

# WHEN INTERTEAM CONFLICT SPIRALS INTO INTRATEAM POWER STRUGGLES: THE PIVOTAL ROLE OF TEAM POWER STRUCTURES

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Organizational teams frequently come into conflict with one another over limited resources. Core theories of intergroup conflict suggest that such interteam resource conflicts unite teams internally, reducing intrateam power struggles. However, conflict spillover theory suggests that interteam conflicts may also stimulate competitive power dynamics within teams. We reconcile these two opposing lines of thought by introducing the internal power structure of teams as the key moderator that determines whether interteam conflict reduces or promotes power struggles *within* teams. We theorize that while the common fate of members of egalitarian teams makes them likely to unite and pool resources when facing an interteam conflict, the power differences in hierarchical teams cause members to be differently impacted by the resource-threatening interteam conflict, leading them to have different perspectives and concerns, thereby promoting internal fights over resources (i.e., power struggles). In turn, such power struggles are expected to negatively affect team performance. We tested these hypotheses with a laboratory study of 85 three-person negotiation teams and a field study of 158 organizational work teams, and found, as expected, that a resource-threatening interteam conflict promotes performance-detracting power struggles in hierarchical (but not egalitarian) teams.

Relationships between organizational teams are often conflictual (Baldrige, 1971; Blake, Shepard, & Mouton, 1964; Kramer, 1991). Due to their mutual dependence on the same valuable but finite organizational resource pool, teams may come into conflict over the allocation of scarce resources, such as budgets, personnel, or help from management (Baldrige, 1971; Kramer, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Pondy, 1967). Resource conflicts between teams inherently pose a threat to a team's own internal resources, as these conflicts may result in teams missing out on desired resources. For example, when two teams get into a conflict over

budget allocation, one, or perhaps even both, of the teams may end up not getting their desired budget. Such interteam conflicts not only affect interteam relations (Jackson, 1993; van Knippenberg, 2003), but can also influence the dynamics within each of the teams caught up in the conflict (see Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961; Sherif & Sherif, 1966). That is, when teams face a resource-threatening interteam conflict, this will impact the availability of *internal* team resources and, as such, affect how members behave toward one another *within* their own team (Mead & Maner, 2012b; Staw, Sandelands, & Dutton, 1981).

The general assumption about the impact of interteam conflicts on intrateam functioning is that interteam conflicts unite teams internally (Brewer, 1999; Campbell, 1965; Coser, 1956; Stein, 1976; Tajfel, 1982). Members are expected to pool their resources and work together to collectively fend off the impending resource threat posed by an interteam conflict (Dahrendorf, 1959; Sherif, 1966; Simmel,

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1955). Indeed, many studies have shown that interteam conflicts can increase intrateam resource contribution and cooperation (see Appendix A for an overview of these studies). For example, Bornstein and colleagues (see Bornstein, 2003, for an overview) have repeatedly shown with experimental team games that interteam conflicts over resources increase members' voluntarily resource contribution to the team pool. As such, resource-threatening interteam conflicts can promote within team resource sharing and reduce within team competitions over resource control—i.e., power struggles (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010).

However, conflict spillover theory suggests that conflicts can also have negative cross-level effects (Jehn, Rispens, Jonsen, & Greer, 2013; Keenan & Carnevale, 1989; Sassenberg, Moskowitz, Jacoby, & Hansen, 2007). For instance, conflict has been theorized to spread from the dyadic to the team level (Jehn et al., 2013), and shown to carry over from the team to the interteam level (Keenan & Carnevale, 1989; Sassenberg et al., 2007). We build upon this theory by proposing that interteam conflicts may instigate intrateam conflicts because the resource threat posed by the interteam conflict may provoke fights over resources within the team. That is, each individual team member may also experience (a fear of) personal resource deprivation due to the interteam conflict. This fear of resource deprivation, combined with the competitive mind-set that is oftentimes engendered by (interteam) conflicts (Deutsch, 1969; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Sassenberg et al., 2007), may make members want to protect their own individual resource share (Esses, Jackson, & Armstrong, 1998; cf. Kerr, 1983). Therefore, instead of combating the resource threat together, the possibility exists that when an interteam conflict threatens a team's resources, members will choose to cope in individualistic manners and safeguard their own resources by engaging in competitive resource-acquiring behaviors within their team, i.e., intrateam power struggles (see, e.g., Greer & Van Kleef, 2010).<sup>1</sup> Intrateam power

struggles, in turn, reduce the sharing of information and distract members from their tasks (cf. De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995), thereby impairing team performance—the degree to which a team accomplishes its goals or mission (Bell, 2007; Devine & Philips, 2001) as seen by a variety of task-oriented indicators, including team output quality, quantity, and efficiency (Gibson, Zellmer-Bruhn, & Schwab, 2003).

In this paper, we seek to reconcile these two research streams by proposing that the key in understanding whether resource-threatening interteam conflicts encourage or discourage performance-detracting intrateam power struggles is the internal power structure of the team. We note that most research that found that interteam conflict brought teams together was conducted in the context of egalitarian teams (see Appendix A).<sup>2</sup> In egalitarian teams, where all members have equal amounts of power, or control over valued resources (Blau & Scott, 1962; Magee & Galinsky, 2008), members are similarly impacted when an interteam conflict threatens team resources (Bornstein, 1992). The egalitarian power structure of such teams thus enforces a common fate of team members when they are confronted with a resource-threatening interteam conflict (Aquino, Steisel, & Kay, 1992; Deutsch, 1975; Kabanoff, 1991). This means that when such teams face a resource-threatening interteam conflict, they are likely to unite, pool resources internally, and respond collectively to the resource threat, and, as such, be less embroiled by internal power struggles.

However, in hierarchically structured teams, where power is divided unequally, conflict over resources may spill over from the interteam to the intrateam level. The unequal division of power within hierarchical teams implies that members of different power ranks are differently affected when there is an interteam resource conflict (cf. Aquino & Reed, 1998; van Dijk & Wilke, 1995). For instance, high-ranked members may face greater scrutiny when there is a resource-threatening interteam

<sup>1</sup> While other forms of conflict may also be similarly reduced, such as status conflicts—i.e., disputes over people's relative status (i.e., respect) positions in their team's social hierarchy (Bendersky & Hays, 2012)—we expect that the form of conflict most likely to be impacted by interteam resource conflicts are conflicts specifically about resources—i.e., power struggles. We therefore focus on the role of power struggles in our theorizing and model here, but return to this point in our discussion, where we suggest that our theory and findings may also apply, albeit to a lesser degree, to other forms of conflict in teams, including status conflicts.

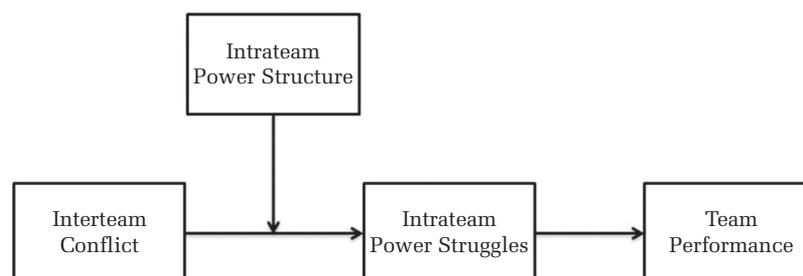
<sup>2</sup> The only studies which have looked at interteam conflicts in hierarchical settings are Maner and Mead (2010) and Mead and Meaner (2012a), who looked at how interteam competition changes the perceptions and behaviors of different personality types of leaders toward their subordinates, and Van Vugt and Spisak (2008) who examined how interteam conflict impacts preferences for male versus female leaders. No studies to our knowledge have compared egalitarian to hierarchical team settings in determining how *teams* respond to interteam conflict.

conflict (Georgesesen & Harris, 2006; Hamblin, 1958; Mead & Maner, 2012; Pettit, Yong, & Spataro, 2010). Alternatively, low-ranked members may face removal from their team or even the entire organization when an interteam conflict threatens team resources (Chen, Brockner, & Greenberg, 2003; Keltner, D., Gruenfeld, D. H., & Anderson, 2003; Kramer, 1996; Solomon, 1960; Tjosvold, 1981). These rank-specific concerns caused by the interteam conflict stress the inequity of the hierarchical power structure, and highlight the different and sometimes even incompatible perspectives, needs, and concerns that differently ranked members may have. As such, a hierarchical power structure encourages members to focus on the individual-level, rather than the team-level, consequences of a resource-threatening interteam conflict. This individualistic focus will make members of hierarchical teams, both high and low ranked, primarily concerned with their own power position and resource share (cf. Mannix, 1993). Therefore, in hierarchical teams facing an interteam conflict, members are expected to try to safeguard or improve their own individual position, thereby fostering spill over from interteam resource conflicts to intrateam power struggles (Deutsch, 1975; Rapoport, Bornstein, & Erev, 1989). To summarize, we develop a theoretical model (see Figure 1) in which we propose that the internal power structure of teams—more hierarchical or more egalitarian—is pivotal in determining whether members will fight or unite in response to a resource-threatening interteam conflict.

