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Goals, Conflict, Politics, and Performance of Cross-Functional Sourcing Teams—Results from a Social Team Experiment

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Strategic sourcing is carried out in cross-functional teams to account for the complexity and multidimensionality of modern procurement decisions. However, such teams not only enable the integration of distinct interdependent skill sets and viewpoints, they are also characterized by functional goal misalignment. We focus on the resulting behavioral challenges, namely conflict and politics, and their effects on team satisfaction and rationality, which ultimately leads to observed outcomes. We test our hypotheses in a structural equation model based on data gathered from 468 participants in a social team experiment. We find a mediated effect of goal misalignment on political behavior via two types of team conflict. Political behavior, in turn, obstructs rational team sourcing decisions and reduces team members' satisfaction with the process. Our study indicates that behavioral challenges in the framework of Organizational Buying Behavior not only co-occur but affect each other via mediation. Hence, managers need to closely monitor the escalation chains' origin, task conflict, which constitutes a necessary condition for further emotional dissent and political biasing. We contribute to the understanding of the challenges in cross-functional sourcing teams, thereby providing advice to executives in their pursuit to rationalize and improve sourcing team decisions and their outcomes.

Keywords: Global sourcing; Team decision-making; Experimental design; Organizational Buying Behavior

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the outsourcing waves of recent decades, organizational buying has become an integral element of firms' strategies and operations (Carter and Narasimhan 1996; Trent and Monczka 2003). At the same time, deciding where to buy from has become more and more complex (Riedl et al. 2013). In order to make effective buying (or sourcing) decisions, various functions, such as purchasing, R&D, and marketing, have to align and integrate (Trent and Monczka 1994; Mentzer et al. 2008). Thus, members of sourcing teams typically possess unique, nonredundant skills, which create interdependence in supply chain management (SCM) decision-making processes, requiring functional representatives to exchange and jointly process information to leverage their combined expertise (Thompson 1967; Moses and Åhlström 2008).

It is well established that cross-functional integration contributes to firm performance and supply chain effectiveness (Flynn et al. 2010), yet diverse sourcing teams also face challenges from functional misalignment and conflicting motives that potentially interfere with rational decision-making processes (Moses and Åhlström 2008; Kaufmann et al. 2012). Thus, cross-functional sourcing teams face a cooperation situation where cooperation is required (i.e., from executives), but functional managers still compete for influence in political fights (Rajala and Tidström 2017). For instance, technical functions politically defend their interests by cropping available supply options to R&D's preferred supplier via the design of sourcing requirements (Stanczyk et al. 2015). In a prestudy with a German

multinational automotive supplier, a top-level supply chain manager stated that, while the trade-offs between costs and technical capabilities can theoretically be resolved throughout the decision-making process, personal animosities, and departmental silo-thinking prevent the required level of collaboration and concession making in sourcing and other SCM committees.

Despite the acknowledgment of misaligned incentives, ineffectiveness, and conflict in cross-functional sourcing teams (Sheth 1973), empirical insights on the particular problems and their potential detrimental effects are still limited. Although metatheory in the field prominently discusses the team level (Schorsch et al. 2017), it remains empirically underrepresented given the traditional focus on organizational-level buyer–supplier relations (e.g., Zimmermann and Foerstl 2014). Today, especially conflict, self-serving politics, and their mutual relationship in SCM team, decision making remains underrepresented yet impactful phenomena (Bai et al. 2016; Thornton et al. 2016). Given initial case study evidence on conflict (e.g., Oliva and Watson 2011) and politics in SCM teams (e.g., Stanczyk et al. 2015), we can suspect that both have the potential to obstruct modern sourcing organizations from reaping the benefits of cross-functional integration (Turkulainen and Ketokivi 2012). Considering these research gaps, we pose the following research questions: (1) How do (mis)aligned goals affect conflict and politics in cross-functional sourcing teams and how are both related to each other? (2) What are the implications of conflict and politics in cross-functional sourcing teams?

Figure 1 shows the framework that derives from our research questions. By further specifying and testing the model we derive from the framework above, we contribute generally by answering the call for more “people-focused” SCM research, which is the primary underestimated SCM research theme today (Wieland et al. 2016; Schorsch et al. 2017). More specifically, this paper advances our conceptual and empirical understanding of Organizational Buying Behavior (OBB) as it begins to unravel the

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hitherto ignored internal relationships among OBB concepts on conflict, politicking, and negotiation (Sheth 1973). Specifically, we jointly consider conflict, politics, and their relationship in SCM decision-making processes. Thus, our study deepens and extends the original OBB theory and taps into the relatively uncovered area of team politics (Vigoda-Gadot and Vashdi 2012). Accordingly, our contribution can be understood as middle-range theory elaboration of OBB that enlightens a deeply rooted practical problem in firms’ sourcing and SCM teams (Garver 2019).

Moreover, this is the first study to examine team-level politics with large-N empirical methods in SCM and continues the yet emerging literature on conflict and politics in sourcing teams (e.g., Marshall et al. 2015; Stanczyk et al. 2015). Hence, we provide empirical evidence on political decision-making processes at the team level and add detail to the benefits and drawbacks of the cross-functional organizational buying centers. Considering the study context, our results allow for careful extrapolation to other cross-functional, temporary, and interdependent team settings in SCM research such as outsourcing or location decisions.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: First, we highlight how exactly our study relates to the sourcing and OBB literature as our conceptual foundation, review the emerging SCM team research, and give an overview of today’s ambiguous research on the “conflict–politics link.” Thereby, we define our concepts of interest before deriving our hypotheses based on extant SCM and general management insight. We continue to present our methodology and channel our results into a discussion of findings based on various robustness checks and complementary analyses. We conclude with the implications of our research and future research opportunities that may fill the limitations that we accepted in this study.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

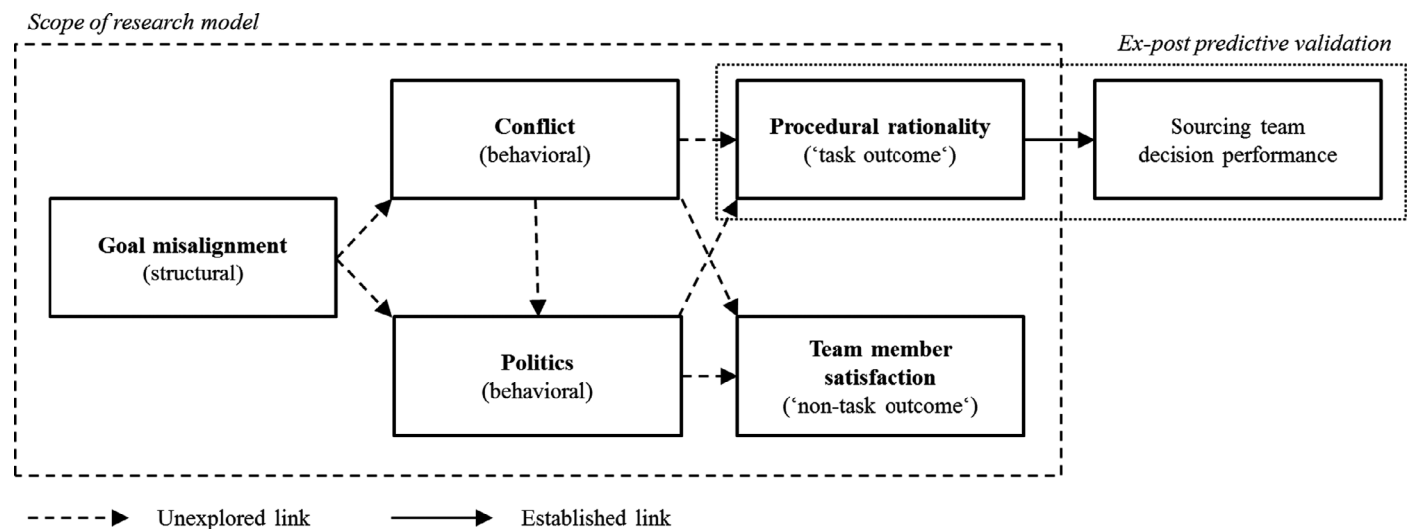
Context and theoretical grounding

Strategic decision about the upstream supply chain is usually carried out in cross-functional sourcing teams (Driedonks et al.

2010; Flynn et al. 2010). Functional representatives come from diverse backgrounds such as purchasing, marketing, or R&D and usually have divergent goals, expertise, or decision-making styles (Moses and Åhlström 2008; Kaufmann and Wagner 2017). In addition, cross-functional sourcing teams are examples of task-based functional integration that serves to solve a particular sourcing task through temporal rather than permanent integration (Miller and Dröge 1986; Foerstl et al. 2015). Hence, such a team can be defined as a collection of individuals with distinct non-redundant skills from different units with a common purpose of enhancing the performance of a particular supplier selection (adapted from Mohsen and Eng 2016). Conversely, collaborative planning, forecasting, and replenishment would rather be implemented in permanent “embedded” (i.e., permanent) teams (Foerstl et al. 2015). Our study focuses on temporal “task-based” and interdependent sourcing teams and the vital impact of their decisions on modern business organizations (Barney 2012; Riedl et al. 2013). Our idea of a sourcing team thus reflects the notion of the buying center in Organizational Buying Behavior (OBB).

Organizational Buying Behavior literature has established that corporate buying is a multidimension, multiperson, and thus multiperspective process, laying grounds for behavioral research in sourcing teams (Webster and Wind 1972; Sheth 1973). Interestingly, original OBB models do account for conflict, negotiation, bargaining, and politicking as irrational sources of inefficiency in buying centers (Sheth 1973; Johnston and Lewin 1996). The general model in Webster and Wind (1972) speaks explicitly of conflict and so-called “personal–political tactics” that can manifest in “reliance on informal relationships and friendships to get decision made and an exchange of favors with other members of the buying center” (p. 18). Despite their acknowledgment, we lack empirical evidence on those challenges and how they may interact in buying processes. Consistently, Sheth (1996) concluded that the OBB research stream has not been fully exploited, particularly where it relates to global sourcing teams. Studies have suspected that conflict and political dynamics affect purchasing and SCM decisions (Stank et al. 2001; Moses and Åhlström 2008), yet hitherto not focused much on them but often focused on the individual decision maker or the organization as a whole (Schorsch et al. 2017).

Figure 1: Research framework.



Our study builds on the understanding of sourcing as stepwise incremental and partly rough process whose actors are highly bounded in their efforts to decide rationally (Makkonen et al. 2012). We acknowledge the group or team focus necessary to build knowledge on firm buying, consistent with earlier OBB studies viewing the buying center as a collection of individuals (Spekman and Stern 1979; Wilson et al. 1991). Furthermore, our study includes the notion that sourcing is executed by a group or team individuals that are set out to cooperate, yet may still feel cross-functional competition manifested in political game playing (Rajala and Tidström 2017). Our “coopetition” perspective on organizational buying including procedural rationality as process-focused outcome (see Figure 1) also relates our study to earlier OBB works that emphasized the need for analytical scrutiny and diligence in buying processes (Bunn 1994). With this process-focused approach, we continue developing operations and SCM scholarship toward considering processes more intensively as called for by Silver (2004). Building on the OBB tradition, we extend the research on behavioral sourcing, which is presented next.

