de Ven & Ferry, 1980), may increase the level of discord, negatively affecting relationship conflict and, consequently, task performance (Jehn, 1995).

Relational Rifts

While research concludes that task conflict, or conflict over ideas, objectives, or resources, is generally positive for the group – pushing the group to achieve greater outcomes (Eisenhardt, et al., 1997; Shah & Jehn, 1993), relational conflict is viewed as both undesirable and contrary to group effectiveness (Jehn, 1995; 1997). Consistent with this distinction between cognitive or task conflict and affective or relationship conflict made by researchers in the area of conflict management (Amason & Schweiger, 1994; Jehn 1995; Pinkley, 1990), we maintain that there are two major types of relational rifts: task-oriented and social-emotional. Task-oriented rifts can arise from disagreements over the task objectives, allocation of duties and/or resources, or other work-related event that trigger negative emotions about the other and lead to a break in the relationship. Task conflict has been found to be beneficial for groups because it can increase critical analysis of ideas and consequently improve performance (Jehn, 1995).

Similar to the research on task conflict, we suggest that task-oriented rifts will be easier to manage and can be mediated or resolved before dysfunctional behaviors emerge (Pierce & Gardner, 2002).

While task conflict can be good for groups, relationship conflict is not. It has been found to decrease performance and satisfaction and it can lead to increased anxiety and tension in the group (Jehn, 1995; 1997; Pelled, 1996b). Relational rifts might be particularly bad for groups because of the negative event that triggers them. Events that we propose might cause a relational rift include a member gossiping about the other, embarrassing the other, or even engaging in an act of betrayal of either a personal or professional nature. The consequence of this conduct is an immediate change in the relationship from positive to negative. Unlike task-oriented rifts, which may not be permanent, social-emotional rifts often create a lasting dislike between the parties and can cause an erosion in trust because the parties view the behavior as a personal affront. As a result, the effect of a relational rift on subsequent behaviors and on future group dynamics is often quite severe.

Given the highly charged nature of emotional conflict, we believe that the changes that occur due to a perceived interpersonal slight are much more harmful for the group than changes that occur due to conflict associated with the task. Therefore, we believe that social-emotional rifts will be associated with more intense feelings of dislike for the offending individual than task-oriented rifts. In addition, social-emotional rifts are associated with feelings of betrayal and will result in decreased levels of trust of the offending individual than task-oriented rifts. This leads to the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Social-emotional rifts will produce more intense feelings of dislike for the offending individual than task-oriented rifts.

Hypothesis 1b: Social-emotional rifts will produce more intense feelings of betrayal for the offending individual than task-oriented rifts.

Hypothesis 1c: Social-emotional rifts will result in lowered levels of trust in the offending individual than task-oriented rifts.

Counterproductive Work Behaviors

The recency of the negative emotion will make it much more likely that reactions to others in the group will be rather strong and potentially very damaging in nature. When individuals feel that they have been betrayed or hurt by another, it is likely to be detrimental to the group for at least two reasons. First, groups with high levels of emotion often forget about the task and instead focus on the conflict, which leads to undesirable behaviors (Jehn, 1997). Second, highly emotionally charged conflict has been found to have the most detrimental outcomes for groups, since it is both emotional in nature and viewed by group members as irresolvable (Jehn, 1997). In these situations it is often not helpful to encourage members to “talk it out”, rather, openness seems to fuel the conflict (Jehn, 1995). Indeed, De Dreu and Van Vianen (2001) found that avoiding attempts to resolve the relationship conflict actually helped group performance, most likely because it allowed group members to focus on the task.

Connected to the high emotionality effect of a relational rift on the group is the desire among some group members to reciprocate for the negative incident. While individuals in existing negative relationships generally find coping strategies such as direct contact avoidance (Jehn, 1995), individuals who have been recently affected by the conflict are not able to distance themselves from the situation and are more likely to strike out in return. Research by Akoyo, Callan & Hartel (2003) and Lazarus & Folkman (1984) shows that conflict that has just occurred is more difficult and more stressful for individuals because they have not had time to cope with the high levels of emotion and develop strategies for dealing with one another.