With our study, we offer a few notable contributions. First, we contribute to the literature on interteam and intergroup conflict (e.g., Bornstein, 2003; Sherif, 1966; Van Vugt, De Cremer, & Janssen, 2007) by reconciling two seemingly opposing views on the impact of interteam conflict on intrateam dynamics. We show that past conclusions about the cooperative benefits of interteam conflicts for intrateam

dynamics have been driven by the setting in which these studies were conducted. We demonstrate that when the internal team power structure is taken into account, interteam conflicts may not foster intrateam cooperation; rather, conflict spillover theory may apply (Jehn et al., 2013; Keenan & Carnevale, 1989; Sassenberg et al., 2007; Smith, 1989). That is, in more hierarchically structured teams, interteam conflicts may promote intrateam struggles, rather than cooperation, around resources. Second, we contribute to the conflict spillover literature (Jehn et al., 2013; Keenan & Carnevale, 1989; Sassenberg et al., 2007), which has until now focused on how conflict may spill over from lower levels to higher levels (i.e., from dyads to the team; from the team to the interteam context). We expand conflict spillover research by showing that the reverse effect is also possible, that conflicts at higher levels may also spill over to lower levels, as we demonstrate that interteam conflicts may lead to intrateam power struggles. Third, we speak to the rapidly growing literature on social hierarchy in teams (e.g., Halevy, Chou, Galinsky, & Murnighan, 2012a; Ronay, Greenaway, Anicich, & Galinsky, 2012; Van der Vegt, de Jong, Bunderson, & Molleman, 2010). While much research on social hierarchy has advocated for the positive effects of power hierarchies on team functioning (i.e., the functionalist account of hierarchy, see Anderson & Brown, 2010; Halevy, Chou, & Galinsky, 2011; Keltner, Van Kleef, Chen, & Kraus, 2008; Magee & Galinsky, 2008), a growing line of research suggests that power hierarchies can also spark intrateam power struggles (e.g., Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Taracki, Greer, & Groenen, 2015). We extend theory on power hierarchies by identifying when a power hierarchy may be functional (i.e., when resources are abundant) versus harmful (i.e., when resources are threatened and scarce—with one instantiation of this being interteam conflict) for team functioning; we show that a power hierarchy

**FIGURE 1**  
**Theoretical Model**



may backfire in settings where resources are under threat. Finally, by looking at how resource-threatening interteam conflict may result in intrateam power struggles, we extend the burgeoning literature on power dynamics in teams (e.g., Aime, Humphrey, DeRue, & Paul, 2014; Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Hays & Bendersky, 2015; Humphrey & Aime, 2014) by providing a first illustration of how intrateam power dynamics are jointly impacted by the interteam setting and the internal team power structure.

### THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Organizational teams tend to be part of a larger network of teams that are mutually dependent on a common pool of organizational resources (e.g., Kramer, 1991; Miles, 1980; Swingle, 1976). Most of these organizational resources are tangible and concrete (e.g., budget, personnel, office space), but others may be intangible and symbolic (e.g., respect, recognition). Although these resources may be replenishable over time, they are at limited supply at any given time (Kramer, 1991). In some situations, teams may experience their resource supplies to become especially threatened and scarce, due to for instance changes in the external environment (e.g., general economic declines), organizational-wide failure, or other teams making conflicting demands upon the same resource base. In this paper, we focus on this last specific cause of resource threat, i.e., interteam resource conflict (e.g., LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Sherif & Sherif, 1953; Stephan & Stephan, 2000), as both empirical and anecdotal evidence suggests that interteam conflicts over resources are frequent occurrences in organizations (Baldrige, 1971; Blake et al., 1964; Kramer, 1991). However, we note that other situations that put a press on team resources, such as economic turndowns, may produce similar effects on teams.

Realistic group conflict theory postulates that interteam conflict ensues where teams have incompatible needs or goals and make claims on the same resources (see Sherif, 1966; Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961; Sherif & Sherif, 1953). For example, when teams may make conflicting appeals on scarce organizational resources, such as budget, office space, talented personnel, prestige, or organizational rewards (e.g., Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978; Pondy, 1967; van Knippenberg, 2003). Such conflicts between teams are often seen as zero-sum and intractable (e.g., Esses et al., 1998), and are

known to sour interteam relations and effectiveness (e.g., Kramer, 1991; Richter, Scully, & West, 2005; van Knippenberg, 2003). However, realistic group conflict theory and related research (Sherif, 1966; Sherif et al., 1961; Sherif & Sherif, 1953) suggests that the effects of interteam conflicts over resources are not contained at the interteam level, but may also permeate team boundaries, impacting intrateam dynamics and performance (see also Mead & Maner, 2012b). Having a conflict over resources with another team implicitly creates a threat to the resources available to a team and its members (e.g., LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Sherif & Sherif, 1953; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). This is because such interteam conflicts may result in teams losing out on desired resources, and combatting with the other team may also require expenditure of existing resources. Interteam conflicts thus threaten current and future intrateam resources, which will have implications for the individual members within a team.

The burning question then is how members cope when interteam conflicts threaten their team's internal resources. On the one hand, members could join forces and pool resources to fend off the resource threat together (e.g., Brewer, 2001; Campbell, 1965, 1972; Coser, 1956; Dahrendorf, 1959; Sherif, 1966; Simmel, 1955; Stein, 1976; Tajfel, 1982). Indeed, a plethora of research has shown that members of teams that face an interteam conflict are likely to unite. For instance, interteam conflict has been found to increase intrateam cooperation (Benard, 2012; Bornstein & Ben-Yossef, 1994; Bornstein, Budescu, & Zamir, 1997; Bornstein & Erev, 1994; Dion, 1979; Sherif et al., 1961), and contribute to the team resource pool (Erev, Bornstein & Galili, 1993; Gunthorsdottir & Rapoport, 2006; Halevy, Weisel, & Bornstein, 2012b). This increased pooling of resources of members suggests that interteam conflicts are likely to reduce intrateam competition over resources, i.e., power struggles.

On the other hand, negative cross-level "spillover" effects of conflict may exist, with conflicts over resources at the interteam level propagating conflicts over resources between individual members at the intrateam level (cf., Jehn et al., 2013; Keenan & Carnevale, 1989; Sassenberg et al., 2007). Research on conflict spillover has postulated that conflicts may spill over from one level to the other. For instance, Jehn and colleagues (2013) have argued that dyadic conflicts between members may spread to the team, and both Keenan and Carnevale (1989) and Sassenberg and colleagues (2007) have experimentally shown that intrateam conflicts may carry over

into interteam conflicts. We propose here that the opposite may also occur, i.e., that cross-level spillover effects of conflicts may also exist from the interteam to the intrateam level. We argue that this is because interteam conflicts induce a resource threat, which has not only team-level but also individual-level ramifications. Losing out on team resources translates into levies on team members' individual resources (Esses et al., 1998; cf. Kerr, 1983). Team members may therefore experience not only a threat to the resources of the team as a whole, but also a personal resource threat as result of the interteam conflict. In addition, conflicts have been argued to cause individual members to adopt a competitive mind-set (Sassenberg et al., 2007) through which they are likely to distance themselves from others, and develop hostile attitudes and a win-lose mentality (Deutsch, 1969; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986). Then, in our context, this resource threat combined with a competitive mind-set may further urge members to let the individual-level repercussions of the interteam conflict take precedence over the team-level repercussions, leading them to compete with members within their team over the remaining available resources (Bornstein et al., 1997; Grossman & Mendoza, 2003; Roux, Goldsmith, & Bonezzi, 2015). Therefore, rather than working together, pooling resources, and acting as a unified team, members could also respond to interteam conflicts in individualistic manners by fighting over internal resource control. As such, conflicts over resources between teams may lead to within team fights over resources—power struggles.

### **The Moderating Role of Intrateam Power Hierarchy**

We propose that the key in reconciling these different views on the effects of resource-threatening interteam conflicts on intrateam power dynamics, and thus whether interteam conflict elicits cooperative or competitive responses within the team, lies in the way in which power is internally structured within the team. When teams have a hierarchical power structure, there are clear power rank differences between members (Harrison & Klein, 2007; Magee & Galinsky, 2008). These power differences can provide teams with structure, stability and clarity of resource allocation (Frenkel-Brunswick, 1949; Neuberg & Newsom, 1993), thereby reducing uncertainty and chaos (Hogg, 2001), and improving intrateam coordination (Halevy et al., 2011): see functionalist accounts of hierarchy (e.g., Halevy

et al., 2011; Keltner et al., 2008). However, power differences may also facilitate individualistic approaches to team interactions, through which intrateam conflicts are fostered, as proposed in conflict accounts of hierarchy (e.g., Bloom, 1999; Greer et al., 2017; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Harrison & Klein, 2007; Hays & Bendersky). Members at different ranks in the power hierarchy will have different perspectives, concerns, and needs, and, at times, these different standpoints may come into conflict. Although there is evidence for power hierarchies to be both a positive and a negative force for teams, a recent meta-analysis (Greer, De Jong, Schouten, & Dannals, 2018) shows that at this point in the literature, power hierarchies are more likely to stimulate competitive dynamics in teams, rather than coordination, especially in competition-prone situations that stress the inequity of the power structure (for related recent reviews on the importance of context in determining the effects of hierarchy, see Anderson & Brown, 2010; Anderson & Kennedy, 2012; Anderson & Willer, 2014). For example, Greer and Van Kleef (2010) find that power hierarchies lead to power struggles in high-power teams, which are susceptible to internal conflicts, but not in low-power teams.

We extend this work here, and examine how teams that have a more or less hierarchical power structure react differently to the competitive landscape put into play by resource-threatening interteam conflicts. We draw on these recent trends in the literature on power hierarchies to propose that resource-threatening interteam conflict may provide a competitive climate that may lead hierarchical teams to turn on one another, while egalitarian teams may be more likely to face the threat together. We base our reasoning for this prediction on the notion that the differentiation in power ranks in hierarchical teams leads members to be differently impacted by a resource-threatening interteam conflict, and therefore to have different perspectives and concerns when facing this conflict (cf. Aquino & Reed, 1998; van Dijk & Wilke, 1995). For example, high-ranked members may have reputational concerns both inside and outside of the team, as all eyes will be on them during an interteam conflict, and they will be held responsible for the outcome. Similarly, high-ranked members may worry that they (as the responsible ones) are pushed to take the biggest burden if the team's resources get reduced due to the interteam conflict. Low-ranked members, on the other hand, may be afraid that they will become (further) marginalized as higher-ranked members' focus is now on the interteam conflict. Likewise, members with less power may worry that reduced resources will result in a situation where

individuals with more power protect their own resources at the expense of those with less power, perhaps even removing low-ranked members from the team or the entire organization. These rank-specific perspectives and concerns of members highlight the inequity of members' positional ranks, and, as such, encourage an individual focus, rather than a team focus, regarding an impending resource threat (Deutsch, 1975; Mannix, 1993; Rapoport et al., 1989). Members of hierarchical teams will thus mainly be concerned with the implications of the resource-threatening interteam conflict for their own power position and resource share (cf. Mannix, 1993). This focus on individual consequences, in turn, makes them eager to safeguard their own power position and individual resource share in the light of interteam conflicts (e.g., Chen et al., 2003; Georgesen & Harris, 2006; Keltner et al., 2003; Pettit et al., 2010). Hence, we propose that hierarchical power structures in teams stimulate the spillover from interteam resource conflicts to intrateam power struggles, as they encourage individualistic approaches toward the resource threat, and thus promote competitive power struggles between members within the same team.

