7 Conclusion

Summarizing the discussion of the results of both studies and referring to identified gaps in conflict research described in the introduction section, the main contributions of this dissertation to existing research on intragroup conflict at work are therefore as follows:

1. Identifying moderators of the conflict-outcome-relation on the individual level:

   Political skill was found to be an individual buffering moderator of the relationship between relationship conflict and well-being (study 1 with the outcome strain; further support in study 2 for the outcome exhaustion).

2. Identifying moderators of the conflict-outcome-relation on the team level:

   Team’s overall adaptation was identified as a buffering moderator of the relationship between team task conflict and team performance (study 2).

3. Providing more information about task conflict’s and relationship conflict’s effects on performance- and well-being-criteria:

   Examinations showed that task conflict at individual level, against former assumptions, had no impact on well-being (study 1 with the outcome strain; further support in study 2 for the outcome exhaustion); whereas relationship conflict at individual level increased strain. Furthermore, both relationship conflict and task conflict at team level negatively influenced team performance (study 2).

Thus, this dissertation revealed that task conflict at the individual level surprisingly did not impair well-being, whereas relationship conflict at the team level was negatively linked to team performance. Relationship conflict at individual level also harmed individual well-being (i.e., led to an increase in strain and exhaustion) but high levels of political skill could buffer these negative effects. Furthermore, this work showed that task conflict at team level did not improve team performance (against the assumption of some researchers from the field of conflict research) but harmed it; however, detrimental effects of high task conflict can be buffered with a high amount of adaptation within teams. The other reflexivity component reflection showed a strong positive impact on team performance but was of no extra help in conflictual situations of work groups. These results provide an interesting expansion of the COM model with adding further moderating variables: political skill at individual level helpful when individuals experience relationship conflict and adaptation at team level helpful when
teams face task conflict. The findings further underpinned that a contingency perspective on conflict is the most appropriate view on it – rather than stating whether conflict is either good or bad. And last but not least, both studies made a contribution a) to research upon stress with expanding demand-resources-models with the resource political skill in a conflict setting, b) to research upon the construct (team) reflexivity in demonstrating further positive effects of team reflexivity, especially adaptation, and c) by broadening psychological research upon founding teams that are under-represented in psychological studies, respectively when founding teams are examined, the focus of interest is more upon the individual entrepreneurs and less about team actions and special circumstances such as conflict.

To sum, the results of this dissertation are promising insofar as they demonstrate chances for individuals and teams to better cope with conflict situations: The two studies exposed factors – namely political skill and team reflexivity – which are helpful for dealing with social conflict at work, thus demonstrating an option for the practical handling of the probably increasing conflict potential in the future. Nevertheless, more research is needed to get a deeper understanding of why these factors are precisely helpful.