Exchange theory suggests that if an individual has recently injured or offended a group member, then that member becomes motivated to reciprocate and hurt the offending individual (Blau, 1964). This is particularly troubling since it appears to lead to an escalation of the general conflict in the group and to more blaming and defensiveness on the part of all group members (Jehn, 1997). When individuals reciprocate for negative feelings that they have developed in a social-emotional rift, it is likely that the reciprocation is counterproductive to the work of the group.

These behaviors that are detrimental or counterproductive to the goals of the group have been identified as counterproductive work behaviors (Dalal, 2005). Counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) range from absenteeism to bullying (Ayoko et al., 2003; Farrell & Stamm, 1988). Marcus and Schuler (2004) found that CWBs are often triggered by perceptions of being wronged or being the victim of injustice, which can be expected in the case of an individual experiencing a relational rift. Perceived stress can also be a trigger for a counterproductive work behavior (Farrell & Stamm, 1988).

In the case of a social-emotional relational rift, the offended individual is likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors that affect the group. Previous research has found evidence that groups that experience high levels of relationship conflict may have more personal attacks and arguments and lower group morale (Jehn & Chatman, 2000; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). Conflict that is stressful for the group and continues over time can escalate and lead to other problems such as bullying, harassment, and other counterproductive work behaviors (Ayoko et al., 2003; Einarsen, 1999).

Once individuals start expressing their negative emotions in the group either through verbal accusations or CWBs, it is likely to affect others in the group. Further, these feelings can lead to similar responses from the other group members (Totterdell, 2000). The phenomenon of the transfer of emotions and affect between individuals in groups is known as group emotional contagion (Barsade, 2002; Schoenewolf, 1990). For example, Neumann & Strack (2000) found evidence that individuals' moods were affected by listening to others express their emotional state. Another study found that when leaders express positive emotions, they influenced their followers' moods and were rated as more effective (Bono & Ilies, 2006). The contagion effect suggests that the group members are aware, at some level, of the negative relationship, particularly if the offended group member is engaging in some form of CWBs. Therefore we expect:

Hypothesis 2a: Groups with a social-emotional relational rift are more likely to have occurrences of counterproductive work behaviors than those groups with task-oriented rifts.

Hypothesis 2b: Members of groups with a social-emotional relational rift are more likely to be aware of the relational rift than when there is a task-oriented relational rift.

Negative Affect

Labianca & Brass (1997) explored the nature of negative affective relationships. They suggested that negative relationships are bad for the organization because they can negatively influence behaviors, attitudes, and outcomes (Labianca & Brass, 1997). Individuals who have negative affect, or dislike, for another may be less likely to cooperate (Jehn 1995; 1997) and more likely to try to harm the other (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). Further, Hess (2000) found that individuals who disliked another group member felt greater levels of discomfort with the other and tended to distance themselves, through strategies such as avoidance, to manage their discomfort. In addition, individuals who experience high levels of negative affect tend to have lowered trust (Choi & Cho, 2009).

Trust is an integral part of relationships in organizations and is important to the process of getting work done. Trust has been defined a variety of ways, but for the purpose of this paper we use the definition given by Kramer & Lewicki (2010, p. 247) in which trust is characterized as "a psychological state characterized by several components, the most important of which is some sort of positive expectation regarding others' behavior". This definition suggests that trust can be eroded if the expectations about the other are violated or proven false.

Trust can lead to prosocial behaviors (Lewicki, McAllister & Bies, 1998) which can increase productivity and effectiveness (Dirks, 2000; Langfred, 2007). It can be particularly important to diverse teams of individuals, which is increasingly common in today's organizational environment (Aulakh, Kotabe & Sahay, 1996; Krishnan, Matin & Noorderhaven, 2006).

Distrust, conversely, can have a negative impact on the functioning of groups and organizations. For example, Dirks (2000) found that team members who distrusted one another focused less on team performance and more on individual performance. Studies have found that conflict within teams can

disrupt trust, which can then negatively impact performance (Barker, 1993; Langsfred, 2007). Groups that are engaged in a negative spiral of task and relational conflict typically have lower levels of trust (Choi & Cho, 2009).

Helping group members is a critical component of group productivity. Helping has been defined as “voluntarily assisting other members in work related areas” (Ng & Dyne, 2005, p. 515) and is related to other concepts such as organizational citizenship behaviors (Organ, 1988). Positive affect is positively related to helping behaviors (Fisher, 2002; George & Brief, 1992). Since negative affect has been associated with distancing behaviors such as avoidance (Hess, 2000) one might expect that one would be less likely to help someone they dislike. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 3a: The offended individual’s ability to trust in the other is negatively related to the level of dislike for the other.