To illustrate, when a team with a hierarchical power structure has a conflict about a budget-allocation with another team, those at the top of the hierarchy may fear that they will be held responsible for the threat to the team's budget, and, as such, they may fear that the interteam conflict will jeopardize their powerful position within their team (Hamblin, 1958; Mead & Maner, 2012a). Therefore, high-ranked members may try to bolster their powerful position by, for instance, securing budgetary or other resources for themselves—likely at the expense of lower-ranked members (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988; Fast & Chen, 2009; Georgesen & Harris, 2006; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Maner & Mead, 2010; Morrison, Fast, & Ybarra, 2009). Those at the bottom of the hierarchy may also feel vulnerable in the face of a resource-threatening interteam conflict, as they may fear they will be mistreated or misused in this situation by more powerful team members (e.g., Chen et al., 2003; Keltner et al., 2003; Kramer, 1996; Solomon, 1960; Tjosvold, 1981). For example, low-ranked members may be afraid that their budget will be disproportionately cut, making them even less powerful than they already are. Low-ranked members may respond to their fears by trying to safeguard or improve their own position, through pre-emptive strikes such as involving lobbying or forming coalitions to improve their own resource share (Fleming & Spicer, 2008; Halevy, 2017; cf. Martorana, Galinsky, & Rao, 2005). As such, resource-threatening

interteam conflicts may spill over into intrateam power struggles in hierarchical teams.

Teams with an egalitarian power structure, on the other hand, are expected to respond differently to interteam conflicts than hierarchical teams. Rather than leading to more intrateam power struggles, we predict that resource-threatening interteam conflicts will reduce power struggles in egalitarian teams. Although the equal distribution of resource control and lack of power rank differences between members in these teams can promote a harmonious climate (e.g., Deutsch, 1975; Kabanoff, 1991; Kerr & Slocum, 2005; Lawler & Yoon, 1998), which benefits team functioning (e.g., Glew, 2009; Lawler & Yoon, 1998; Leventhal, Karuza, & Fry, 1980; Smith & Cook, 1973), there may, at times, also be temptations for members within egalitarian teams to engage in self-interested power-seeking behaviors, i.e., to increase one's individual control over resources within the team (Hays & Bendersky, 2015). For instance, members of egalitarian teams may also, in certain situations, try to improve their individual power position by withholding information, exerting dominance, or forming coalitions. However, we expect these tendencies to be reduced by resource-threatening interteam conflicts, as members of egalitarian teams tend to be similarly impacted by the resource threat (Bornstein, 1992). That is, as members of egalitarian teams all have the same power rank, the resource threat will not affect one member in a different way than another member. As such, members of egalitarian teams will have similar perspectives and concerns regarding the interteam conflict. This common fate of members with respect to a resource-threatening interteam conflict emphasizes the equitable structure of the team (Aquino et al., 1992; Deutsch, 1975; Kabanoff, 1991), and enhances a team focus—rather than an individual focus, leading to unification rather than polarization (Stein, 1976; Tajfel, 1982). Therefore, when egalitarian teams are confronted with a resource-threatening interteam conflict, we expect them to join forces, and reduce internal competitive responses (e.g., Bornstein, 2003; Sherif et al., 1961), thereby decreasing power struggles within the team. In sum, we propose:

*Hypothesis 1. There is an interaction effect between interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on intrateam power struggles, such that interteam conflict is positively related to intrateam power struggles in teams with a hierarchical power structure, and negatively in teams with an egalitarian power structure.*

## Intrateam Power Struggles and Team Performance

Intrateam power struggles are competitions over resource control within a team (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010).<sup>3</sup> We expect power struggles to have negative consequences for team performance. First, power struggles distract members from the team task at hand (cf. De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Jehn, 1995), as members' attention goes to managing their own individual concerns around resource control within the team, and, as such, they can lose sight of team task activities. Second, power struggles increase the likelihood of performance-detracting political behavior, which is characterized by observable, but often covert, actions by which members enhance their power to influence decisions (Eisenhardt & Bourgeois, 1988). These actions encompass (behind-the-scenes) coalition formation, offline lobbying, withholding information, gossiping, and attempts to control the agenda (Pettigrew, 1973; Pfeffer, 1981). When political behavior is employed during an intrateam power struggle, team performance and outcomes suffer because members are less likely to cooperate and share information openly with one another (Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010). Third, power tends to be seen as zero-sum and therefore struggles over power can induce competitive behaviors (Berger, Ridgeway, Fisek, & Norman, 1998; Gould, 2003; Homans, 1961), which, in turn, harm interpersonal relationships in teams (Mannix & Sauer, 2006) and thereby impair team performance (Greer, 2012). Last, when one or more members challenge the intrateam power structure, quite quickly the whole team gets involved. This is because members are very sensitive to losing power (Anderson & Brion, 2014; Magee & Galinsky, 2008; Mead & Maner, 2012a), and therefore when one or more members show power striving behaviors, other members are inclined to respond with power protecting behaviors, quickly spreading power struggles

<sup>3</sup> Power struggles are different from conflicts over the task (i.e., goals and outcomes of work), relationship (i.e., interpersonal personality conflicts), process (i.e., logistics, such as meeting time), and status (i.e., the array of respect within a team) (cf., Bendersky & Hays, 2012; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010) in that power struggles are explicitly about the control of valued team resources, such as money and personnel. Although task conflict can in certain situations be good—or at least not bad—for teams, all other types of conflict tend to be more harmful for team functioning and performance (De Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012; Jehn, 1995), including power struggles (e.g., Greer & Van Kleef, 2010).

throughout the whole team. Also, power struggles between a subset of members are likely to impact all members (also members that are not part of the power struggle), as power relations with non-participating members may change due to the power struggle they are not part of (cf., Bendersky & Hays, 2012). Therefore, power struggles tend to quickly escalate to include the whole team, and are likely long-term and intractable (Kapferer, 1969; Morrill, 1991; Ridgeway & Walker 1995), thereby forming a systematic deterrent to effective teamwork that hurts team performance.

Based on this reasoning, we propose that:

*Hypothesis 2. Intrateam power struggles are negatively related to team performance.*

*Hypothesis 3. There is a moderated mediation effect of interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on team performance through intrateam power struggles.*

## STUDY 1

### Participants

Participants included 267 business students ( $M_{\text{age}} = 19.8$  years,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.10$ ; 131 women) whom were randomly assigned to 89 three-person teams.<sup>4</sup> The experiment utilized a 2 (interteam conflict: present vs absent)  $\times$  2 (intrateam power structure: hierarchy vs equality) between-subjects factorial design. Participants took part in the experiment either for partial course requirement or to earn monetary compensation.

### Procedure

Upon arrival in the laboratory, team members were welcomed, introduced to their fellow team members, and informed that the experiment would be video recorded. In addition, they were told that there was another team in an adjacent lab, which was taking part in the study. In reality, teams were

<sup>4</sup> Two teams were excluded from analyses as there was a technical issue leaving their videos unrecorded: one team was excluded as it failed to follow instructions (discussed the amount of points with each other), and one team was excluded as it did not reach agreements within the allotted time. This left us with a final sample of 85 teams (21 in the interteam conflict-intrateam hierarchy condition; 22 in the interteam conflict-intrateam equality condition; 20 in the no-conflict-intrateam hierarchy condition, and 22 in the no-conflict-intrateam equality condition).

operating independently of each other. Next, participants were told that they were going to be working together with their teammates on a consultancy project and that today would be their first meeting, which would consist of three parts (Part 1: Choosing a company; Part 2: Team decision task, and Part 3: Meeting the other team). Crucial to our experiment, members were informed that the three teams with the best performance (assessed by the quality of their final company-choice, their pitch, and their performance on the team decision task)<sup>5</sup> would win a monetary team prize (three team prizes of 150 euros each), and that there were also individual prizes for the highest individual outcomes on the team decision task (three individual prizes of 50 euros each).

**Part 1: Choosing a company.** In the first part of the meeting, teams had to decide for which company they wanted to do the consultancy project (they could choose between four companies for whom they were given descriptions) and write a pitch explaining why they preferred this company and why the company should opt for their team to be their consultants. Teams were informed that the quality of the choice of the company as well as the pitch was important, as it would affect their chances of winning the monetary team prize.

**Part 2: Team decision task (intrateam negotiation).** In the second part, teams engaged in a negotiation task in which they were required to make team decisions on four integrative issues regarding their plan of approach for the consultancy project. The issues on which they had to negotiate included the amount of interviews they would hold with the client, the form and frequency of the client contact, the amount of training for the client (misaligned issue), and the frequency of intrateam contact (see Table 1). For this decision task (based on the team negotiation task by Beersma & De Dreu, 1999; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010), each member of the team was given a unique preference table explaining their personal preferences for each of these issues. Members were told that their individual preference table was confidential, and they were not to discuss their points associated with the issues with their teammates. For three of the issues, there was a difference in profit-size between members, meaning that Member A could obtain relatively more points for issue 1 and considerably less points for issues 2 and 4, while Member B could obtain relatively more points for issue 2, and

considerably much less for issues 1 and 4, and Member C could obtain relatively more points for issue 4, and considerably less points for issue 1 and 2. However, the preference table for the issue that was most profitable to a specific member was never aligned with the preference tables of the other two members for this issue. The preference tables of the other members were however relatively aligned on this (for them less important) issue, thereby inviting coalitions between those members. Teams performed best if they created value by logrolling over these issues and opted for the preferred option of the team member who got more points for that issue. The one diverging issue (issue 3) was for all members of equal importance, and all preference tables were for this issue “misaligned.” Combining three classic integrative issues (e.g., Beersma & De Dreu, 1999, 2002; Weingart, Bennett, & Brett 1993) with this misaligned issue makes the symmetry in the payoff matrix less obvious, so that the negotiation is more difficult and realistic.

Teams were then given 20 minutes to try to reach internal agreement on all four issues, and were told that if they failed to reach agreement they would receive zero points. Intrateam negotiations mimic typical decision-making meetings in the organizational team context, as there team members also tend to have “mixed-motives”—they are motivated to do well for themselves as well as to contribute to the team’s collective success, while working together to obtain a team-level decision (e.g., Beersma & De Dreu, 2002).