Literature review of relevant behavioral research in sourcing teams

As a starting point, it is important to acknowledge that sourcing teams are cross-functional, highly interdependent, and temporary in nature (Trent and Monczka 2003; Moses and Åhlström 2008; Stanczyk et al. 2015). Building on these tenets, exploratory inquiry into problems during cross-functional sourcing decisions detects that behavioral problems are significant challenges to sourcing teams (Moses and Åhlström 2008) and that conflict and politics, specifically, are possible impediments to effective cross-functional team or project work (Marshall et al. 2015; Stanczyk et al. 2015). Further studies show that the two major established types of conflict (i.e., task and relationship conflict) have different effects on sourcing teams and SCM teams and that heated emotions are usually unproductive in conflict situations (Andre 1995; Ehie 2010). Such *relationship conflicts* are “interpersonal incompatibilities among group members, which typically includes tension, animosity, and annoyance among members within a group” (Jehn 1995, p. 258). Additionally, rational *task conflict* can be defined as “disagreements among group members about the content of the tasks being performed, including differences in viewpoints, ideas, and opinions.” Emotional conflicts in SCM teams can best be resolved by open and collaborative conflict resolution strategies (Oliva and Watson 2011). Yet, qualitative observations indicate that collaboration can be obstructed, for instance by power imbalance among sourcing team members, functional goal misalignment, or political agendas of individual members (Stanczyk et al. 2015). So-called *political behavior*, being “intentional acts of influence to enhance or protect the self-interest of individuals or groups” (Allen et al. 1979, p. 77), is subjected to interact with formal power and to ultimately diminish decision outcomes. Consistent with the theorizing in Eisenhardt and Bourgeois (1988), Stanczyk et al. (2015) argue that a powerful actor is naturally able to influence other sourcing team members. Moreover, recent observational evidence suggests that managers’ political agendas vary in outsourcing projects depending on their underlying motivation, which remains independent of the formal power of actors (Marshall et al. 2015). In

particular, long-term oriented motivation, such as promoting one’s individual reputation, is suspected to contribute to decision outcomes, while, for example, short-term financial attainment goals ameliorate project outcomes.

Based on the review of the SCM team literature, we agree that “the impacts of political environments, behaviors, strategies, and skills on SCM remain empirically untested and poorly understood” (Thornton et al. 2016, p. 44). Additionally, organizational scholars have noted recently that “there is relatively little knowledge about the politics in and around teams” even outside the scope of SCM literature (Vigoda-Gadot and Vashdi 2012, p. 287). In an attempt to contribute to the knowledge on politics in sourcing teams but also on politics in teams in general, this study reports on a decision-making environment free of hierarchies within the team, which have been put forward as natural driver of influence in buying centers (Webster and Wind 1972). Instead, we focus on political behavior following extant research on sourcing team processes (Stanczyk et al. 2015) and its relation to team conflict, which is an under-researched area of inquiry. Notably, our results on the hypothesized sequence from conflict to politics are robust to alternative measures of team politics based on an adapted *perception of politics* scale (Ferris and Kacmar 1992) as similarly applied at the team level by Maslyn and Fedor (1998).

The unexplored “Conflict–Politics Link”

Different to the underrepresentation of team politics research, scholars have added diverse studies on the impact of politics on individual employees and team conflict has traditionally received strong attention.¹ Both streams of literature have brought forward a set of informative meta-analyses (De Dreu and Weingart 2003; Higgins et al. 2003; Miller et al. 2008; Bing et al. 2011; De Wit et al. 2012) and semantic reviews (Cohen and Bailey 1997; Doldor 2007; Mathieu et al. 2008; Weissenberger-Eibl and Teufel 2011). However, despite the intensive research, “conflict and politics have traditionally been treated as separate literatures, and the link to connect both is understudied” (Bai et al. 2016, p. 96; Franke and Foerstl 2018). Thus, besides our studies’ motivation rooted in SCM literature and OBB concepts, it shall contribute to enhancing a unified discussion of both concepts bridging across disciplines. Thereby, we caution readers to consider the cross-functional, interdependent, and strategic context of our study and point to the idiosyncratic character of context in SCM studies (Durach et al. 2017).

Consistent with the assessment in Bai et al. (2016), we find few studies that consider both politics and conflict today. On the one hand, several studies observe conflicts and the resulting resource constraints resulting in politics as means to overcome obstacles and still achieve individual goals (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois 1988; Gargiulo 1993; Stanczyk et al. 2015). They consistently describe how disagreements create incentives for

¹This study is informed by a previous systematic review of 166 publications seeking to bridge between the streams on conflict and politics outside the scope of SCM journals. We omit a detailed review of this literature due to space limitations yet draw from that “general management” literature base in the following and throughout our theoretical argumentations.

individuals within social networks (i.e., a group) to use influencing tactics on the constraining party itself or even other parties that can control the constraint. Consistently, Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) argue that politics are a result of the conflict for resources in an organization. Also, OBB models indicate that politics are applied to resolve or maneuver around conflicts in buying centers (Sheth 1973). On the other hand, we are unaware of studies that have directly observed the inverse namely politics causing conflict. Instead, studies have highlighted that group-level politics lead to citizenship behavior as defense mechanism or means to gain legitimacy in the political environment (Maslyn and Fedor 1998). This tendency is also supported at the individual level along with the suggestion that politics in the organizational environment evoke employees to join the political game (Hsiung et al. 2012) or withdraw from the political environment once and for all (Chang et al. 2009).

To our knowledge, only Bai et al. (2016) have tested a politics–conflict relation using cross-sectional survey methods. However, the authors partly blend the concepts of functions’ goals (a rather static trait of the organization and the grown incentive structure) and politics (a dynamic behavioral phenomena), which our study seeks to disentangle: “political climate describes the team context in which members share the perception that individuals in their organization have opposing interests” (Bai et al. 2016, p. 97). Considering original definitions in Kacmar and Baron (1999) or the one used in this study (Allen et al. 1979), formal goals (a state) are not part of politics (a behavior or perception) per se unless individuals actively pursue diverse goals (a behavior) in political ways (Dean and Sharfman 1996). In order to substantiate and continue recent inquiry in the field of SCM (Stanczyk et al. 2015), we separate goals from politics and focus on a conflict–politics relation, yet deem an inverse link theoretically possible but conceptually less plausible for the temporary sourcing team context (also see Appendix E).

Finally, a branch of research on the conflict–politics link is concerned with political skill, essentially the ability to influence others effectively (Mintzberg 1983, 1985), yet seldom takes the group or team perspective. Pioneering team-level studies find that teams’ political skill increases agreement and performance of the team (Lvina et al. 2018). The larger individual-level research has highlighted that political skill can serve as employee’s coping resource for conflict in organizations (Perrewé et al. 2004; Meurs et al. 2010) and increase popularity at work, which leads to less workplace conflict and ostracism (Cullen et al. 2014). Table 1 enables an easier access to the key pieces of our literature base.

Hypotheses development

We develop hypotheses around functional goal misalignment, conflict, politics, and team outcomes. Thereby, we concentrate on the two main types of conflict, namely task and relationship conflict, as they have been popular subject to general management research (De Dreu and Weingart 2003; De Wit et al. 2012). Moreover, we focus on procedural rationality as “task-oriented” outcome and team member satisfaction as “non-task-oriented” outcome following the distinction in Webster and Wind (1972). Procedural rationality is a verified team performance proxy (Riedl et al. 2013) and furthermore correlates significantly with observed performance outcomes of our

study (see results section). Our approach can be considered middle-range theorizing as we generally explain and test relationships between abstract variables but within the sourcing team domain guided by OBB models, which include both group and individual behavioral elements (Garver 2019). Please find the research model depicted in Figure 2 and the definitions summarized in Table 2.

The effect of goal misalignment on conflict in cross-functional sourcing teams

Dissimilar goals lie at the heart of task conflict although conflict neither in its conceptualization nor in its measurement instrument encompasses misaligned goals explicitly (Jehn 1995, 1997). Webster and Wind (1972) noted that players in buying centers can have conflicting needs and criteria. Consistently, studies argue that members of sourcing teams frequently have different goals and values, which lead to individuals interpreting the same information in different ways (Sheth 1973). Based on this notion of different perception (Dearborn and Simon 1958), conflict is a usual outcome of the joint decision-making process since individual representatives make independent evaluations based on their functional background and incentive scheme. For instance, functional representatives may disagree upon the prioritization of suppliers based on technical, cost, logistical, or quality indicators, leading to a task-focused conflict. Thus, we expect that cross-functional members of goal misaligned and interdependent sourcing teams will realize their different objectives and naturally begin a task-focused discussion in the sense of Jehn (1997) on which parameters of the supplier quotes should be prioritized to derive a final decision. Thus, we posit:

H₁ : Goal misalignment positively affects task conflict in cross-functional sourcing teams.

Extant research has indicated that misaligned goals create several problems in sourcing teams (e.g., Moses and Åhlström 2008), yet SCM and organizational research remain unclear on whether misalignment alone can create political behavior among teams. We propose that politics may emerge under misaligned goals in a sourcing team based on a dual process: One driver may be an unjustified anticipation of obstacles to one’s own goal achievement, while the other may be politics in response to actual constraints that reduce the chances of achieving one’s individual goals. We elaborate on the reactive response to resource constraints in later hypotheses while focusing on the proactive anticipating approach in the next paragraph.