Hypothesis 3b: The offended individual’s ability to maintain a professional relationship is negatively related to the level of dislike for the other.

Hypothesis 3c: The offended individual’s willingness to help is negatively related to the level of dislike for the other.

Betrayal

When a group member experiences a betrayal it is extremely detrimental to the group. Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro & Hannon (2002) define a betrayal as a violation of the norms of the relationship. Events such as betrayals which harm or threaten to harm an individual tend to generate negative emotions (Frijda, 1988). Individuals who have experienced betrayal report a variety of emotions ranging from distrust to anger (Sias, Heath, Perry, Silva & Fix, 2004). In addition to the emotional responses, Sias and colleagues (2004) point out that the results of a betrayal are long-lasting and difficult to resolve. The more positive the relationship is originally, the more damaging the betrayal is to the individuals and their relationship. High levels of trust that exist between friends can cause the perceived betrayal to have a very substantial and negative impact (Robinson, Dirks & Ozelik, 2004; Labianca & Brass, 2006).

Betrayals are particularly destructive because when trust has been violated, it can create an extremely negative response (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). It can also cause individuals to feel insulted and perceive a loss of face, both of which can lead to anger, aggression, and a desire for revenge (Berkowitz, 1993; Bies & Tripp, 1995; Felson, 1982). Once a betrayal has occurred it is very difficult for individuals to overcome their negative emotions (Finkel et al., 2002). In addition to the negative affect, victims of a betrayal can develop negative cognitions and negative behaviors (Hess, 2000; Kremer & Stephens, 1983; Sias, 2004). Individuals who have been “wronged” by another might engage in more aggressive acts which can escalate and trigger a spiral of conflict (Bies & Tripp, 1995; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986).

Given the high levels of negative emotions that are experienced, victims of a betrayal may find it difficult to continue working with the other (Sias et al., 2004). There is a great deal of emotional stress generated by a betrayal, and those who have been affected will engage in different strategies to manage the hurt. These strategies range from distancing behaviors to leaving the organization altogether and they often negatively impact job performance (Hess, 2000; Sias et al., 2004). In extreme cases, there can be a desire for revenge which will damage the relationship even further (Bies & Tripp, 1995). Individuals who are betrayed experience decreased levels of trust due to the violation of the norms of the relationship and are less likely to desire to engage in professional behaviors or help the other. This leads to our last set of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 4a: The offended individual’s ability to trust in the other is negatively related to the level of betrayal experienced.

Hypothesis 4b: The offended individual’s ability to maintain a professional relationship is negatively related to the level of betrayal experienced.

Hypothesis 4c: The offended individual’s willingness to help is negatively related to the level of betrayal experienced.

METHODS AND RESULTS

A questionnaire was administered to graduate students in core and elective Organization Behavior courses at a state university in North Texas. Approximately 200 questionnaires were distributed; 173 usable responses were returned. In the first section of the questionnaire students were asked to think of someone with whom they worked and whom they did not like or for whom they had negative feelings. Students were asked to provide their age, sex, and national origin as well as those of the other person. Information about the relationship, such as months known, nature of the relationship, nature of their interactions, and other descriptive information was also provided. In the second section of the questionnaire, students were asked to provide narratives identifying what led to the relationship change, why they disliked the person and what were the consequences of the negative relationship to themselves, the other person, and their work group. In the third section of the questionnaire, students were given 14 statements describing their feelings toward the other person and their perceptions of the other person's and the group's feelings regarding the relationship. On a seven-point Likert scale, students were asked whether they strongly agreed, agreed, strongly disagreed, disagreed, or were neutral regarding the statements. Analysis of the respondents revealed that 65% were male, 49% were Caucasian, 38% were Asian, 9% were Hispanic and 4% were African American, with an average age of 29. Descriptive statistics and correlations are included in Table 1.