**Part 3: Post-task questionnaire.** After the decision task, teams were informed that the other team had not finished their decision task, and that they were required to individually complete a questionnaire while waiting to meet the other team and go on with the study. When all team members were finished with the questionnaire, members were told that there was no third part. They were then debriefed, probed for suspicion, and thanked for their participation.

## Manipulations

**Interteam conflict.** We manipulated interteam conflict in the first part of the experiment when teams had to choose a company. Teams were told that choosing the “best” company was important as it directly affected their chances of winning the monetary team prize. However, teams were also told that their team and the team in the other room were not allowed to choose the same company. If they were to choose the same company, there would be a conflict between the teams. In this case, teams would in the

<sup>5</sup> In reality, the team prize was only determined by teams’ performance on the team decision task.

**TABLE 1**  
**Profit Schedules Used in the Intra-team Negotiation Task**

Amount of interviews	Client-contact	Amount of training	Team contact
Profit schedule of Consultant 1			
2 (200)	Weekly calls (50)	6 (90)	2 × week (100)
1 (150)	Weekly emails & calls every other week (37.5)	5 (60)	1 × week (75)
3 (100)	Emails every other week & weekly meetings (25)	4 (30)	1 × 2 weeks (50)
5 (50)	Weekly emails & meetings every other week (12.5)	3 (0)	1 × 3 weeks (25)
4 (0)	Weekly emails (0)		1 × 4 weeks (0)
Profit schedule of Consultant 2			
2 (0)	Weekly calls (100)	6 (60)	2 × week (0)
1 (12.5)	Weekly emails & calls every other week (75)	5 (30)	1 × week (50)
3 (25)	Emails every other week & weekly meetings (50)	4 (0)	1 × 2 weeks (100)
5 (37.5)	Weekly emails & meetings every other week (25)	3 (90)	1 × 3 weeks (150)
4 (50)	Weekly emails (0)		1 × 4 weeks (200)
Profit schedule of Consultant 3			
2 (0)	Weekly calls (0)	6 (30)	2 × week (50)
1 (25)	Weekly emails & calls every other week (50)	5 (0)	1 × week (37.5)
3 (50)	Emails every other week & weekly meetings (100)	4 (90)	1 × 2 weeks (25)
5 (75)	Weekly emails & meetings every other week (150)	3 (60)	1 × 3 weeks (12.5)
4 (100)	Weekly emails (200)		1 × 4 weeks (0)

third part of the experiment have to battle with each other about which of the teams would ultimately become the consulting team for the company they both had chosen, and still be in the running to win the monetary team prize. Therefore, choosing the same company as the other team, and thus being in a conflict with the other team, threatened a team's chances of winning the team prize, and as such team resources. This could either lead members to combine forces and exert all their efforts to perform well as a unified team on the team decision task, focusing on the team prize, or it could lead members to focus on doing well for themselves in the team decision task—at the expense of other members, so they would increase their own chances to win the individual prize. If the teams immediately chose different companies, then the teams would meet up in the third part of the experiment to give each other tips on how to approach the project.

After teams had chosen a company and written a short pitch (to increase their commitment to their choice), teams received a (bogus) note presented to them by the experimenter—ostensibly from the other team—with the name of the company the other team had chosen. For the teams in the interteam conflict condition, this note had the same company name on it as their own company choice; for the other half of the teams, the note had a different company name on it

(no-interteam conflict condition). The manipulation was reinforced by an experimenter note stating in the interteam conflict condition: “Both teams have chosen the same company. This means that there is a conflict between both teams and that teams will have to battle it out in the third part to see who can have the company they initially chose. Remember: your team's chance to do well in the experiment and win one of the monetary prizes is partly dependent on the quality of the company you end up with.” In the no interteam conflict condition the note stated: “Both teams have chosen a different company. This means that there is no conflict between the teams. In the third part teams will exchange tips on how to approach the project.”<sup>6</sup>

**Intrateam power structure.** We manipulated intrateam power structure by informing participants about the formal power structure within their team, including individual members' positions within that given team power structure. In the hierarchy condition, team members were given the role of senior consultant, consultant, and junior consultant. Members were informed that senior consultants had

<sup>6</sup> The interteam resource conflict was symmetric, i.e., teams had equal amounts of power. This was not explicitly mentioned, but there was no reason to assume that the other team would have more/less power than the own team.

the most power and control over team resources and outcomes during the consultancy project, consultants had intermediate power and control over team resources and outcomes, and junior consultants had the least power and control over team resources and outcomes. This implied that in the team decision task the more powerful members had the power to enforce their will on the decision-making process, thereby strongly influencing team and individual outcomes of the task. In the equality condition, team members could have the role of consultant A, B, or C. Members were informed that they all had an equal moderate amount of power and control over team resources and outcomes during the consultancy project.

The manipulation of hierarchy versus equality was reinforced by power structure charts in participants' instruction booklets (including their place in the power structure), power structure charts on the wall of the laboratory room, and by giving participants name-tags that stated their role. Additionally, to increase the perceived legitimacy of this manipulation, participants were asked to fill out an online leadership questionnaire the day before the experiment. They were told that their placement in the team power structure was based on the results of this questionnaire; in reality, their placement was random. Manipulating intrateam power structure and "true" power in this manner is common in experimental research, and similar legitimization and reinforcement of power manipulations has been shown to be effective in past power research (e.g., Briñol, Petty, Valle, Rucker, & Becerra, 2007; Chen, Lee-Chai, & Bargh, 2001; Greer & Van Kleef, 2010; Lammers, Galinsky, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008; Maner & Mead, 2010; Mead & Maner, 2012a).

## Measures

***Intrateam power struggles.*** Power struggles were measured through video-coding of the team decision task (intrateam negotiation). A power struggle coding scheme was constructed based on the definition of power struggles, and the power struggle scale of Greer and Van Kleef (2010); an example item is "In my team, we contested who can control outcomes." The coding scheme contained concrete power struggle behaviors (including examples of how they may manifest in this context), such as asserting dominance and forcing one's will by raising one's voice, taking control by interrupting others, forming explicit coalitions (i.e., "If we team up, it's two against one"), preventing others from gaining control by ignoring suggestions, using the own or others' position to gain influence (e.g., "You're only a junior consultant, why should we listen to you?" or "You're

just a consultant like me, you can't just force your will like that!") and explicitly referring to the power structure of the team to contest who can control outcomes (i.e., "Our team has a clear hierarchy, so basically I can decide whatever I want" or "We're all equal in power, so we should all agree before we decide"). Two coders were shown a few videos that exemplified teams with a low degree of power struggles (a score of 1), a medium degree of power struggles (a score of 3.5), and a high degree of power struggles (a score of 7), and were instructed to use these as anchor-points. The coders tallied power struggle behaviors, and then, based on the frequency and intensity of power struggles in a team, an overall power struggle score on a 1–7 scale was determined. One coder scored and rated all teams, and the second coder scored and rated a subset of 35% of the teams to determine inter-rater reliability,  $ICC(1) = .92$ ;  $ICC(2) = .96$ . Twenty-nine percent of power struggle scores had perfect agreement between coders. The rest varied slightly—between .2 and .5. As reliability was sufficiently high, the ratings of the first coder were used in analyses.

***Team performance.*** Team performance was assessed through the joint outcomes of the intrateam negotiation task. Joint outcomes are defined as the sum of the profits of the individual negotiators (Tripp & Sondak, 1992), calculated by summing the points of the three members across the four issues. The minimum number of points a team could generate was 540, and the maximum number of points was 780. Within the context of an intrateam negotiation, joint outcomes can be viewed as the most important indicator of team performance. This is because joint outcomes are determined by a team's ability to find integrative potential through the integration of members' interests, and as such signal the quality of their decisions (Rubin, Pruitt, & Kim, 1994). When joint outcomes are high, an integrative solution has been reached, and the individual outcomes of members are similar and on average high. Joint outcomes are also relevant in the light of intrateam power struggles. Namely, in order for high outcomes to be achieved, members need to engage in integrative and cooperative behaviors such as information exchange about preferences and priorities, logrolling, and the cooperative creation of value (Lax & Sebenius, 1986; Lewicki, Saunders, & Minton, 1999; Neale & Bazerman, 1991; Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). The competitive nature of power struggles however may cause information to be withheld or manipulated, and voices to not be heard. This undermines the behavior that is necessary to reach integrative potential and as such stands directly in the way to the achievement of high joint outcomes.

**TABLE 2**  
**Marginal Means and Correlations among the Observed Variables (Study 1)**

Variable	Descriptive statistics ( <i>M</i> , <i>SE</i> ) <sup>a</sup>					Correlations <sup>b</sup>
	Full sample	InterTEAM conflict		No interTEAM conflict		
		Hierarchy	Equality	Hierarchy	Equality	
1. Power struggles	3.86 (0.22)	4.99 (0.39)	2.86 (0.39)	3.60 (0.40)	4.01 (0.39)	
2. Joint outcomes	662.15 (4.92)	659.53 (9.79)	657.83 (9.58)	656.15 (10.03)	674.42 (9.60)	-0.24*

Notes:  $n = 85$ .

<sup>a</sup> Means (with standard error in parentheses) controlled for participants knowing each other.

<sup>b</sup> The reported correlations are partial correlations, controlling for knowing, and the effect of the experimental conditions and their interaction.

\*  $p < .05$

**Controls.** We controlled for whether students knew each other in advance, as knowing each other often affects performance (Shah & Jehn, 1993). We coded whether participants knew none (0), one (1) or both (2) of the other participants before the experiment.

## Results

Means, standard errors, and correlations of the observed variables can be seen in Table 2 and 3. All analyses were run at the team level.

**Manipulation checks.** To check whether our interTEAM conflict manipulation was effective, we asked participants what the situation was between their team and the other team, with answer option (A) “We had a conflict with the other team” (coded as 1), and (B) “We had no conflict with the other team” (coded as 0). Our manipulation was indeed effective, as teams in the conflict condition were significantly more likely to report having a conflict with the other team ( $M = 0.95$ ,  $SD = .12$ ) than participants in the no-conflict condition ( $M = 0.06$ ,  $SD = .18$ ),  $t(83) = -25.96$ ,  $p < .001$ .