Since individual goals and functional preferences are central to buying centers’ processes (Sheth 1996), it is likely that these aspects are discussed first or at least become implicitly clear in early stages of the negotiation. Hence, team members feel pressured to apply political tactics based on the anticipation of self-serving or opportunistic intentions of their fellow sourcing team members solely due to competing or mutually exclusive goals. Functional managers expect politics since they are aware that others are incentivized to reach their functional targets as they are themselves. Therefore, they are more likely to apply political tactics proactively in order to avoid a competitive disadvantage and to hedge for possible negative effects of goal misalignment on their own target achievement. Thus, we posit:

Table 1: Key studies from the literature review across disciplines

Author(s)	Year	Key Finding(s)	SCM	Team	Politics	Conflict	Journal
Stanczyk et al.	2015	Power imbalance and intuition create politics in cross-functional sourcing teams, which negatively affects rationality.	X	X	X		JBL
Marshall et al.	2015	Individual goals of political actors shape the success or failure of outsourcing project teams.	X	X	X		IJOPM
Moses and Åhlström	2008	“Functional misalignment” manifests in conflict and selfish (i.e., political) behavior among sourcing team members.	X	X	X	X	JPSM
Andre	1995	Solution-oriented conflict resolution in logistics teams outperforms nonconfrontational or control styles.	X	X		X	JBL
Ehie	2010	Rational conflict in manufacturing teams has positive outcomes (e.g., firm performance), while emotional conflict has negative outcomes.	X	X		X	IJPE
Oliva and Watson	2011	Open and constructive processes during supply chain planning can integrate diverse goals and manage conflicts.	X	X		X	JOM
Kaufmann et al.	2012	More rational sourcing teams make better performing decisions regardless of market dynamism and stability.	X	X			JPSM
Riedl et al.	2013	Accountability and effective incentives among sourcing teams drive procedural rationality and final sourcing decision outcomes.	X	X			JOM
Thornton et al.	2016	Organization-level politics interact with top SCM executives’ political skill to improve the overall supply chain orientation of the firm.	X		X		JSCM
Sheth	1973	Buying centers’ choices are affected by conflicts that root from goal misalignment and that can be resolved by applying political tactics.	X		X	X	JOMar.
Webster Jr and Wind	1972	Buying centers processes include “personal–political tactics” that enhance actors’ power and influence during buying decision making.	X		X	X	JOMar.
Allen et al.	1979	Politics can be distinct tactics that are different in nature yet share the goal of selfish support of own goals irrespective of others’ interests.			X		CMR
Ferris and Kacmar	1992	Tests the left side of the original perceptions of politics conceptual model including a negative effect of work group cohesion on perceived politics.			X		JO Mgt.
Pfeffer and Salancik	1978	Politics are the result of conflict over the resources in organizations.			X	X	-
Jehn	1995	Task and relationship conflicts’ effect on outcomes of teams depends on the task type, task interdependence, and group norms.		X		X	ASQ
Gargiulo	1993	Managers use political influence tactics to obtain control over individuals that are sources of resource-constraining conflicts.			X	X	ASQ
Eisenhardt and Bourgeois	1988	Conflict leads to politics when few actors within the top management team hold superior power compared to others.		X	X	X	AMJ
Bai et al.	2016	Perceived politics entail that individuals hold divergent goals, which lead to conflicts in management teams.		X	X	X	JBE

Continued.

Table 1: (Continued)

Author(s)	Year	Key Finding(s)	SCM	Team	Politics	Conflict	Journal
Maslyn and Fedor	1998	Perceived politics at the organizational and team level have different effects, which justifies a team perspective on politics.		X	X		JAP
Dean and Sharfman	1996	Procedural rationality increases teams' decision-making effectiveness while political behavior reduces effectiveness.		X	X		AMJ

A wide range of publications on team-level conflict and organizational-level politics is available outside the scope of SCM. We include early influential publications and refer to Franke and Foerstl (2018) for a comprehensive report on the literature.

Figure 2: Conceptual research model.

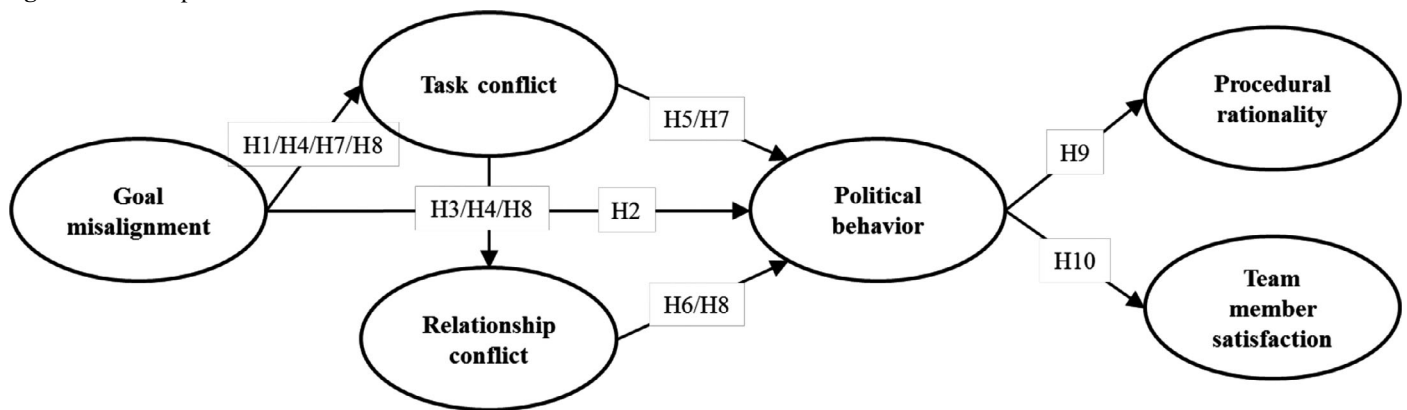


Table 2: Construct definitions

Name	Construct Definitions	Based on
Goal misalignment	Differences in goals, interests, or priorities such as price, quality, security of supply, etc.	Stanczyk et al. (2015)
Task conflict	Disagreements among group members about the content of the tasks being performed	Jehn (1995)
Relationship conflict	Interpersonal incompatibilities among group members, which typically includes tension, animosity, and annoyance	Jehn (1995)
Political behavior	Intentional acts of influence to enhance or protect the self-interest of individuals or groups	Allen et al. (1979)
Procedural rationality	The extent to which the decision-making process reflects a desire to make the best decision possible under the circumstances	Dean and Sharfman (1993a)
Team member satisfaction	The general state of joy, happiness, and satisfaction during and after the teamwork	Jehn et al. (2010)

H₂ : Goal misalignment positively affects political behavior in cross-functional sourcing teams.

Additional to the hedging and proactive politics, the alternative effect may be due to justified evidence that requires managers to apply political tactics as soon as conflicts emerge. Consequently, team members react to tangible constraints with politics that seek to overcome obstacles to goal achievement

(Sheth 1973). For this path, however, we first need to establish a connection between the two conflict types under study, namely task and relationship conflict.

Studies in the field of team conflict suggest that task conflict, being rational discussions around the task at hand, may subsequently escalate into relationship conflict, when the task-focused problems cannot be resolved (e.g., Peterson and Behfar 2003; De Wit et al. 2012). For instance, Camelo-Ordaz et al. (2015) find that management teams disagree about the task (i.e., strategic firm

decisions) and relationship conflict serves as a mediating factor between task conflict and firm innovativeness. Also, OBB models support that conflicts among buying centers may shift away from task-focused topics, such as supplier requirements, to emotional and personal matters (Sheth 1973). In line with the early OBB model and given that sourcing team members still need to exchange information and coordinate regardless of task conflict, we argue that the difficult but ongoing integration processes may trigger personal annoyance and animosity that lead to explicit relationship conflict. Particularly, the interdependence of knowledge and skills among cross-functional sourcing team members even requires them to integrate and exchange rather than avoiding the apparent task conflicts. As a result, the repeated experience of task conflicts without proper resolution likely leads to heated emotional fights that disregard facts and figures of the selection process but target personal problems. Hence, we hypothesize:

H₃ : Task conflict positively affects relationship conflict in cross-functional sourcing teams.

Relationship conflict, however, is not naturally driven by the misalignment of goals per se but can depend on several contextual variables such as the team task, diverse cultural dimensions, or team familiarity (De Wit et al. 2012). Also, relationship conflict can be path dependent as past relationship conflict can trigger more relationship conflict (Peterson and Behfar 2003). Yet, our study focuses on so-called “task-based” functional integration and sourcing teams being composed specifically for a discrete sourcing task (Miller and Dröge 1986; Foerstl et al. 2015). Members in temporary task-based sourcing teams usually have comparably little work experience with one another due to their heterogeneous functional backgrounds. Hence, sourcing teams should not suffer from past relationship conflict.

Extant studies have suggested mediation of task conflict’s effect on team outcomes through relationship conflict (Camelo-Ordaz et al. 2015). This rationale is based on the logic of sequential escalation from slow or unproductive task conflict subsequently to dissent on the emotional level (**H3**). As pointed out in our reasoning leading to **H1**, goal misalignment between participating functions drives them to engage in task-focused conflicts about the sourcing decision at hand. As a result, we expect that task conflict is an intervening mechanism between the structural precondition of goal misalignment and the behavioral phenomenon of relationship conflict. Conversely, a direct link between goal misalignment and heated relationship conflict has no theoretical grounds in temporary sourcing teams. Drawing on the above argumentation and referencing back to OBB’s process models leading to **H3**, we posit the following mediation:

H₄ : Task conflict mediates the link between goal misalignment and relationship conflict in cross-functional sourcing teams.

The effect of conflict on politics in cross-functional sourcing teams

Recall that our study argues for a dual process between goal misalignment and politics in sourcing teams. On the one hand, managers anticipate competition based on goal misalignment and

apply political tactics proactively (**H2**), while on the other hand representatives may need to manage obstacles to their goal achievement reactively. We delineate the second idea in the following based on organizational politics and OBB concepts.

Functional representatives need to exchange information and documents through internal integration processes in interdependent sourcing teams (Moses and Åhlström 2008). In fact, they are reciprocally interdependent, meaning that one function’s output is necessary as other functions’ input and vice versa (Thompson 1967; Trent and Monczka 2003). Nevertheless, sourcing teams should ideally make the global best decision for the firm, while functional representatives seek to find local optima to serve possibly misaligned functional interests (Stanczyk et al. 2015). The resulting conflicts restrict individual access to information as functional managers become hesitant to share information that may oppose one’s own interests and strategic goals. Task and relationship conflicts triggered by goal misalignment (**H1**, **H3**, **H4**) hence become constraining problems that require managers to seek ways to work around constraints in order to still achieve their individual functional goals. These manifest conflicts represent justified evidence for functional managers to apply political tactics reactively as means to reduce obstacles to their goal achievement.

We build on the notion that political tactics can ease resource access in relations suffering from conflict (Gargiulo 1993). Tactics that may help overcome conflicts are, for instance, ingratiation toward important owners of information, coalition formation to overrule constraints, or selective information sharing to signal cooperation but avoiding to disclose critical knowledge via cooptation (Stanczyk et al. 2015; Rajala and Tidström 2017). Moreover, OBB process models of sourcing decisions indicate that resolution of conflicts by politicking and back-stabbing is common in industrial buying decisions (Sheth 1973). Similarly, important gatekeepers of purchasing processes will likely be subject of “personal-political” tactics that aim at goal achievement via personal favors (Webster and Wind 1972). We expect that both task conflict and relationship conflict trigger politics in sourcing teams since both types of conflict potentially obstruct individual access to important supplier information and can result in politics as reactive coping strategy. Task conflict obstructs exchange processes based on rational incompatibilities of task-focused goals, while relationship conflict obstructs exchange primarily based on irrational personal incompatibilities. Thus, we posit:

H₅ : Task conflict positively affects political behavior in cross-functional sourcing teams.

H₆ : Relationship conflict positively affects political behavior in cross-functional sourcing teams.