TABLE 1
DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS

| | Mean | S. D. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
|------------|---------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|--------|-------|--------|---------|---------|-------|--------|--------|----|
| 1. Sex | .3468 | .47734 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2. Age | 29.2543 | 6.12126 | -.269** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3. Cauc. | .4855 | .50124 | .070 | .098 | 1 | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 4. Hisp. | .0925 | .29055 | -.107 | .199** | -.310** | 1 | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5. AfAmer | .0405 | .19761 | .097 | -.081 | -.199** | -.066 | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| 6. Asian | .3815 | .48717 | -.047 | -.187** | -.763** | -.251** | -.161* | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| 7. Same | .5645 | .28161 | -.095 | .016 | .106 | -.144* | -.134* | .031 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| 8. Known | 33.7225 | 39.19322 | -.114 | .446** | .128* | .088 | -.149* | -.123 | .119 | 1 | | | | | | |
| 9. Dislike | 5.3468 | 1.34075 | .020 | -.106 | -.036 | .081 | -.053 | .010 | .007 | -.094 | 1 | | | | | |
| 10. Betray | 3.6185 | 2.17387 | .022 | .062 | -.085 | .121 | -.032 | .028 | -.055 | .139* | .092 | 1 | | | | |
| 11. Trust | 2.4162 | 1.43469 | -.093 | .004 | -.097 | -.177* | .043 | .187** | .091 | -.090 | -.344** | -.309** | 1 | | | |
| 12. CWBs | 1.0636 | 1.49086 | -.007 | .186** | .122 | -.081 | -.009 | -.074 | -.044 | .201** | -.200** | .165* | -.067 | 1 | | |
| 13. Aware | 1.8439 | 2.27062 | .034 | .172* | .082 | -.084 | -.038 | -.019 | -.098 | .171* | -.129* | .030 | -.108 | .738** | 1 | |
| 14. Type | .9653 | 1.19542 | -.020 | .213** | .048 | -.074 | -.068 | .023 | .012 | .165* | -.239** | .105 | .005 | .712** | .634** | 1 |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Quantitative data used in this study for the most part came from the third part of the questionnaire with the exception of classifying the type of conflict as social-emotional or task-oriented. For this, we

coded responses to the question “why do you dislike this person?” as either social-emotional (1) or task-oriented (0). Fifty-one percent of the observations were classified as social-emotional conflict.

To test the first two sets of hypotheses, (H1a-H1c and H2a-H2b), the independent variables were the main effect, type of conflict, with controls for the sex, age, and race of the respondent. In addition, we also controlled for the amount of time (in months) the respondent and the other person knew each other and included an index variable capturing the demographic similarities between the two individuals.

Ordinary least squares regression models were estimated first only for the control variables and then adding the type of conflict for each of the predicted results. When only the control variables were included, respondents of Asian descent were more likely to report positive levels of trust ($p < .05$) while older workers were more likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors ($p < .05$) or perceive that others in the group were aware of the conflict ($p < .01$). When the type of conflict was added to the model, the coefficients for these control variables were no longer significant. For the first set of hypotheses, we found no significant relationships between the type of conflict and the offended party’s feelings of betrayal or lower levels of trust. In addition, we found that, contrary to expectations, social-emotional conflict was negatively relative to dislike, at $p < .01$. Thus, none of the predictions of Hypothesis 1 were supported. Conversely, for Hypothesis 2 the coefficients for counterproductive work behaviors and awareness of the conflict by other group members were both positive and significantly related to social-emotional conflict at $p < .001$. Thus, Hypotheses 2a and 2b were supported. Results of these analyses are reported in Table 2.

TABLE 2
REGRESSION RESULTS OF EFFECTS OF TYPE OF DISLIKE ON REACTIONS

| | Dislike | Betrayal | Trust | CWBs | Awareness |
|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Sex | .035 (.222) | .227 (.367) | -.267 (.237) | -.009 (.177) | .208 (.297) |
| Age | -.016 (.018) | .014 (.030) | .011 (.019) | .008 (.014) | .022 (.024) |
| Hispanic | .377 (.373) | 1.031 (.616) | -.689 (.398) | -.343 (.297) | -.566 (.498) |
| African American | -.451 (.528) | -.117 (.873) | .590 (.564) | .106 (.421) | -.247 (.706) |
| Asian | .030 (.221) | .310 (.366) | .497* (.236) | -.296 (.176) | -.179 (.296) |
| Same Demographics | .070 (.367) | -.273 (.607) | .346 (.392) | -.311 (.293) | -.986* (.490) |
| Months Known | -.002 (.003) | .008 (.005) | -.004 (.003) | .004 (.002) | .005 (.004) |
| Type of Conflict | -.249** (.087) | .194 (.144) | -.020 (.093) | .879*** (.069) | 1.174*** (.116) |