To check whether our power structure manipulation was effective, we asked participants what kind of power structure their team had, with answer option (A) “We had a hierarchical power structure” (coded as 1), and (B) “We had an egalitarian power structure” (coded as 0). In support of our manipulation, teams in the hierarchy condition were significantly more likely to report having a power hierarchy ( $M = 0.85$ ,  $SD = .20$ ) than teams in the equality condition ( $M = 0.05$ ,  $SD = .12$ ),  $t(83) = -23.18$ ,  $p < .001$ .

At the end of the experiment, we probed participants for suspicion—both verbally and on paper. Participants did not indicate suspicion about the other competing team, nor did they express concerns about the legitimacy of the manipulated power structure and/or role assignment.

**Hypothesis testing.**<sup>7</sup> In Hypothesis 1, we proposed that intrateam power structure would moderate the effects of interTEAM conflict on intrateam power struggles, such that interTEAM conflict would be positively related to intrateam power struggles in hierarchical teams and negatively related to intrateam power struggles in egalitarian teams. This hypothesis was supported, as an analysis of variance revealed that interTEAM resource conflict and intrateam power structure had a significant interactive effect on intrateam power struggles,  $F(1, 80) = 10.47$ ,  $p = .002$ . The effect size ( $\eta^2 = .12$ ) is considered normal in this type of research (cf. Bell, 2007; Horwitz & Horwitz, 2007; Joshi & Roh, 2009).<sup>8</sup>

When decomposing this interaction, we found that there were significantly more intrateam power struggles when hierarchical teams had an interTEAM resource conflict compared with no interTEAM conflict, *Mean Difference (I-J)* = 1.39, *SE* = 0.56,  $p = .02$ , 95% *CI* = 0.27, 2.52. In contrast, egalitarian

<sup>7</sup> When running all analyses controlling for gender, this did not alter the direction or conclusions of our results.

<sup>8</sup> We obtained similar results when we ran the analyses using our manipulation checks as independent variables rather than the manipulation codes. Also, in order to exclude the possibility that there were other unaccounted mechanisms caused by our independent variables that micro-mediated the relationship between interTEAM conflict and intrateam power structure on the one hand and power struggles on the other hand, we ran analyses on cohesion-like constructs (i.e., intrateam trust and team identification), which we had as back-up measures. Analyses showed that there was no main effect of interTEAM conflict or intrateam power structure on cohesion, nor an interaction effect of interTEAM conflict and intrateam power structure on cohesion, nor a three-way interaction between interTEAM conflict, intrateam power structure, and cohesion on power struggles.

**TABLE 3**  
**Raw Descriptives and Zero-Order Correlations (Study 1)**

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Knowing	0.29	0.46				
2. Interteam conflict	0.51	0.50	0.10			
3. Intrateam hierarchy	0.48	0.50	0.02	0.01		
4. Intrateam power struggles	3.86	1.99	0.26*	0.05	0.23*	
5. Team performance	622.15	45.36	0.21	-0.06	-0.09	-0.14

Note: n = 85.

teams experienced less intrateam power struggles when they were involved in an interteam conflict compared with no interteam conflict, *Mean Difference (I-J)* = -1.15, *SE* = 0.55, *p* = .04, 95% *CI* = -2.23, -0.06 (for a graph of the interaction, see Figure 2).

Additionally, in an exploratory analysis, we found that hierarchical teams had significantly more intrateam power struggles than egalitarian teams when involved in an interteam conflict, *Mean Difference (I-J)* = 2.13, *SE* = 0.55, *p* < .001, 95% *CI* = 1.03, 3.22. There was no difference between hierarchical and egalitarian teams when there was no interteam conflict, *Mean Difference (I-J)* = -0.41, *SE* = 0.56, *p* = .47, 95% *CI* = -1.52, 0.70.

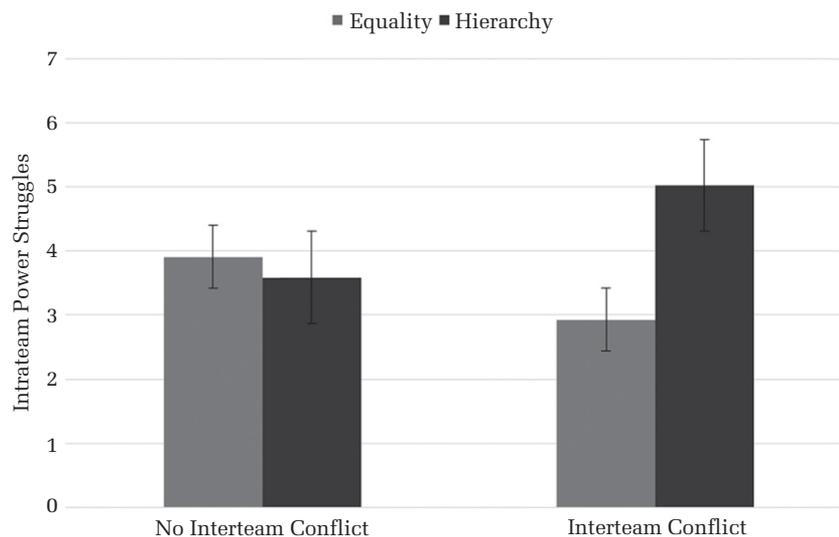
Hypothesis 2 predicted that intrateam power struggles would negatively relate to team performance. This hypothesis was tested using hierarchical regression analyses and was supported

( $\beta = -.27, t = -2.23, p = .03, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .07$ ); power struggles were negatively associated with joint outcomes.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that there would be a moderated mediation effect of interteam resource conflict and intrateam power structure on team performance through intrateam power struggles. We performed a test of moderated mediation with bootstrapping using the PROCESS macro (Model 7) with 5000 repetitions by Hayes (2013). Simulation research shows that bootstrapping is one of the most valid and powerful methods for testing intervening variable effects (MacKinnon, Lockwood, & Williams, 2004; Williams & MacKinnon, 2008), and is therefore the preferred statistical method when indirect effects are tested (Hayes, 2009). In line with our predictions, we found a negative indirect effect of interteam conflict on joint outcomes via power struggles in hierarchical teams (*b* = -6.56; Bias and accelerated 95%

**FIGURE 2**

**Interactive Effects of Interteam Conflict and Intrateam Power Structure on Intrateam Power Struggles (Study 1)**



CI:  $-18.10, -0.30$ ), and a positive significant effect of interteam conflict on joint outcomes via reduced power struggles in egalitarian teams ( $b = 5.39$ ; Bias and accelerated 95% CI:  $0.15, 16.32$ ). Hypothesis 3 thus was supported.

Although the indirect effect is the effect as predicted, and evidence for the indirect effect supports our hypothesis even in the absence of a direct effect (on the importance of indirect effects, see Rucker, Preacher, Tormala, & Petty, 2011), we note that we did not find a direct interaction effect of interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on team performance (see Table 4).<sup>9</sup>

**Additional analyses.** Although we did not hypothesize there to be differences in power struggle participation and initiation between members of different hierarchical power ranks, as we consider power struggles to be a team-level variable concerning all members of a team (e.g., Greer & Van Kleef, 2010), we did explore the potential for there to be differences in participation and initiation in power struggles per hierarchical position. We coded power struggle behaviors for each individual member, using the same coding scheme as described for team-level power struggles, and determined an overall individual power struggle score (1–7) for power struggle participation. We also coded which of the members initiated the power struggle, i.e., made the first power struggle move. When analyzing our data in a multi-level manner, we did not find a main effect of individual position on power struggle participation,  $F(2,116) = 0.93, p = .40$ , nor an interaction of individual position and interteam conflict,  $F(2,116) = 0.06, p = .94$ , suggesting that power struggles are indeed a team-level phenomenon which can be driven as much by high-power members protecting their positions as by low(er)-power members trying to bolster or improve their position.

In addition, we examined whether members of certain hierarchical positions were more likely to initiate a power struggle compared to others, and whether this was affected by the presence of an interteam conflict. Results showed that position mattered in terms of who initiated the power struggle ( $W = 10.56; p = .005$ ); both high-ranked (senior

consultants) and low-ranked members (junior consultants) were more likely to initiate a power struggle than middle-ranked members (consultants) (respectively  $b = -1.83, W = 10.25, p = .001; b = -1.63; W = 8.09; p = .004$ ). There was no difference between high- and low-ranked members in terms of who was more likely to start a power struggle ( $b = -0.20; W = 0.20, p = .66$ ), nor did interteam conflict moderate the effect of position on power struggle initiation ( $W = 0.72, p = .70$ ).<sup>10</sup>

## Discussion

In line with our hypotheses, the results of Study 1 indicate that interteam conflict and intrateam power structure interactively determine the level of intrateam power struggles, which in turn negatively affect team performance (in this study, joint outcomes). In teams with a hierarchical power structure, interteam conflict was positively related to intrateam power struggles, whereas in teams with an egalitarian power structure, interteam conflict was negatively related to intrateam power struggles. Intrateam power struggles, in turn, were negatively related to team performance. Moderated mediation analysis showed that there was an indirect effect of interteam resource conflict and intrateam power structure on team performance through intrateam power struggles.

<sup>10</sup> The finding that high- and low-ranked members are more likely to begin a power struggle echoes Competition Theory (Garcia, Tor, & Gonzalez, 2006), which postulates that people who are proximal to a meaningful standard, such as at the top or the bottom of a hierarchy, are more likely to compete. This is because the proximity to meaningful standards directly impacts our unidirectional drive upward, thereby fostering social comparison processes and increasing competition (Festinger, 1954). High- and low-ranked members may thus—due to their proximity to the top and the bottom of the hierarchy—be more occupied with their position in the hierarchy than middle-ranked members, and therefore more active in protecting or improving their power position. However, once a power struggle has started within the team, middle-ranked members are just as likely to participate in the intrateam power struggle. This in line with work on conflict contagion (Jehn et al., 2013), which argues that intrateam conflicts tend to spread among all members, and work on hierarchy conflicts in teams (Kapferer, 1969; Morrill, 1991; Ridgeway & Walker 1995), which argues that this is especially likely to happen when the conflict is about the power structure in the team, as the outcome of such conflicts affects all members in the team.