Seminal studies on politics in organizations view politics as result of conflicts for resources (e.g., information, documents; Pfeffer and Salancik 1974, 1978), and conceptual models of strategic decision making and OBB see politics as outcome of conflict (Sheth 1973; Eisenhardt and Bourgeois 1988) consistent with our theorizing above. At the same time, we argued that conflicts are driven by goal misalignment among the sourcing team

(**H1**, **H3**). Therefore, we expect that conflicts are intervening mechanisms between structural goal misalignment and emerging political behavior in cross-functional sourcing teams. On the one hand, task conflicts emerge based on goal misalignment (**H1**) and subsequently drive political behavior since managers' rational discussions may lead to more transparency about the available suppliers and their characteristics; however, the remaining orthogonality of functional objectives (partly or entirely) triggers politics in the team (**H5**) (Stanczyk et al. 2015). On the other hand, relationship conflict that has developed based on the unsatisfactory task-focused discussions (**H3**, **H4**) subsequently triggers politics (**H6**). Thus, we expect that both types of conflict serve as mediators and additionally posit a sequential mediation hypothesis based on **H4**.

H₇ : Task conflict mediates the link between goal misalignment and political behavior in cross-functional sourcing teams.

H₈ : Task conflict and relationship conflict sequentially mediate the link between goal misalignment and political behavior in cross-functional sourcing teams.

The effect of politics on outcomes of cross-functional sourcing teams

In a sourcing team, optimally all team members concentrate their energy and capacity at the multilateral integration processes, which are necessary to sort out interdependent task information on strategic decisions (Mell et al. 2014). Research on politics, however, states that when employees face a politically charged environment, their two dominant response strategies are to avoid negative psychological and emotional consequences by withdrawing (i.e., quitting the job) or to join the political game in order to win (Hsiung et al. 2012; Wiltshire et al. 2014). Political teams, other than broader organizations, do not tend to suffer from employee turnover (Maslyn and Fedor 1998), possibly due to their often temporary nature. Hence, team members are only left with engaging in the political game to win. As a result, politics limit team members' attention to the task by shifting it toward exerting political influence. Hence, managers focus more attention and energy on managing their conflicts via political tactics rather than scrutinizing the provided task information in order to make the best possible decision as a team (Eisenhardt and Bourgeois 1988; Dean and Sharfman 1993a, 1996). Hence, we expect that politics among sourcing teams reduce the procedural rationality of the decision process.

H₉ : Political behavior negatively affects procedural rationality in cross-functional sourcing teams.

Several studies have supported that politics in organizations reduces satisfaction of employees with their job in general (Miller et al. 2008). However, studies have shown that allegedly straightforward and well-researched links, such as political environments and withdrawal from the job, can be challenged when lifted into the team context (Maslyn and Fedor 1998) (see **H9** development). Thus, we seek to trace the effect of politics among sourcing teams on our second outcome dimension, team member satisfaction.

Political environments reflect the notion that personal relations and social ties rather than individual effort and achievement determine personal rewards in organizational research (Ferris and Kacmar 1992). In essence, not the team member with the best contribution but the one that most effectively applies political tactics tends to achieve functional goals in politically charged sourcing teams. Altering the individual "effort–outcome function" by introducing political exchange standards contradicts the ideology of fair treatment and rewards (so-called "exchange ideology"; Andrews et al. 2003). As increasing politics further reduce the effect of effort on personal outcomes, such as individual rewards and appreciation by functional peers, team member satisfaction suffers. Accordingly, we formulate our final hypothesis.

H₁₀ : Political behavior negatively affects team member satisfaction in cross-functional sourcing teams.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We conduct a social experiment at the team level in order to effectively control extraneous influences and extract solid inferences about our dependent variables. We selected the vignette-based experiment method, which has become well accepted in behavioral operations (Bachrach and Bendoly 2011; Croson et al. 2013) and sourcing research (Ribbink and Grimm 2014; Rottenburger and Kaufmann 2019). Subsequently, we describe our experimental design, its variables and measures, and our treatment of possible biases.

Experimental design and data collection

Our experimental design follows the methodological guidelines for vignette experiments in SCM (Bachrach and Bendoly 2011; Eckerdt 2016) and a recent example of a complex team experiment (Mell et al. 2014). We chose to conduct an on-site experiment including real team interaction (event technique) on a sourcing task to foster realism (Koschate-Fischer and Schandelmeier 2014). The vignettes were generated through iterative discussions with experienced field researchers and SCM professionals following the guidelines by Rungtusanatham et al. (2011). The baseline situation describes a hypothetical manufacturing firm facing a selection of an important supplier. In order to continue serving the market with motorcycles, the sourcing team needs to successfully select a new engine supplier. We randomly assigned participants into teams of three and likewise randomly assigned the teams to one of the experimental conditions (see next section). Please see the Appendix for example vignettes and an overview of the process.

All participants received a general briefing about the process, individual rewards, and the study's rules before general instruction emails were sent out. After completing a preparatory online survey on several control variables, team members received an individualized e-mail that framed each participant into an upcoming supplier selection meeting for a strategic sourcing item (motorcycle engine) and an individual functional background (purchasing, marketing and sales, or R&D) along with explicit

functional goals (e.g., supplier flexibility). All e-mails contained an individualized document with information items on four possible suppliers and a spreadsheet that would assist participants in their premeeting analysis (see Appendix). After 30 minutes of individual analysis, participants performed a standard manipulation check reproducing their assigned goal indicators.

Next, the three individuals formed a cross-functional sourcing committee and were given up to 60 minutes to come up with a supplier selection as the outcome of their self-guided group discussion in a meeting setting. During the discussion, participants had to retrieve relevant information from fellow team members to find their preferred supplier reflecting high functional interdependency (Thompson 1967; Moses and Åhlström 2008). Teams were seated at a table in closed meeting rooms. After a decision had been made, all participants individually completed an online survey on latent variables of our model including their final assessment of each supplier's profitability according to their assigned goals (later used as performance validation). Finally, we thanked and de-briefed the participants and handed over their rewards. Please find an overview of the processes in the Appendix.

Experimental conditions and manipulation

Participants were either instructed to maximize benefits and minimize costs in their choice according to a set of identical indicators (goal alignment) or a function-specific set of indicators (goal misalignment). The instruction of goals was explicitly coupled to the performance-based rewards, while participants were not aware of other functions' goals initially. Literature is ambiguous whether experiment subjects should be incentivized. We incentivized our participant because previous performance-based payouts have shown several positive effects such as increased data quality (Hertwig and Ortmann 2001). We sampled professionals enrolled in part-time graduate programs and full-time students. Participants were incentivized with both fixed and performance-based course credit where possible (10%–15% of their final course grade) or monetary incentives where course credit was infeasible (5€ for attendance and up to 5€ performance-based). The rewards are small enough for participants to perceive them as small “thank you” and not compare them to their opportunity costs of participation (Koschate-Fischer and Schandelmeier 2014).

Sample characteristics

We recruited full-time employed part-time students and full-time students while distributing our sampling across several subgroups to ensure validity of our findings (Knemeyer and Naylor 2011). We recruited 561 students grouped into 187 cross-functional teams of three. 31 teams (93 individual) had to be excluded due to failed manipulation checks resulting in an effective sample of 468 individuals grouped in 156 sourcing teams. Approximately half of our participants are part-time graduate students and executive MBA students (222 in total) who are all fully employed as commercial or technical supply chain agents or in other departments such as sales and marketing to mirror the cross-functionality of sourcing teams. Additionally, we recruited 246 full-time students. We find no difference between the mean engagement of professionals and students ($F = 2.33, p = .129$). Please find the sample descriptive statistics summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Sample descriptive statistics

	Fully employed students	Full-time students
Participants	222	246
Teams	74	82
Age (years)*	27.2	22.8
Engagement**†	5.5	5.6
Experience (years)*	4.9	2.0
Familiarity team**†	3.0	3.3
Familiarity teamwork**†	5.7	5.6
Perceived realism**†	4.5	4.6
Gender		
Female	94	103
Male	128	143
Incentive type‡		
Cash	60	51
Credits	162	195
Industry (of most experience)		
Agriculture	0.9%	2.0%
Construction	4.5%	0.8%
Manufacturing	26.1%	15.9%
Transportation	5.4%	6.5%
Wholesale Trade	3.2%	2.0%
Retail Trade	9.5%	8.1%
Finance and Insurance	9.0%	12.6%
Services	14.4%	16.3%
Public Admin.	1.8%	0.4%
Other	25.2%	35.4%§

*Mean values.

†Based on 7-point Likert scale.

‡Incentives never differed within teams.

§Mostly students without relevant work experience.

Variables and measurement

We vary the independent variable goal misalignment on two levels by giving out aligned or misaligned goals in the sourcing teams. We include a dichotomous independent variable to reflect the manipulation in our estimations (0 = aligned goals; 1 = misaligned goals).² Dependent variables of this study are task conflict, relationship conflict, political behavior, procedural rationality, and team member satisfaction (see Table 2). We operationalized task conflict and relationship conflict with the widely used scale items in Jehn (1995) and used the instrument provided in Dean and Sharfman (1996) for political behavior. We used the term “committee” instead of “team” in our items to avoid significant bias toward cooperation detected in pretests. Both terms share a very similar meaning and fit our definition adapted from Mohsen and Eng (2016). Finally, we proxy team performance with procedural rationality drawing on Dean and

²A latent variable based on a reversed “goal similarity” instrument in Jehn (1995) delivers robust results.

Sharfman (1993a) and additionally measure team member satisfaction using a scale instrument used in Jehn et al. (2010). We chose rationality and satisfaction as team outcomes as suggested by extant studies (Jehn et al. 2010; Riedl et al. 2013).

Regardless of their assigned group, all participants read the same baseline scenario that provided information about the company, industry, firm size, sourcing item, decision importance, etc. Thus, we are controlling for factors that are commonly known to influence strategic decision-making processes (Dean and Sharfman 1993b). We also captured respondents' age, gender, work experience, familiarity with teamwork, perceived realism of the setting, engagement (Rich et al. 2010), and familiarity among team members (Kohli 1989). We slightly adapted engagement

items to the focus on the "task" instead of on the "job" (Rich et al. 2010) as presented in Table 4. All control variables are presented in the correlation Table 5.