* $p < .05$ n=173 n=173 n=173 n=173 n=173
 ** $p < .01$ $r^2 = .074$ $r^2 = .051$ $r^2 = .083$ $r^2 = .530$ $r^2 = .427$
 *** $p < .001$

Hypotheses 3, and 4 were tested using a separate regression model as the predictor variables for each of these were the level of dislike for the other person and the level of betrayal experienced by the respondent. An additional control variable was added to account for whether the respondent reported that they at one time liked the other person. Both dislike and betrayal were negatively related to trust at $p < .001$, and dislike was negatively related to the likelihood of helping the other at $p < .05$, thus supporting Hypotheses 3a, 3c, and 4a. The individual’s ability to maintain a professional relationship was unaffected

by his or her feelings of dislike or betrayal; thus, Hypotheses 3b and 4b were not supported. Results are reported in Table 3.

TABLE 3
REGRESSION RESULTS OF CONSEQUENCES OF CONFLICT
ON INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIORS

| | Trust | Professional Relationship | Willingness to Help |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Sex | -.231 (.210) | .142 (.258) | .095 (.248) |
| Age | .015 (.017) | .028 (.021) | -.004 (.020) |
| Hispanic | -1.204** (.379) | -.846 (.447) | 1.280** (.499) |
| African American | .605 (.502) | -.570 (.618) | .293 (.592) |
| Asian | .633** (.211) | -.869*** (.260) | -.464 (.249) |
| Same Demographics | .236 (.348) | -.859 (.428*) | -.262 (.411) |
| Months Known | -.004 (.003) | .005 (.003) | -.003 >.003 |
| Dislike | -.288*** (.074.) | .049 (.091) | -.213* (.087) |
| Betrayal | -.218*** (.047) | -.098 (.057) | -.049 (.055) |
| Used to Like | .168** (.061) | .107 (.076) | -.031 (.072) |
| | *p<.05 n=173 | n=173 | n=173 |
| | **p<.01 r ² =.250 | r ² =.134 | r ² =.104 |
| | ***p<.001 | | |

DISCUSSION

Our findings suggest that the type of rift does not seem to matter with respect to the individual's internal state. No differences were reported in levels of reported dislike, betrayal, or trust between social-emotional rifts and task-oriented rifts. Some studies have suggested that these results may occur because it is difficult, if not impossible, for individuals to disentangle types of conflict. The reasoning is that relationship conflict can lead to task conflict because dislike leads to disagreement over task related issues and, conversely, task conflict can lead to relationship conflict because personal dislike stems from continued disagreement over task related issues. In a meta-analysis of conflict studies, De Dreu & Weingart (2003) found that task conflict and relationship conflict were both bad for groups. One study found that relationship conflict leads to task conflict, but not the other way around (Choi & Cho, 2010). Our study suggests that, at least for cognitions and affective reactions, the type of conflict (and therefore rift) was irrelevant. One was just as likely to dislike or distrust the offending individual if there was a task-oriented rift than if there was a social-emotional rift.

However, we did find evidence that the behavioral responses and outcomes do differ with regards to type of rift. If the rift is social-emotional it is more likely that individuals will act and that others will be aware of the rift. This result is supported by evidence from previous studies which suggest that the high

levels of negative emotion experienced in social-emotional rifts make it more likely that individuals will engage in some sort of counterproductive work behavior (Ayoko et al., 2003; Einarsen, 1999). Interestingly, age seems to be positively related to these outer manifestations. This seems somewhat counter-intuitive, as one would think older employees would be able to keep their emotions in check and not engage in CWBs. Further research is needed to examine the nature of the relationship and why the rift occurred. In addition, because of their experience, older workers may be more perceptive and, therefore, are more aware when conflicts exist.

Our second model examined the effects of internal reactions to the rift on external behaviors. Both dislike and betrayal predicted lack of trust and dislike predicted an unwillingness to help. Thus, perceptions of betrayal did not lead to more disruptive behaviors as initially anticipated. Even when respondents reported that they disliked the other or felt betrayed by the other, they can still maintain a professional relationship. This is good news for managers as it suggests that conflicts within groups are not necessarily detrimental to the continued professional effectiveness of the groups. On the other hand, dislike between individuals within group may affect willingness to help – this could suggest that animosity among group members will have an overall negative effect on positive behaviors such as helping and other organizational citizenship behaviors in part because the conflict causes problems for the relationship (Ng & Dyne, 2005).