<sup>9</sup> We also note that the lack of significance of the overall regression model test should not be a concern here because our focus is on the specific hypothesis tests and not on the development of an overall predictive model (i.e., we include controls and main effects for which non-significant findings are irrelevant to our theory).

**TABLE 4**  
**Results of Regression Analysis (Study 1)**

Variable	Power struggles		Team performance		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
Controls					
Knowing	-0.26*	-0.27*	0.22 <sup>†</sup>	0.22 <sup>†</sup>	0.29*
Interteam conflict	0.02	0.02	-0.08	-0.08	-0.07
Intrateam hierarchy	0.22*	0.22*	-0.09	-0.09	-0.03
Conflict × hierarchy		0.32**		0.11	0.20 <sup>†</sup>
Power struggles					-0.27*
$R^2$	0.12	0.22	0.06	0.07	0.12
Adjusted $R^2$	0.09	0.18	0.02	0.02	0.07
Change in $R^2$	0.05	0.10	0.01	0.01	0.06
Overall $F$	3.62*	5.65**	1.61	1.47	2.24 <sup>†</sup>
$df$	3, 81	4, 80	3, 81	4, 80	5, 79

Notes:  $n = 85$ . Standardized  $\beta$  coefficients are presented.

<sup>†</sup>  $p < .10$

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

With this study, we aimed to provide causal evidence for our hypothesis that interteam conflict causes performance-detracting power struggles in hierarchically structured teams and reduces power struggles in egalitarian teams. We chose an experimental method to maximize internal validity and to allow us to conduct behavioral coding of power struggles as the mediating process between cause and outcome. Also, being able to randomly assign teams to conditions (and members to roles) wards off concerns about endogeneity and self-selection, as we could ascertain that it is intrateam hierarchy per se that causes interteam conflict to result in intrateam power struggles, and not the composition of team members in the different power structures in terms of abilities and preferences. However, experimental set-ups may raise concerns regarding external validity. It might for instance be that (parts of) our effects are only applicable to newly formed, short-lived student teams. Therefore, replication of our results in an organizational setting with pre-existing organizational work teams would be beneficial.

We found in this laboratory study, the predicted interaction effect of interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on intrateam power struggles, the predicted negative association between intrateam power struggles and team performance, and an indirect effect of interteam conflict on team performance through intrateam power struggles. One may therefore expect to also find a direct effect of

interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on team performance. However, the direct effect in this laboratory study did not reach significance.<sup>11</sup> Yet, our findings (i.e., the interactive effects on our mediator, effects of our mediator on our dependent variable, and indirect effects from our independent variable through our mediator on the dependent variable) suggest that rather being non-existent, the direct interactive effects are relatively weak in this setting (e.g., Hayes, 2009; Rucker et al., 2011). Because field studies tend to provide stronger effects than laboratory experiments when it comes to team research (LePine, Piccolo, Jackson, Mathieu, & Saul, 2008; van Dijk, van Engen, & van Knippenberg, 2012), another advantage of replication in a field study is that it would give us a stronger test of the performance effects of interteam resource conflict and power struggles. To address these limitations of Study 1, we conducted a second study in a field

<sup>11</sup> A possible reason for this is that there are other factors outside of our model that have influenced the performance of teams on the decision task, such as individual differences in social value orientation (e.g., Beersma & De Dreu, 1999) and epistemic motivation (De Dreu, Beersma, Steinel, & Van Kleef, 2007). Indeed, the total effect on a dependent variable is the sum of many different paths of influence, direct and indirect, not all of which may be part of the formal model (Hayes, 2009). Therefore, several methodologists have argued for the importance of assessing indirect effects, also in the absence of direct effects (Hayes, 2009; Rucker et al., 2011).

setting with pre-existing organizational teams. In addition, we employed in this field study a more general measure of team power structure, namely perceived power structure rather than formal power structure. Therefore, Study 2 allows for replication, as well as a test of generalizability and potentially stronger (direct) effects.

## STUDY 2

### Participants

In this study, we tested our hypotheses regarding the consequences of interteam conflict on intrateam power struggles and performance in a field study. Our sample included 158 pre-existing teams (1809 employees) of a Dutch health insurance corporation.<sup>12</sup> The average team contained 11.45 ( $SD = 6.11$ ) members. The average age of the participants was 42.81 years ( $SD = 9.66$ ), and 45.4% of participants were male. The participating teams came from all departments in the insurance company (e.g., care-purchase, commerce, customer service, human relations, information technology, marketing, sales, staff) and executed a wide variety of tasks, including signing contracts with caregivers (e.g., hospitals, clinics, and general practitioners), customer acquisition (private and companies), solving customer-related problems, and handling reimbursements.

### Procedure

To assess the variables in our study, we had access to multi-source data, including surveys distributed to managers and employees. Interteam conflict, intrateam hierarchy, and intrateam power struggles were rated by team members, whereas team performance was rated by managers.

### Measures

Our survey items utilized a five-point Likert scale, with 5 indicating high agreement.

**Interteam conflict.** Interteam conflict was measured with three items (e.g., “My team experiences conflict with other teams” and “My team experiences competition with other teams about the allocation of valued resources, such as budget, personnel, or

prestige”). The scale exhibited sufficient internal reliability ( $\alpha = .74$ ).

**Intrateam power structure.** Intrateam power structure was measured with seven items (e.g., “In my team, there is a clear distance between the top and the bottom of the hierarchy” and “There are virtually no differences in authority between the members of my team” [reverse coded]). The scale exhibited sufficient internal reliability ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

**Intrateam power struggles.** We measured power struggles with three items (e.g., “I have disagreements with other team members about who has control in the team” and “I have disagreements with other team members about who can take decisions”), based on the scale of Greer and Van Kleef (2010). The scale exhibited sufficient internal reliability ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

**Team performance.** To assess team performance, we had each manager rate his or her team’s performance on the basis of four items (e.g., “I believe this team performs well at work,” and “This team is effective in getting things done in time”), previously used by Greer, Caruso, and Jehn (2011). This scale exhibited sufficient internal reliability ( $\alpha = .84$ ).

**Control variables.** To rule out possible alternative explanations for our results, we controlled for team size, gender composition (standard deviation), and intrateam goal interdependence. Team size could affect our results in several ways. Team size has been argued to negatively affect team processes (Mueller, 2012), including the degree of (power) conflicts (e.g., Amason & Sapienza, 1997; Edmondson, 1999). Team size has also been argued to relate to hierarchy, as larger teams tend to have higher coordination demands (Mueller, 2012; Staats, Milkman, & Fox, 2012). Thus, we wanted to exclude the possibility that a relationship between hierarchy and power struggles reflects a team size effect. Gender composition may also affect intrateam processes, specifically those related to hierarchy and power (Greer & Bendersky, 2013; Hays, 2013), as men and women tend to value and especially handle power differently (Hays, 2013; Mann, 1995). Intrateam goal interdependence is the extent to which members are dependent on one another to achieve their goals, which is known to affect how members interact with one another, their degree of cohesiveness, and their performance (e.g., Beersma, Hollenbeck, Humphrey, Moon, Conlon, & Ilgen, 2003)—all of which could have altered our results. Goal interdependence was manager-rated and assessed via two items (“Team members receive feedback based on the performance of the team” and “Team members are informed about

<sup>12</sup> We used as inclusion criteria a minimal team response rate of 50% and availability of team performance ratings. This allowed us to include 72% of the teams in the company (our survey went out to all teams).

the goals they need to achieve as a team”), which had sufficient reliability ( $r = .45, p < .001$ ).

**Analysis.** To test the appropriateness of conducting our analyses at the team level (Klein & Kozlowski, 2000), we calculated intra-class correlations (ICCs) and inter-rater agreement ( $r_{wgs}$ ) (LeBreton & Senter, 2008). In our sample, all  $F$ -tests were significant, and all ICCs and  $r_{wgs}$  were sufficient to aggregate our data to the team level of analysis (interteam conflict: ICC [1] = .13; ICC[2] = .63;  $r_{wgs} = .78$ ; intrateam hierarchy: ICC[1] = .17; ICC[2] = .70,  $r_{wgs} = .85$ ; and intrateam power struggles: ICC[1] = .15; ICC[2] = .67;  $r_{wgs} = .82$ ) (LeBreton & Senter, 2008).

## Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations are presented in Table 5. To test our hypotheses, we used hierarchical regression analysis. Independent variables were centered before creating interaction terms (Aiken & West, 1991).

In Hypothesis 1, we proposed that there would be an interaction effect between interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on intrateam power struggles, such that interteam conflict would be positively related to intrateam power struggles in more hierarchical teams and negatively related to intrateam power struggles in more egalitarian teams. This hypothesis was partly supported. There was an overall significant interaction effect of interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on intrateam power struggles ( $\beta = .15, t = 2.14, p = .03$ ; see Table 6). The adjusted explained variance [ $\text{Adj. } R^2 = .33$ ] and the change in adjusted explained variance [ $\Delta R^2 = .02$ ] are comparable with other research on intrateam dynamics (cf. Chun & Choi, 2014; Schippers, Den Hartog, Koopman, & Wienk, 2003;

Stewart & Barrick, 2000). Following the procedure of Aiken and West (1991), we examined the simple slopes of this interaction at values one standard deviation above and below the moderator values. We found that interteam conflict was positively related to intrateam power struggles when teams had a more hierarchical power structure ( $\beta = .26, t = 3.40, p = .001$ ), but was not related to intrateam power struggles when teams had a more egalitarian power structure ( $\beta = .05, t = 0.54, p = .59$ , see Figure 3).

In addition, we also found in this field study a direct interaction effect of interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on team performance ( $\text{Adj. } R^2 = .23, \Delta R^2 = .02$ ; see Table 6). When we examined the simple slopes, we found that interteam conflict was negatively related to team performance when perceived hierarchy was high ( $\beta = -.47, t = -3.61, p < .001$ ), but not when it was low ( $\beta = -.07, t = -0.48, p = .63$ , see Figure 4).

In Hypothesis 2, we proposed that intrateam power struggles would be negatively related to team performance. This hypothesis was supported ( $\beta = -.17, t = -2.00, p = .047, \text{Adj. } R^2 = .25$ ).