Validity assessment and measurement model

Previously validated scales, a thorough literature review, and a pretest were used to ensure content validity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988; Forza 2002). In the first pretest with five teams composed of postdoctoral researchers and experienced PhD students, we focused on the comprehensibility of the general task, the vignettes, and the accompanying survey. After refinements of the material's wording and order, we assessed the effectiveness of the intended manipulation in the second round with 21

Table 4: Measurement model properties

Construct (GLB; CR; AVE)Original Item	Item Code	Item loadings
Engagement (GLB .95; CR .94; AVE .73) (Rich et al. 2010)		
I worked with intensity on the task.	Eng1	.888
I tried my hardest to perform well on the task.	Eng2	.830
I exerted my full effort to the task.	Eng3	.884
I exerted a lot of energy on the task.	Eng4	.824
I strived as hard as I can to complete the task.	Eng5	.857
I devoted a lot of energy to the task.	Eng6	.852
Goal misalignment (condition marker; 0 aligned goals, 1 misaligned goals)		
Political behavior (GLB .70; CR .80; AVE .57) (Dean and Sharfman 1996)		
Committee members were primarily concerned with their own goals rather than with the goals of the organization.	Pb1	.812
Committee members were open with each other about their interests and preferences in the decision (reversed).	Pb2	.747
The decision was affected by the use of power and influence among committee members.	Pb3	.698
Procedural rationality (GLB .80; CR .88; AVE .71) (Dean and Sharfman 1993a)		
How extensively did the committee look for information in making this decision?	ProcRat1	.820
In general how effective was the committee at focusing its attention on crucial information and ignoring irrelevant information?	ProcRat2	.828
How extensively did the committee analyze relevant information before making a decision?	ProcRat3	.874
Relationship conflict (GLB .95, CR .96; AVE .87) (Jehn 1995)		
How much emotional conflict is there among members in your committee?	Rc1	.940
How much are personality conflicts evident in your committee?	Rc2	.934
How much interpersonal tension is there among members in your committee?	Rc3	.940
How much friction is there among members in your committee?	Rc4	.908
Task conflict (GLB .94; CR .96; AVE .85) (Jehn 1995)		
To what extent are there differences of opinion in your committee?	Tc1	.878
How frequently are there conflicts about ideas in your committee?	Tc2	.946
How much conflict about the work you do is there in your committee?	Tc3	.939
How often do people in your committee disagree about opinions regarding the work?	Tc4	.929
Team familiarity (GLB .97; CR .97; AVE .87) (Kohli 1989)		
The committee members knew each other well.	Fam1	.960
The committee members could build upon past experience working together.	Fam2	.926
The committee members were familiar with each other's way of working.	Fam3	.902
The committee members had known each other for a long time.	Fam4	.947
Team member satisfaction (GLB .95; CR .96; AVE .90) (Jehn et al. 2010)		
I was very satisfied working with this committee.	Satis1	.939
I was happy working with this group.	Satis2	.956
How much did you enjoy working on this task with your committee members?	Satis3	.945

CFA model fit: $\chi^2=639.38$; $\chi^2/df = 1.696$; CFI = .934; RMSEA = .067.

Table 5: Construct correlation matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1 Age	<i>n.a.</i>														
2 Engagement	-.201*	.856													
3 Experience	.801**	-.125	<i>n.a.</i>												
4 Fam. team	.126	-.001	.006	.934											
5 Fam. work	.006	.155	.007	.050	<i>n.a.</i>										
6 Gender	.183*	-.081	.187*	.268**	-.102	<i>n.a.</i>									
7 Incentive	.289**	-.273**	.237**	.215**	-.132	-.055	<i>n.a.</i>								
8 Realism	.025	.210**	.033	-.030	-.198*	.023	.106	<i>n.a.</i>							
9 Student	-.635**	.110	-.464**	.100	-.040	.008	-.074	.058	<i>n.a.</i>						
10 Goal misalign.	.003	-.391**	-.130	-.006	.012	.040	.159*	-.118	-.039	<i>n.a.</i>					
11 Pol. behavior	.036	-.178*	.017	.124	-.077	.036	.133	.001	-.012	.480**	.754				
12 Proc. rationality	-.199*	.551**	-.169*	.105	.116	.019	-.199*	.142	.135	-.365**	-.466**	.841			
13 Rel. conflict	.177*	-.242**	.161*	.094	-.070	.100	.222**	.001	-.195*	.423**	.658**	-.432**	.931		
14 Task conflict	.110	-.240**	.079	-.018	-.033	-.075	.222**	.088	-.137	.538**	.679**	-.431**	.799**	.923	
15 Team m. satisf.	-.167*	.538**	-.137	.045	.084	-.024	-.180*	.132	.077	-.462**	-.535**	.596**	-.599**	-.546**	.946
Sample mean	24.910	5.505	3.333	3.134	5.627	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	4.573	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	2.384	5.515	1.977	2.981	5.920
Std. deviation	3.436	.879	2.878	1.471	.674	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	.970	<i>n.a.</i>	<i>n.a.</i>	1.228	.825	1.040	1.169	.890

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < .01$; 4: Familiarity with team members; 5: Familiarity with teamwork in general; diagonal shows square root of AVE where applicable.

participants from part-time graduate classes and SCM employees of a major food retailer.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in AMOS was used to assess convergent validity. The results indicated to narrow down items for political behavior and procedural rationality. We only accepted items above the recommended cutoff value (Nunnally 2010). The CFA presented in Table 4 provides solid model fit indices ($\chi^2 = 743.78$; $\chi^2/df = 1.71$; CFI = .92 7; RMSEA = .067). Scale reliability was assessed based on the Greatest Lower Bound (GLB) of construct reliability and congeneric reliability (CR) for each scale. Cronbach's alpha is not applicable in our case since our instruments show unequal factor loadings (Ten Berge and Sočan 2004). We compute the GLB using the R package referenced in Peters (2014). Furthermore, the comparison of the square root of the AVE for each construct and the corresponding correlation coefficients (see Table 5) supported discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The psychometric properties of our measurement model are presented in Tables 4 and 5. We aggregated several of our individual-response variables to the team level to account for their team-level conceptualization following advice on SCM multilevel studies (Carter et al. 2015). To verify that aggregation was possible, we assessed each teams' inter-rater agreement $R_{wg(I)}$ for each latent construct based on the recommendations in Boyer and Verma (2000) and LeBreton and Senter (2008). Even the minimum detected within-team agreement (.67) exceeds the recommended .5 cutoff value (e.g., Chun and Choi 2014).

Manipulation checks and bias treatment

Several steps were taken to reduce concerns on manipulation failure, common method bias, and measurement model invariance. To check the effectiveness of the manipulation, we include a qualitative manipulation check that entails a simple reproduction of the assigned goal indicators. 31 teams were excluded from the data since the responses to the manipulation check were incorrect. Furthermore, common method bias (CMB) was assessed by applying several CFA model comparisons as described in Williams et al. (2010). First, we find that modeling marker variable loadings onto the substantive (theory-based) indicators does not improve model fit significantly, indicating no CMB ("Baseline" vs. "Method-C" Model) ($\Delta\chi^2 = .03$; $\Delta df = 1$; $\chi^2_{critical} = 3.84$; no difference). In addition, we find that the non-significant CMB is uniform in our model (tau-equivalence) and that the substantive factor correlations remain unaffected by CMB. Therefore, we conclude that CMB did not significantly impact our structural model estimations. We also tested for measurement equivalence between the subgroups in our data, students versus young professionals, and cash versus credit incentive using the procedure recommended in Knoppen et al. (2015). We find that all indicators loaded significantly on their respective constructs in all subgroups (configural equivalence) and that constraining the item loadings across groups (i.e., enforcing equivalence) does not significantly reduce the model fit for students versus young professionals ($\Delta\chi^2 = 26.6$; $\Delta df = 22$; $\chi^2_{critical} = 33.9$; no difference) and cash versus credit incentive ($\Delta\chi^2 = 22.9$; $\Delta df = 22$; $\chi^2_{critical} = 33.9$; no difference).

RESULTS

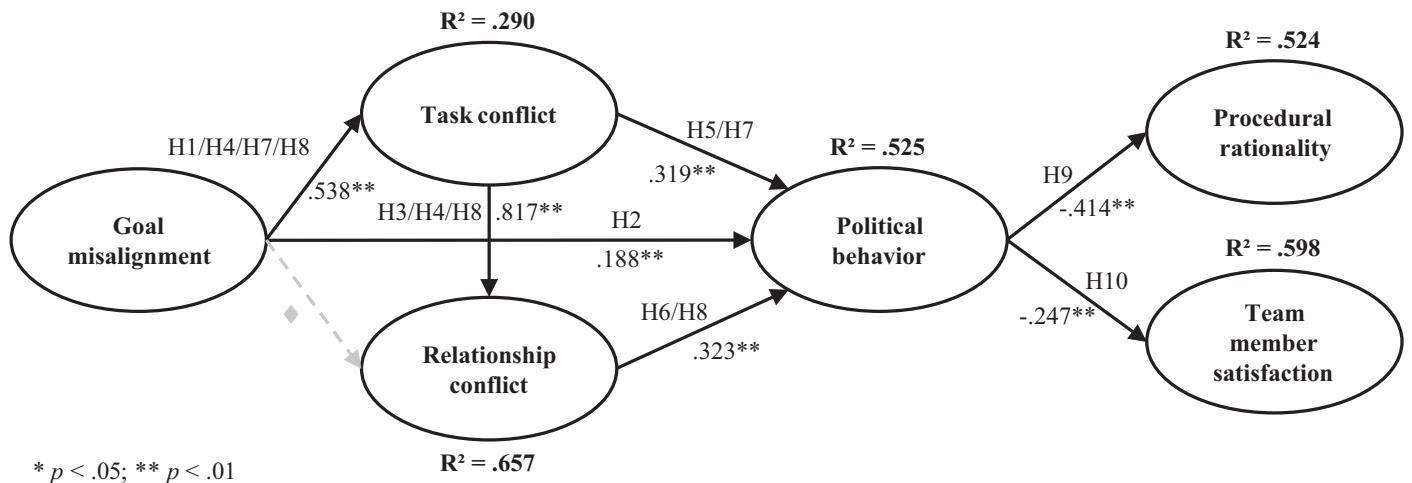
We tested our hypotheses in a path analytical structural equation model. Consistent with the recommendations in Preacher and Hayes (2008) and Malhotra et al. (2014), we use bootstrapping to test our mediation hypotheses. Please see Figure 3 and Table 6 for a summary of the estimated structural model and the hypotheses tests, which are subsequently summarized per hypothesis. Our results show that goal misalignment creates task conflict among cross-functional sourcing teams (**H1**; $\beta = .538$, $p < .01$; see Table 6) and that misaligned goals also drive political behavior (**H2**; $\beta = .188$, $p < .01$). Thus, we accept **H1** and **H2**. Furthermore, the model substantiates the direct link between task and relationship conflict (**H3**; $\beta = .817$, $p < .01$) for the sourcing context. Moreover, we find support for **H4** stating that task conflict mediates the link between goal misalignment and relationship conflict since the specific indirect effect is significant ($\beta = .440$, $p < .01$; Table 6 *Mediation*).

We find support for **H5** and **H6** as both task conflict ($\beta = .319$, $p < .01$) and relationship conflict ($\beta = .323$, $p < .01$) show the hypothesized positive effect on political behavior. Additionally, the specific indirect effects of goal misalignment through task conflict ($\beta = .172$, $p < .01$) and through both types of conflict sequentially ($\beta = .142$, $p < .01$) were found significant, supporting **H7** and **H8** (see Table 6 *Mediation*). Given that goal misalignment's direct effect on political behavior prevails (support for **H2**), we conclude a partial mediation sequence for the goals–conflict–politics mediation. Finally, we tested whether political behavior affects procedural rationality and satisfaction and found support for its detrimental effect on rationality ($\beta = -.414$, $p < .01$) and on team members satisfaction ($\beta = -.247$, $p < .01$). Hence, we accept **H9** and **H10**.