IMPLICATIONS FOR MANAGEMENT

Trying to resolve these rifts will be a challenge for managers because they will need to strive to balance the need for discussion with the need for avoidance. On the one hand, allowing members to “vent” or discuss their problems can further hinder the group’s effectiveness (Brown, Westbrook & Challagalla, 2005; De Dreu & Van Vianen, 2001). Conversely, allowing members to engage in a strategy of avoidance is also has negative implications for group interactions (Hess, 2000).

Thus, the question becomes not whether the manager should act, but rather, what should the manager do? There are several steps a manager can take. The first, is to separate the members of the negative dyad from one another and the group. While this may cause a temporary disruption to the group, it will prevent escalation of the conflict (Kressel & Pruitt, 1989). It also allows for some time to pass for the two individuals to “cool off” before engaging again. The time apart might give the parties the opportunity to rationally evaluate the costs of escalating the conflict, develop some coping strategies, and heal some of the hurt felt immediately after the precipitating incident. There is a risk that this tactic will cause problems since it will call attention to the negative dyad and possibly stigmatize those group members; conversely, allowing the conflict to escalate would also call attention to the negative behavior. Thus, by separating the parties, the potential for the conflict to spiral out of control is mitigated.

Another method for dealing with this problem is preemptive, that is, having groups develop norms about dealing with conflict before the conflict occurs. Surprisingly, research suggests that groups who have norms of openness about dealing with conflict tend to do worse than groups with avoidance norms (Jehn, 1995). This would suggest that managers and groups create norms that discourage individuals from trying to work through problems using discussion and encourage individuals to avoid issues that stimulate conflict. If an organization or group creates an environment in which individuals perceive high levels of procedural justice, group members might be less likely to seek revenge against other members who they perceived have hurt them (Aquino, Tripp & Bies, 2006). Managers can work to create a climate in which individuals work towards forgiveness, once the original hurt has worn off.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with most self-report studies, there runs a risk that respondents’ answers may be biased or, at least, based on a misinterpretation of the question. By asking both open-ended questions as well as survey queries, we believe the study was able to capture the true feelings of the respondents regarding the object of their dislike. We also note that the distinction between task-oriented and social-emotional rifts was

based on a content analysis of qualitative responses. Recognizing the possible miscoding that can occur, the authors plan to administer the survey again to another group of students to validate the responses.

While we found a clear link between dislike and trust we don't have a clear sense of which comes first. Do people dislike someone because they distrust him or her, or do they distrust people because they dislike them? We asked the question as "used to like" to try to control for this, but it is quite possible that lack of trust is an antecedent to dislike. Further research is needed to determine the direction of the causality. The picture with betrayal seems clearer in that one would suspect that a betrayal precedes both dislike and distrust. Further analysis of data could confirm this suspicion.

Other than our focus on betrayal, we did not closely examine the antecedents to the rift. It is quite possible that particular antecedents are much more detrimental than others. For example, if the rift is related to the presence of a bully or toxic person it might have particular outcomes and suggest certain prescriptions for fixing the problem (Einarsen, 1999; Meglich, Faley & DuBois, 2012).

Our findings with regards to age and race suggest that more research is needed. It was puzzling to us that older employees tended to be more likely to engage in counterproductive work behaviors. However, it could be the case that older workers are more likely to report their CWBs while younger workers are more likely to be prone to the social desirability response bias when answering questions about behaviors in the workplace (Arnold & Feldman, 1981).

In a surprising set of findings, race was significantly related to some of the outcomes, but not necessarily in the direction expected. Hispanics reported that they were significantly less likely to trust an offender, but were significantly more likely to be willing to help. Asians, on the other hand, reported that they were more likely to trust a violator and less likely to maintain a professional relationship with them. As Hispanics and Asians are generally categorized as having a collectivist cultural orientation (DeCampo, Rogers & Henricks, 2010), it is difficult to explain this inconsistency, and clearly more research is needed on individual characteristics as antecedents for the effects of a rift.

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