Lastly, in order to test Hypothesis 3, we tested for moderated mediation with bootstrapping using the PROCESS macro (Model 7) with 5000 repetitions by Hayes (2013). We found support for indirect moderated mediation, as there was a negative relationship between interteam conflict and team performance via intrateam power struggles when perceived intrateam hierarchy was high ( $b = -.08$ ; Bias and accelerated 95%  $CI$ :  $-0.18, -0.01$ ) and moderate ( $b = -.05$ ; Bias and accelerated 95%  $CI$ :  $-0.11, -0.01$ ), but not when perceived intrateam hierarchy was low ( $b = -.01$ ; Bias and accelerated 95%  $CI$ :  $-0.07, 0.03$ ).

TABLE 5  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations (Study 2)

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Team size	11.45	6.11						
7. Gender $SD^a$	0.38	0.20	-0.01					
8. Goal interdependence	4.10	0.54	0.00	0.02				
9. Interteam conflict	2.62	0.40	-0.01	0.06	-0.09			
10. Intrateam hierarchy	2.80	0.34	0.05	0.14	-0.20*	0.37**		
11. Intrateam power struggles	1.94	0.38	0.03	-0.03	-0.13	0.36**	0.54**	
12. Team performance	3.88	0.60	0.08	-0.02	0.40**	-0.28**	-0.23**	-0.30**

Notes:  $n = 158$ .

<sup>a</sup> Gender was coded as male = 0, female = 1.

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$ .

**TABLE 6**  
**Results of Regression Analysis (Study 2)**

Variable	Power struggles		Performance		
	Step 1	Step 2	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3
<b>Controls</b>					
Team size	0.01	0.02	0.08	0.07	0.08
Gender	-0.11	-0.09	-0.00	-0.02	-0.04
Goal interdependence	-0.02	-0.00	0.37**	0.35**	0.35**
Interteam conflict	0.19**	0.16*	-0.21**	-0.18*	-0.15
Intrateam hierarchy	0.48**	0.46**	-0.08	0.06	0.02
Conflict × hierarchy		0.15*		-0.17*	-0.15*
Power struggles					-0.17*
$R^2$	0.34	0.35	0.23	0.26	0.28
Adjusted $R^2$	0.31	0.33	0.21	0.23	0.25
Change in $R^2$	0.34	0.02	0.23	0.03	0.02
Overall $F$	15.30**	13.81**	9.28**	8.88**	8.34**
$df$	4, 152	5, 151	5, 152	6, 151	7, 150

Note:  $n = 158$ . Standardized  $\beta$  coefficients are presented.

\*  $p < .05$

\*\*  $p < .01$

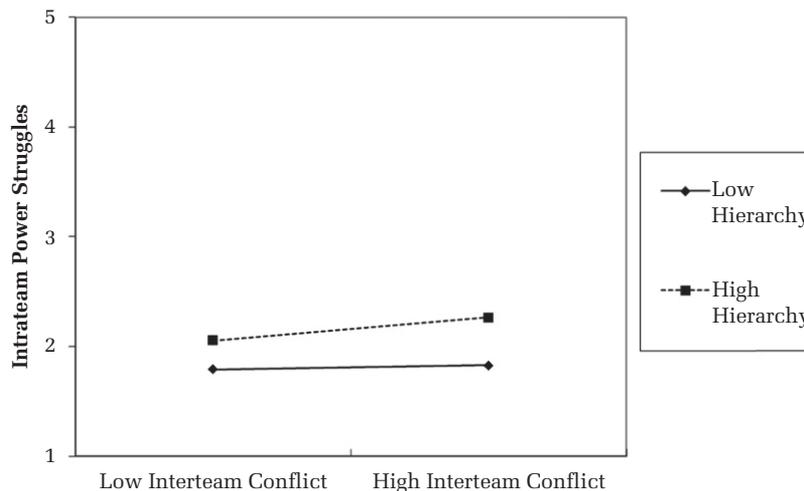
**Discussion**

In this multi-source field study of teams working in a health insurance organization, we replicated most of our findings from Study 1. Similar to Study 1, we found that interteam conflict is associated with performance-detracting intrateam power struggles in teams with a more hierarchical power structure, but not in teams with a more egalitarian power structure. We found this while looking at a different operationalization of intrateam power structure, and also in the field context, lending support to the generalizability and replicability

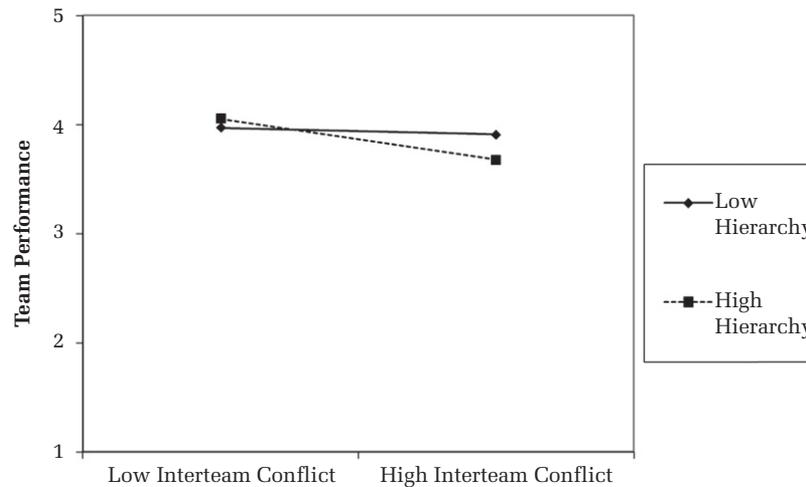
of the findings in our first experimental study. Additionally, we also found in the field study a direct effect of interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on team performance. This is in line with other research and shows that such effects in team research are stronger in the field than in the lab (LePine et al., 2008; van Dijk et al., 2012).

Although we replicate the key findings of our lab study in this field study— interteam conflicts can tear apart hierarchical, but not egalitarian, teams—we do not find the predicted negative association between interteam conflict and intrateam power struggles in

**FIGURE 3**  
**Interactive Effects of Interteam Conflict and Intrateam Power Structure on Intrateam Power Struggles (Study 2)**



**FIGURE 4**  
**Interactive Effects of Interteam Conflict and Intrateam Power Structure on Team Performance (Study 2)**



egalitarian teams (which we did find in our lab study). This divergence in findings may be because in our field study none of the teams was perceived as completely egalitarian by its members (minimum *M*-score was 1.9 on a five-point Likert scale), which is not surprising considering that all teams had a manager. It may be that in order to find a negative relationship between interteam conflict and intrateam power struggles, the power structure within a team needs to be completely egalitarian and not just less hierarchical. Indeed, most studies documenting the benefits of interteam conflict for internal team interactions were undertaken in short-term, experimental settings (e.g., Bornstein, 1992; Mulvey & Ribbens, 1999; Rabbie, Benoist, Oosterbaan, & Visser, 1974), where maintaining complete equality is feasible. The only two (quasi-experimental) field studies (Erev et al., 1993; Sherif et al., 1961) that found interteam conflict to benefit intrateam dynamics (respectively decreased free-riding and increased intrateam affiliation) were done with high-school boys in short-lived teams, which makes them similar to our laboratory study with undergraduate students. To conclude, the findings of our field study with ongoing organizational teams do not contradict previous findings (of our laboratory study or other studies) nor are they necessarily unsupportive of our hypotheses. Rather, they show the strict contingency of power structure as a moderating variable for the relationship between interteam conflict and intrateam power struggles. That is, in order to find full support for our first hypothesis (a full cross-over effect), teams need to have a true

egalitarian structure. When that is not the case, we show across both studies that interteam conflicts will promote performance-detracting power struggles, with these effects being enlarged by the strength of the internal team power hierarchy. Together, our studies provide an important redirection of the interteam conflict literature, showing that interteam conflicts have just as much, if not more, potential to tear teams apart.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

Interteam conflicts have often been argued to encourage intrateam cooperation and resource sharing (e.g., Brewer, 1999; Levine & Campbell, 1972; Coser, 1956; Dahrendorf, 1959; Simmel, 1955; Sherif, 1966; Stein, 1976; Tajfel, 1982). However, other research suggests that interteam conflict also has the potential to spill over into the intrateam domain (e.g., Jehn et al., 2013; Keenan & Carnevale, 1989; Sassenberg et al., 2007; Smith, 1989). In our paper, we aim to make sense of these seemingly contradictory expectations for the impact of interteam conflict on intrateam dynamics. Based on an extensive review of the literature, we note that the literature showing that interteam conflicts promote resource-pooling only reflects studies conducted in the context of egalitarian teams (e.g., Bornstein, 2003; Halevy et al., 2011; Sherif et al., 1961; Van Vugt et al., 2007). Given the ubiquity of power hierarchies, especially in organizational settings (Magee & Galinsky, 2008), teams facing an interteam conflict may more often than not have a hierarchical power structure, and in such situations, we proposed, and found, that conflict spillover effects may be more likely to apply. Namely, we demonstrated across

two studies (a laboratory study involving a three-person intrateam negotiation, and a field study of pre-existing organizational work teams) that when hierarchical teams are impacted by an interteam conflict, they are likely to implode into performance-detracting internal power struggles. When teams have a more egalitarian structure, our results show that the negative effects of interteam conflict on intrateam dynamics are attenuated. Specifically, our field study shows that when teams have a less hierarchical structure (i.e., are relatively more egalitarian) the relationship between interteam conflict and intrateam power struggles is alleviated, and our laboratory study shows—in line with previous experimental research (e.g., Benard, 2012; Bornstein, 2003; De Dreu et al., 2010; Halevy et al., 2011)—that when teams have a completely egalitarian structure, interteam conflict even reduces intrateam power struggles.