Post hoc robustness checks

As mentioned in the methods section, we captured the individual assessments of each supplier's profitability after the sourcing team discussion. Ideally, all team members would have reached their individual correct analytical solution to the sourcing problem according to the (mis)aligned goals. We average (adding is equivalent) individual scores to form a team-level error measure. The error metric significantly correlates with our latent measures for political behavior (.239, $p < .01$) and procedural rationality (–.210, $p < .01$), which provides predictive validation for the validity of procedural rationality (cf. Figure 1) in line with earlier findings of Riedl et al. (2013).

In addition, we performed multiple χ^2 difference tests to verify the structure of the model and avoid model overspecification. We ran a model excluding links between task conflict, relationship conflict, and political behavior ($\Delta df = 3$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 200.27$; $\Delta\chi^2_{critical} = 7.82$) and two other models that each omit a single link between the two conflict constructs and political behavior ($\Delta df = 1$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 5.44$ and 6.89, respectively; $\Delta\chi^2_{critical} = 3.84$). According to the three significant χ^2 tests, the larger (fewer df) hypothesized model (see Figure 2) always fit the data better. This result provides further support for conflict driving politics in a stepwise mediated process.

Figure 3: Summary of results.

◆ Estimated but nonhypothesized link. Please see Table 6 for all estimated effect sizes.

Finally, we repositioned task conflict, relationship conflict, and political behavior in two different ways in the SEM to observe changes in effect sizes and R^2 . Appendix E.1 shows an alternative model with political behavior as intervening mechanism between task conflict and relationship conflict. This model is based on the possible notion that politics can trigger emotional responses (i.e., relationship conflict) to fend off political influencing. While effect sizes largely match our expectations, R^2 drops significantly for political behavior ($\Delta R^2 = -.340$) and the model does not mirror the behavioral process that finally leads to teams' performance in practice (insignificant path and indirect effects toward procedural rationality). Similarly, E.2, assuming a "politics-conflict link," shows that R^2 for political behavior again drops ($\Delta R^2 = -.277$) and indirect effects on procedural rationality are insignificant. These results substantiate both conflict types as predictors of political behavior, as theorized in our model (Figure 2), that explain the team processes and its outcomes more effectively.

Post hoc examination of the "Conflict–Politics Link" using NCA

To further dive into the relation of conflict and politics and derive more insightful implications, we complement the SEM with Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA) (Dul 2016). NCA looks for *necessary but not sufficient* drivers of an outcome variable instead of the often assumed linear and continuous relationship in regular estimation techniques such as SEM or regressions. In short, NCA informs us on how the variables of our model may constrain each other and assists in deriving more interesting and insightful implications on the "conflict–politics link" (Cachon 2012). In other words, "a necessary cause is a constraint, a barrier, an obstacle, a bottleneck that must be managed to allow a desired outcome to exist" (Dul 2016, p. 11). Please find detailed results of our analyses in Appendix F and note that we reversed factor scores of our two outcome variables for NCA since it only operates in the upper-right quadrant of the Cartesian coordinate system in the current version 3.0.1. Appendix G provides a concise overview of NCA.

We find that multiple necessary conditions exist among the variables of our model, but they differ significantly in size. The strongest constraint is posed by task conflict on relationship conflict ($d = .425$, $p < .01$), which also shows to constrain political behavior with $d = .201$ ($p < .01$), an effect sized considered moderately strong for NCA (Dul 2016). These patterns can be more easily observed in the bottleneck table in Appendix F. We find that relatively high levels of political behavior and procedural irrationality are possible without contributions of the structural goal misalignment or any type of behavioral process we proposed (conflict and politics). In fact, 60% of political behavior's and 50% of (ir)rationality's magnitude are unexplained by its antecedents in our model. The bottleneck tables also allow inferring when and how quickly our antecedent variables allow for increases in political behavior and procedural rationality. For instance, we can observe that 73.2% of task conflict's range is necessary to allow for the highest political behavior, but only 34.5% of relationship conflict will suffice to reach that high level. Thus, when relationship conflict occurs, even low conflict levels allow for maximum political behavior. For procedural (ir)rationality, we find a similarly steep incline based on relationship conflict albeit the variable contributes late to irrationality (starting at >70% of Y). The NCA revealed that relatively low levels of relationship conflict can trigger strong politics and irrationality, whereas task conflict seems strongly coupled with relationship conflict. These findings are in line with our robustness checks concerning the model structure.

DISCUSSION

Theoretical implications

Our work makes several important contributions to the literature. First, our study contributes to OBB literature by providing empirical substance for its conceptual framing of sourcing/buying as a constrained process among irrational and misaligned professional actors besides the proven benefits of integration (Swink and Schoenherr 2015). According to the theory, the heterogeneity

Table 6: Estimation results

	H	β_{path}	<i>p</i>	95% CI	β_{total}	<i>p</i>	95% CI
Substantive relations (all)							
Goal misalignment (GM) → Task conflict	H1	.538	.000**	[.425; .648]	.538	.000**	[.425; .648]
GM → Relationship conflict	–	–.011	.855	[–.130; .113]	.428	.000**	[.297; .546]
GM → Political behavior	H2	.188	.003**	[.055; .306]	.498	.000**	[.387; .602]
GM → Procedural rationality	–	.039	.606	[–.090; .194]	–.192	.006**	[–.320; –.049]
GM → Team member satisfaction	–	–.061	.345	[–.183; .069]	–.322	.000**	[–.444; –.182]
Task conflict (TC) → Relationship conflict	H3	.817	.000**	[.717; .907]	.817	.000**	[.717; .907]
TC → Political behavior	H5	.319	.001**	[.129; .502]	.583	.000**	[.472; .693]
TC → Procedural rationality	–	.010	.924	[–.216; .209]	–.289	.000**	[–.447; –.134]
TC → Team member satisf.	–	.040	.751	[–.220; .294]	–.407	.000**	[–.552; –.255]
Rel. conflict (RC) → Political behavior	H6	.323	.000**	[.148; .500]	.323	.000**	[.148; .500]
RC → Procedural rationality	–	–.071	.485	[–.272; .130]	–.205	.036*	[–.406; –.015]
RC → Team member satisf.	–	–.370	.004**	[–.604; –.090]	–.450	.000**	[–.673; –.182]
Political behavior → Proc. rationality	H9	–.414	.000**	[–.581; –.249]	–.414	.000**	[–.581; –.249]
Political behavior → Team member satisf.	H10	–.247	.003**	[–.413; –.096]	–.247	.003	[–.413; –.096]
Mediation (hypothesized only)							
GM → TC → RC	H4	.440	.000**	[.331; .548]	–	–	–
GM → TC → Political behavior	H7	.172	.002*	[.068; .288]	–	–	–
GM → TC → RC → Political behavior	H8	.142	.000**	[.061; .235]	–	–	–
Control variables							
Age → Proc. rationality	–	–.113	.409	[–.376; .160]	–.113	.409	[–.376; .160]
Age → Team member satisfaction	–	–.114	.296	[–.327; .100]	–.114	.296	[–.327; .100]
Engagement → Procedural rationality	–	.421	.000**	[.284; .558]	.421	.000**	[.284; .558]
Engagement → Team member satisf.	–	.383	.000**	[.276; .503]	.383	.000**	[.276; .503]
Experience → Procedural rationality	–	–.023	.852	[–.263; .229]	–.023	.852	[–.263; .229]
Experience → Team member satisfaction	–	–.041	.638	[–.220; .133]	–.041	.638	[–.220; .133]
Fam. team → Procedural rationality	–	.173	.018	[.033; .314]	.173	.018	[.033; .314]
Fam. team → Team member satisfaction	–	.109	.075	[–.014; .224]	.109	.075	[–.014; .224]
Fam. work → Procedural rationality	–	.020	.725	[–.088; .136]	.02	.725	[–.088; .136]
Fam. work → Team member satisfaction	–	–.008	.901	[–.125; .119]	–.008	.901	[–.125; .119]
Gender → Procedural rationality	–	.054	.395	[–.075; .177]	.054	.395	[–.075; .177]
Gender → Team member satisfaction	–	.059	.354	[–.057; .192]	.059	.354	[–.057; .192]
Incentive → Procedural rationality	–	–.037	.584	[–.167; .089]	–.037	.584	[–.167; .089]
Incentive → Team member satisfaction	–	.040	.562	[–.092; .179]	.040	.562	[–.092; .179]
Realism → Procedural rationality	–	.062	.313	[–.050; .189]	.062	.313	[–.050; .189]
Realism → Team member satisfaction	–	.041	.508	[–.090; .154]	.041	.508	[–.090; .154]
Student dummy → Procedural rationality	–	–.041	.643	[–.215; .135]	–.041	.643	[–.215; .135]
Student dummy → Team member satisf.	–	–.144	.080	[–.297; .030]	–.144	.080	[–.297; .030]

p-values and confidence intervals (CI) calculated using bootstrapping; **p* < 0.05; ***p* < .01.

of skill sets and function-inherent goals lead to emotional and social barriers to rational choice. This study is among the first to study these barriers in a large-N empirical setting. Particularly, we begin filling the empirical void that persisted in the OBB literature concerning “politicking” and conflicts (Sheth 1973) or “interpersonal influence” (Webster and Wind 1972). While the original frameworks have recognized the challenges inherent to conflict and politics, studies regret that they have hardly been conceptually disentangled and empirically observed (Bai et al. 2016; Thornton et al. 2016). With the additions in our study, we not only initiate closing this gap but follow the general call for more people-focused logistics and SCM research (Wieland et al. 2016).

Second, we speak to work that has recognized the tension between necessary cooperation among functional areas and the arising competition (“coopetition”) that roots from functional diversity in buying processes (Rajala and Tidström 2017). Our study emphasizes political behavior as one possible manifestation or outcome of coopetition in OBB where actors are supposed to work together in a joint task (supplier selection) yet also choose to exert undisclosed influence to serve unidimensional functional needs. Thus, we provide further substance to studies emphasizing that complex decisions cannot be decomposed into clearly defined and structured steps but that the process can be rugged, intuitive, and spontaneous (Makkonen et al. 2012). Also, we add to the ongoing discussion around politics

and influencing in sourcing processes (Stanczyk et al. 2015; Brewer et al. 2019).

Third, we add substance to the mediation commencing with conflict via politicking on organizational buying team outcomes based on alternative path model estimations (see Appendix E) and NCAs (see Appendix F and G). Consequently, this finding speaks to work that has emphasized emotional processes shaping buying center decisions and behavior at several organizational levels (Kemp et al. 2018). We add to these recent developments as we disentangle the relationship of rational task conflict (i.e., topic-focused discussions) with their emotional escalation (i.e., relationship conflict) and the resulting political response strategies. Hence, these findings suggest that problems in cross-functional sourcing teams not only co-occur but may affect each other via mediation and also constrain one another as necessary conditions, thereby empirically extending conceptual and anecdotal insights of former studies (Trent and Monczka 1994; Moses and Åhlström 2008). Specifically, we add to the closing of the conceptual and empirical void between conflict and politics (Bai et al. 2016) but also generally to the research that emphasizes emotional or irrational processes in OBB and in the wider OSCM domain (Urda and Loch 2013; Stanczyk et al. 2015; Kemp et al. 2018). Notably, our findings on the “goal misalignment–political behavior link” can even be extended toward our final outcomes. The extended specific indirect effects account for 30.7% and 10.5% of the total effects on procedural rationality and team member satisfaction, respectively, which outlines the significance of the observed mediation chain. More subtle drivers of team-level politics, outside the scope of this study, are yet to be uncovered as also indicated by our NCA (Appendix F).

Fourth, we find that task conflict does not show its rationalizing effect but serves as necessary condition to the detrimental relationship conflict. This finding partially contradicts conclusions that task conflict can have positive effects as it brings all information to the table and helps teams to better understand complex tasks (De Wit et al. 2012). The absence of the catalyzing role of task conflict may be due to participants anyhow high attention to discussing the data provided in the experimental design. Thus, future studies could substantiate the merits or dangers of task conflict in sourcing teams. Additionally, our negative implications of politics’ effect on team outcomes are consistent with the extant SCM team politics evidence (Stanczyk et al. 2015), yet future SCM research should also consider the recently emerging positive perspective of politics (Hochwarter 2012; Hsiung et al. 2012; Kapoutsis and Thanos 2016), which we did not detect in this study.>

Managerial implications

Our study is relevant to executives supervising cross-functional sourcing teams and managers involved in cross-functional sourcing teamwork. This study shows that sourcing teams (or buying centers) are not always rational actors in the best interest of the firm but that individuals may bring in misaligned functional incentive structures and goals based on their diverse functional background. We highlight that the resulting social and emotional problems between functional areas not only co-occur but also affect each other in a mediation sequence. Goal misalignment drives task-focused conflicts, which in turn constitute a necessary

condition for further emotionally laden conflicts to emerge. We find that both types of conflict are positively associated with political response strategies to defend uni-lateral interests and goals. According to our study, managers should avert personal interpretations of task conflict and the resulting relational (emotional) conflict. This is particularly important as task conflicts need to be very intensive (73% necessary of a 1%–100% scale) to allow strong politics (100%—the maximum) to emerge and negatively affect rationality and decision outcomes, while even low levels of relationship conflict (35% on a 1–100% scale) result in strong team politics, which significantly hamper rationality in deriving decision outcomes. Moreover, managers should not counteract low to medium levels of task-focused conflicts, also because they can be functional (De Wit et al. 2012), but closely monitor and manage relationship conflict.

While we argue for politics to be a coping strategy for managers seeking to overcome conflict and still achieve individual functional goals, we caution decision makers that political influencing behavior ultimately leads to reduced scrutiny in sourcing teams and ultimately causes lower performance. Our analysis reveals that goal misalignment, conflict, and politics all drive irrationality, yet their influence mostly explains medium to high levels of irrationality according to the *post hoc* analyses. Roughly 50% of irrational influence at low or medium levels is likely due to hitherto unexplored behavioral phenomena in sourcing teams. Thus, we advise sourcing team managers not to solely look for conflicts or political fights to resolve, but also for extraneous and subtle factors (i.e., past experience, personal needs, or prejudices) whose influence future research still has to trace. Generally, we can advise practice to reduce functional goal misalignment as far as possible as it causes proactive politics (hedging against other’s manipulating) and to closely monitor escalation processes from rational discussions to heated emotional debates.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The limitations of our research also open the field to further research. First, we do not consider diversity in teams beyond functional backgrounds, expertise, and goals. Recently, behavioral SCM research has begun observing team diversity and included emotions as varying coping strategy among team members (Kaufmann and Wagner 2017). Consistently, reviews of OBB literature state that team diversity, also of ethnic or cultural origin, remains largely unexplored in the literature (Sheth 1996). Second, we did not capture influences of personality traits on our results, but opted for a random assignment of subjects. Building on personal differences in sourcing teams, personality may play a larger role than extant research has assumed. Although studies have supported the impact of personality and emotions on SCM in general (Urda and Loch 2013), tangible influences of conscientiousness or political skill (i.e., the ability to exert political influence) in sourcing teams remain unexplored also in our study. Third, despite assessing the team’s divergence from the ideal rational choice (cost–utility-based solution), our study and large portions of SCM research are unable to assess long-term performance of a recently selected supplier. In this study, we cannot predict the selected supplier’s performance beyond the stylized

experimental context. Hence, future studies should pursue a longitudinal design possibly also including qualitative observations of sourcing teams in a real-world context. Fourth, our methods entail pooling respondents from diverse origin such as students and young professionals as well as across different incentive schemes. Although our equivalence testing was satisfactory, we advise future research to avoid using few heterogeneous data sources where possible. Fifth, our study benefits from the experimental prediction power, yet only for goal misalignment (manipulated). We acknowledge that the “conflict–politics link” is possibly not one-directional but bi-directional or even circular as functional representatives can build expectations and gather evidence on their colleagues behavior in recurring team settings. In line with *ad hoc* sourcing decisions, our design focuses on temporary task-based integration (Miller and Dröge 1986; Foerstl et al. 2015). Such situations are typical for large companies with constantly changing sourcing team configurations, whereas in small and medium enterprises specific teams may interact more regularly. For the latter, the shadows of the past and the future may have a stronger impact on team and functional relationships. In line with the social exchange perspective, we advise future research to consider that previous social interaction can impact future encounters and assess medium- to long-term political behavior in under such varying circumstances. Finally, our experiment placed participants in a particular functional context, which may or may not have reflected their own work in practice. Despite the satisfactory engagement and realism ratings, we acknowledge that additional research such as field experiments will be necessary to test our findings also in different contexts, such as permanently embedded teams. While none of the above limitations fundamentally question the validity of this study, we hope to stimulate future research on political sourcing team processes with our study.

CONCLUSION

In responding to the initial research questions, our results suggest a sequentially mediated effect of goal misalignment via rational task and emotional relationship conflict on team politics. Moreover, we show the potentially detrimental implications of misalignment, conflict, and politics in cross-functional sourcing teams. Hence, our main contribution is evidence for a granular extension of the conflict–outcome path (Peterson and Behfar 2003). Goal misalignment is identified as a root cause for conflict and politics. We find that team conflict leads to political behavior that in turn reduces team member satisfaction and procedural rationality, which is directly related to the overall performance of the sourcing decision (Riedl et al. 2013). Hence, this study shows that problems in cross-functional sourcing teams emerge in a stepwise escalation process, in accordance with the procedural perspective taken in OBB theory Complementary Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA) allows us to conclude that our predictors tend to explain high levels of politics and irrationality, which points to future research potentials directed at more subtle drivers of manipulation in sourcing teams. Based on our inquiry, future research on sourcing team conflict, team politics, and their mutual relation is necessary to advise practice on suitable mitigation strategies that avoid negative outcomes while

reaping the benefits of cross-functional integration (Turkulainen and Ketokivi 2012).

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APPENDIX A

Vignette material example: Assignment email (misaligned goals; Marketing & Sales)

Dear employee,

As you know, our engine supplier went out of business. A cross-functional procurement committee will soon be composed and I am sending you as the purchasing representative. I want you to make the best cut for the purchasing department and watch out for our strategic goals **customer satisfaction and image**. I can only pay out your **bonus** in case the optimal supplier with regard to these goals is chosen.

You will find some supplier information in an appended document. Analyze it thoroughly and make use of the spreadsheet I prepared for you. The goals are of equal importance to me, and they are not causally related across categories. Our research may be incomplete. Try to retrieve useful information during the negotiation to make the most profitable choice for purchasing.

Again, I need you to make sure that the costs are minimal and benefits are maximal regarding our goals **customer satisfaction and image**. If the committee's choice reflects these goals in the end, I will pay out your full **bonus**.

Good luck,

Your Supervisor

Senior Director of Marketing & Sales

Bronson Inc. Motorcycle Works

*** Please analyze your case material individually.

Come up with your preferred supplier and a strategy to convince the committee ***

*** Complete Part 2 of the questionnaire as soon as you are done with your analysis.

Please stop at Part 3 ***

Survey link | access code

APPENDIX B

Vignette material example: Supplier information (same for all conditions; Marketing & Sales)

Akron

Akron's sales channels are very **flexible**. They are able to surpass Bronson's parts inventory and supply a spare engine to a Bronson garage in less than 24 hours. This flexible solution could save Bronson 1,100,000€.

Akron has not yet discovered the potentials of comarketing bikes with the OEM. Hence, no Akron agents will be deployed for pop-up dealerships. To compensate the not very **flexible** Akron marketing, Bronson will need to invest 225,000€.

Laboratory tests of Akron engines' **quality** have resulted in very good resistance to vibration and shocks. This could be a unique selling point to market *off-road* capable bikes leading to a 1,700,000€ benefit.

Competitors that have relied on Akron engines recently had to call back motorcycles. In case Bronson sources from Akron, CRM agents will be busy with this **quality** issue resulting in costs of 1,000,000€.

Akron has explicitly addressed barriers of career advancement and inequity for women in their workforce. The Ministry of Labor has praised Akron and their program, which will also affect Bronson's **image** in case of a deal. Bronson can expect a 2,300,000€ benefit.

IACT

IACT sales officers have stated that they are absolutely unable to supply technical adaptations quickly. Bronson, however, has already marketed variations to its customers. Sending in a team to quickly develop supplier **flexibility** will cost 200,000€.

IACT is used to doing on-site marketing at fairs, shows, and other events. They could **flexibly** attend Bronson pop-up dealerships to make the events special for customers. This option could yield a benefit of 1,900,000€.

The logistical perspective on **flexible** call-offs with IACT has missed to consider that increased **warehousing** will also require Bronson to hire permanent workers instead of external services. This reduces Bronson's flexibility and leads to an increase in the originally estimated costs by factor 10/9.

Competitors have experienced a rattling noise in some IACT engines. This noise has been attributed to a **quality** problem. Bronson should expect a 1,325,000€ campaign investment to cover up the recent critical press when sourcing from IACT.

Although IACT engines are not necessarily racing **quality** per se, IACT has signed two famous GP3 pilots to praise their quality at races and fairs. Bronson can use these deals for its own good and collect a benefit of 2,100,000€.

IACT has been ranked in the lower third in last years "Best Place to Work" survey. Experts estimate a weakening of **image** manifesting in 250,000€ costs for Bronson in case of a deal.

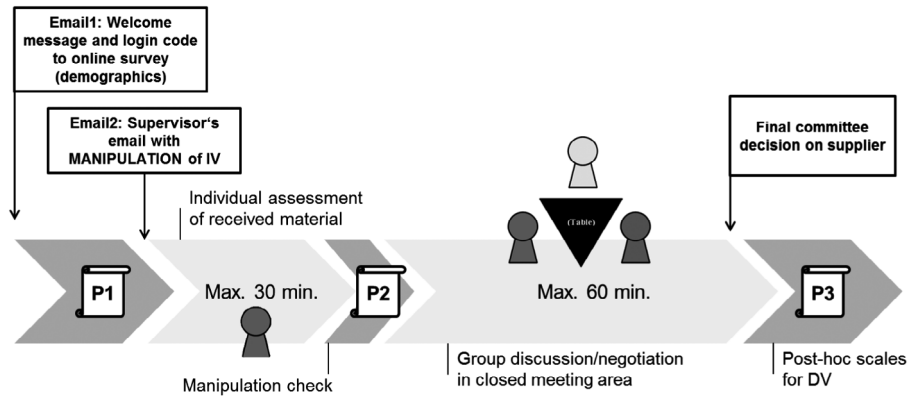
Eagle Motors

You met a technical sales representative from Eagle Motors at the last marketing congress. He told you that Eagle Motors is struggling to adapt an existing **quality** testing unit to their engines. He stated that Bronson will have to develop a whole new unit, resulting in twice the estimated costs compared to an adaptation of the old unit.

Eagle Motors engines perform well on racetracks, yet their **quality** is not suitable to ride heavily off-road. In case Bronson buys Eagle Motors engines, marketing would have to write off contracted sponsoring of off-road events costing 250,000€ in total.

Engines by Eagle Motors are of high **quality** and thus evenly compatible to consumer and racing bikes. This great efficiency

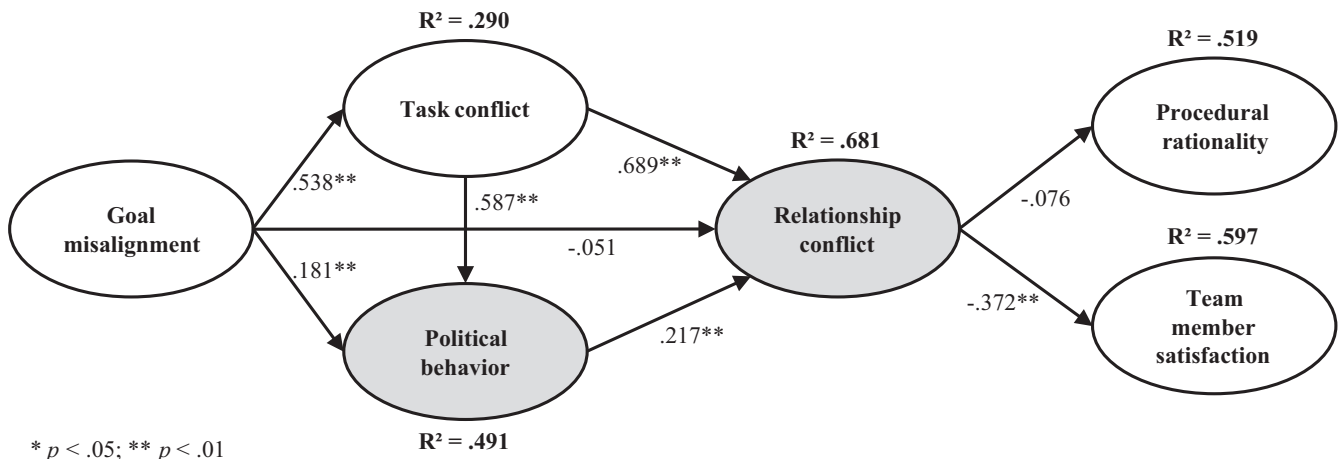
APPENDIX D
Experimental process scheme



APPENDIX E

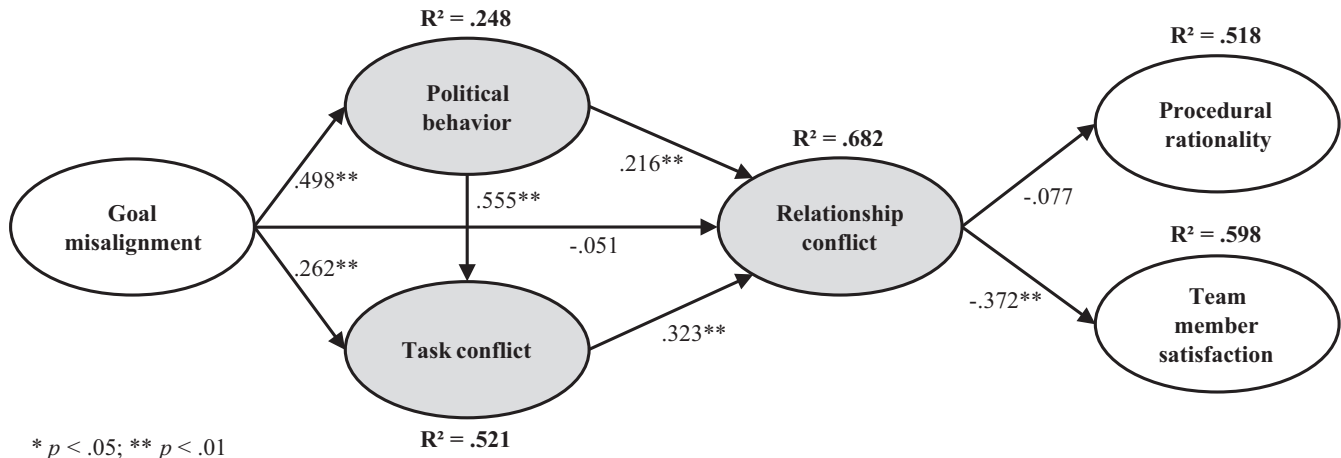
Post hoc robustness check: analysis of R^2 and effect sizes (*df ceteris paribus*)
Repositioned constructs have been highlighted in gray

E.1: Politics as intervening mechanism between conflict types



Nonhypothesized links are estimated but not displayed for comprehensiveness. Grey constructs have been repositioned for model comparison.

E.2: A “politics–conflict link”



Nonhypothesized links are estimated but not displayed for comprehensiveness. Grey constructs have been repositioned for model comparison.

APPENDIX F

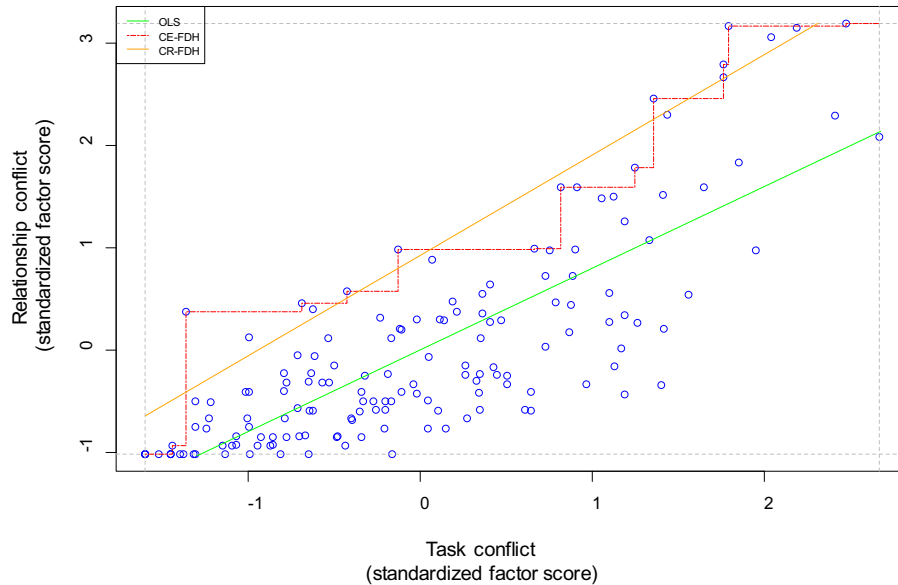
NCA bottleneck tables for political behavior (Y1 left) and procedural (ir-) rationality (Y2 right)

Y1	X1	X2	X3	Y2	X1	X2	X3	X4
Pol. Beh. (%)	Goal mis.* (%)	Task conf. (%)	Rel. conf. (%)	Proc. Rat.† (%)	Goal mis.* (%)	Task conf. (%)	Rel. conf. (%)	Pol. Beh. (%)
0	NN	NN	NN	0	NN	NN	NN	NN
10	NN	NN	NN	10	NN	NN	NN	NN
20	NN	NN	NN	20	NN	NN	NN	NN
30	NN	NN	NN	30	NN	NN	NN	NN
40	NN	NN	NN	40	NN	NN	NN	NN
50	NN	NN	NN	50	NN	NN	NN	NN
60	NN	NN	NN	60	NN	NN	NN	14.1
70	NN	10.2	4.0	70	NN	14.3	NN	30.1
80	3.5	31.2	14.2	80	18.7	34.3	NN	46.0
90	35.0	52.2	24.4	90	49.0	54.2	24.0	62.0
100	66.5	73.2	34.5	100	79.3	74.1	96.2	77.9

**post hoc* measured using a scale from Jehn (1995).

†Reversed for NCA; all results based on CE-FDH.

APPENDIX G
Necessary Condition Analysis (NCA): A quick overview
based on Dul (2016)



NCA adopts a *necessary but not sufficient* logic, which differs from the regular linear sufficiency logic of traditional correlational or regression-based analysis techniques. It seeks to identify factors (X) that are necessary for some outcome (Y) to exist and can complement traditional methods of data analysis with additional detail. Resources for NCA can be found in Dul (2016) and at <http://www.erim.nl/nca>. NCA is implemented in R.

Y: RC (%)	X: TC (%)
0	NN
10	1.1
20	11.2
30	21.2
40	31.3
50	41.3
60	51.4
70	61.4
80	71.5
90	81.6
100	91.6

Starting point of NCA is a scatter plot of X and Y. An empty “upper left corner” of the scatter plot is an indication for a necessary condition (see example output based on this study’s data below). The plot shows a regular OLS line (green) and two default ways of determining a so-called *ceiling*, either as a step function using the “frontier” datapoints (red, CE-FDH: ceiling envelopment with free disposal hull) or as an OLS line through the frontier points (orange, CR-FDH: ceiling regression with free disposal hull). Important outcome of NCA is the *effect size* of a

possible necessary condition, which is computed from the overall area and the area of the so-called *ceiling zone* (upper left corner). For this case, the effect size *d* based on the orange line is .425, a value considered high for NCA (Dul 2016). Recently, a significance level *p* has been added to NCA (Dul et al., 2018), which is below .01 in this case.

Another main outcome of NCA is the so-called *bottleneck table* (see on the right). The table reflects the plot and allows to infer at which level X is constraining Y and how much. In this case, Y is absent when X is 0 and the stepwise function increases quite steadily (see plot). However, other cases often reveal that some Y is present even though X is 0 (“NN”) or shows big jumps in the stepwise function. The constraint of X on Y can thus be more complex, and the bottleneck table gives further information on its nature.

The relation between task conflict and relationship conflict seems to be, at least statistical, close to an ideal necessary condition relationship in our data. It is important to add that NCA, as most common analysis techniques, needs thorough theoretical arguments to support a conclusion especially when NCA is used to test deduced theory rather than to explore inductively and *post hoc* as we do in this study.

SHORT BIOGRAPHIES

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