### Theoretical Implications

The first and primary goal of our research was to reconcile two seemingly opposing views on the impact of interteam conflict on intrateam dynamics (i.e., whether resource-threatening interteam conflicts unite or divide teams internally). We theorized and found that the internal power structure of teams can determine when each of these two lines of research is more likely to apply, thereby integrating past divergent theories on the impact of interteam conflict on intrateam dynamics. Our research has several implications for the intergroup conflict literature in general (e.g., Benard, 2012; Bornstein, 2003; LeVine & Campbell, 1972; Coser, 1956; Sherif, 1966), and organizational research on interteam conflict more specifically (e.g., Baldridge, 1971; Blake et al., 1964; Kramer, 1991). Most importantly, our theory postulates that interteam conflict can induce power struggles in teams with a hierarchical power structure. In hierarchical teams, members are qualitatively differently impacted by the imposed resource threat, creating different individual concerns and individualistic coping-behavior in response to interteam conflict. This implies that in other situations in which team members would not be equally affected by a resource-threatening interteam conflict, such interteam conflict could also result in power struggles. One can think of functionally diverse teams, where different resources may be important for different expertise, and where some expertise is more valued than others, resulting in unequal access to team resources. When these sorts of teams are confronted with an interteam conflict, the same processes and dynamics may come into play as in hierarchical teams. As such, our findings offer important implications for the study of interteam conflict, including recognizing that teams prone to conflicts (e.g., hierarchical

or diverse teams) are likely to experience internal conflict in the face of interteam conflict, thereby providing a strong counter-point to the prevailing wisdom that interteam conflicts unite teams internally.

By demonstrating that interteam conflict may cause intrateam power struggles, and as such that conflict may spill over from the interteam to the intrateam domain, we expand theory and research on conflict spill over (Jehn et al., 2013; Keenan & Carnevale, 1989; Sassenberg et al., 2007; Smith, 1989). Hitherto, most research on conflict spillover (also coined conflict carry-over or conflict contagion) has examined how conflict may spill over from member-dyads to the whole team (Jehn et al., 2013), from the team to the interteam context (Keenan & Carnevale, 1989; Sassenberg et al., 2007), and has largely argued an adopted competitive mind-set to be the cause of such a spillover effect (Deutsch, 1969; Keenan & Carnevale, 1989; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Sassenberg et al., 2007). Our study extends this work by showing that the reverse may also hold, conflict between teams may also “spill over” to conflicts within teams, i.e., between members of the same team. We theorize that the underlying mechanism of this effect is the resource threat that is imposed by the interteam conflict, which may be fended off either collectively and individually. Further, in line with past theories on conflict spillover, we argue that the latter becomes more likely due to the competitive mind-set, which is engendered by a conflictual situation. In short, our research shows that conflicts may not only spread from lower levels to higher levels, but also vice versa. This implies that for instance conflicts at the inter-organizational level may lead to conflicts at the intra-organizational level, and that conflicts at the departmental level may lead to interteam conflicts and/or intrateam conflicts. As such, conflicts may spread in multi-directions and are difficult to contain, which may in part explain the intractability of most conflicts.

By showing that intrateam power structure is a key moderating factor of the effect of resource-threatening interteam conflict on intrateam power struggles, we also contribute to the growing literature on power hierarchies in teams (e.g., Greer et al., 2018; Halevy et al., 2011, 2012a, 2012a, 2012b; Ronay et al., 2012; Van der Vegt et al., 2010). While researchers have advocated for the benefits of power hierarchies in teams (Anderson & Brown, 2010; Halevy et al., 2011; Magee & Galinsky, 2008), we add nuance to this line of work by identifying a situation in which the functionality of having an internal power hierarchy may be limited. Although we by no means deny that power hierarchies can at times be advantageous for team functioning, our research suggests that a power hierarchy may also harm team functioning in teams facing a resource-threatening interteam conflict. Hierarchical

structures introduce inequity in resource control between members, which seems to backfire (i.e., ignite competitive power striving behaviors) in situations where resources are under pressure—in competitive, power-hungry high-power teams (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010), or as we show here, in interteam conflict. That is, our results show that the power inequity in hierarchical teams becomes challenged when interteam conflicts threaten the internal resources of teams. Other situations that also put a strain on a team's resources, like economic downturns or declines, budget cuts or intense competition from rival teams and companies (Hills & Mahoney, 1978; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1974), may also limit the benefits of hierarchy and may instead lead members to challenge the internal inequities regarding resource control inherent to hierarchical teams. However, future research needs to determine whether hierarchy is for teams indeed detrimental in situations of resource scarcity. Together, our research offers important implications for current thought on power hierarchies, including the importance of realizing that a power hierarchy may be a double-edged sword. Power hierarchies are not a universally functional solution, and it is therefore critical to understand the context of the team (such as the scarcity or abundance of resources) before advocating for the benefits of such hierarchical team power structures.

Finally, by looking at the conditional precursors of power struggles in teams, we contribute to the growing literature on power dynamics in teams (for a recent review, see Greer et al., 2017; Greer, Van Bunderen, & Yu, 2017), which has hitherto predominantly focused on cooperative intrateam power dynamics (Aime et al., 2014; DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Humphrey & Aime, 2014). We provide an important investigation of competitive power dynamics, including identifying their source in the interaction of the interteam setting and the internal team power structure. Our findings on the spill over of interteam conflict to internal team power struggles are in line with conflict spillover theory (e.g., Jehn et al., 2013; Keenan & Carnevale, 1989; Sassenberg et al., 2007), and we extend this literature by showing that the competitiveness of the external environment is more likely to spill over to the internal environment when the latter is characterized by an inequitable power structure (Georgeson & Harris, 2006; Pettit et al., 2010; Solomon, 1960; Tjosvold, 1981). When members of teams in which power is unequally distributed (i.e., the power structure of the team is hierarchical) are confronted with a resource-threatening interteam conflict, they are differently impacted, and therefore inclined to fend this threat off individually by securing their own individual resources (i.e., engaging in power struggles). As such, our research

has implications for the study of power dynamics in teams, including the importance of understanding what contextual (external resource threats, such as caused by interteam conflicts, but which may also be caused by for instance economic declines or overall weak performance of the organization) and internal factors (the internal power structure) can lead individuals to compete for power. One would assume that when teams have other external or internal factors that would increase an individual focus toward self-protection, such as when teams with low interdependence operate in an uncertain environment, power struggles may also ensue. Shedding a greater light on the emergence of this relatively understudied but ubiquitous phenomenon of power struggles has important implications for both research and practice.

### Limitations and Future Directions

We have based our conclusion on the largely converging findings that our laboratory and field study provide, as the primary basis for conclusions are findings that replicate over studies.<sup>14</sup> However, as already discussed in-depth in the discussion section of Study 2, we do note two differences between the results of our laboratory study and our field study. The first concerns the related issues of the difference in the direct interactive effects of interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on team performance, and the relative strength of explained variance at the model level, which may well be explained by the known difference between lab and field studies, i.e., effects tend to be weaker in the lab than in the field (LePine et al., 2008; van Dijk et al., 2012). The second

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<sup>14</sup> First, there is the value of replication per se; findings that replicate are less likely to be chance findings. Second, findings that replicate over studies relying on different methods cannot be attributed to the specifics of any particular study, arguing against methodological artifacts. Third, the conservative nature of hypothesis testing implies that significance is more informative than non-significance given that there is a far greater likelihood that the latter is attributable to chance than that the former is attributable to chance. Fourth, we cannot test differences between studies. Findings that replicate lead to the same conclusion and at least at the level of the conclusion do not require testing across studies; for reliable conclusions, however, findings that appear to differ between studies would require further testing to determine whether they do significantly differ (i.e., significant in the one study and non-significant in the other does not automatically mean the relationships differ significantly). For all these reasons, differences between studies can be a valuable basis for speculation, but core conclusions should be based on replication across studies.

concerns the difference in the level of attenuation of the relationship between interteam conflict and intrateam power struggles in teams with an egalitarian power structure. We believe the explanation for this is straightforward and fully in line with our conceptual analysis: only in Study 1 with short-lived student teams could a true egalitarian power structure exist. Power structure is not a dichotomy but a continuum, i.e., teams are not hierarchical or egalitarian, but they are relatively more hierarchical or relatively more egalitarian (cf. Bunderson, Van der Vegt, Cantimur, & Rink, 2016), and in the field we were not dealing with truly egalitarian teams but with more and less hierarchical teams. The conclusion that is in line with our theory would then be that interteam conflict only reduces intrateam power struggles in very egalitarian teams, is unrelated to power struggles in teams that are not egalitarian but low on hierarchy, and promotes power struggles in more hierarchical teams. However, it must be noted that this is a post hoc interpretation and future research that could map these different outcomes in one study rather than across studies would be valuable.

With our laboratory experiment we provide causal evidence for the hypothesis that an intrateam power structure is the key mechanism that causes interteam conflict over resources to spill over into intrateam power struggles. We have argued that hierarchical power structures cause this effect, because power differentiation causes members to be differently impacted by a resource-threatening interteam conflict. This makes members of hierarchical teams primarily focus on the individual-level implications of the resource threat, and therefore focus on protecting or improving their own (power) position in the light of an interteam conflict. One may wonder whether the combination of interteam conflict and intrateam power structure also affects other team processes, for instance processes related to team cohesiveness, and whether such processes are the more proximal cause of power struggles (i.e., less cohesive teams engage in more power struggles). There is no strong theory, however, to expect that less cohesiveness would result in power struggles, and we are in the position to rely on experimental evidence for the interaction effect of interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on intrateam power struggles to base conclusions regarding causality. Whereas the current conclusions stand as they are, we do recognize the value of future research exploring the effects of interteam conflict and intrateam power structure on other team processes.

We found across two studies converging evidence for our theory that interteam conflict may stimulate internal power struggles in teams with hierarchical

power structures. There may be moderators that amplify or mitigate these effects. For instance, the relative power balance between the two teams may influence the relationship between interteam conflict and intrateam power struggles in hierarchical teams. In both our laboratory and our field study, we did not explicitly consider the power balance *between* teams. However, in both cases it may be assumed that the interteam conflicts were symmetrical, meaning that there was no difference in power *between* the teams. In our experimental setting there was no reason to believe the conflict was asymmetrical, and in organizational settings, teams are arguably more prone to get into conflict with other equally powerful teams. Even so, based on our theory, we would predict that when there is an asymmetrical conflict, and a hierarchical team is in the low-power position, intrateam power struggles are aggravated, as the resource threat becomes more severe. If a hierarchical team is in the high-power position, and has confidence in the victory, the resource threat is smaller, which may mitigate the relationship between interteam conflict and intrateam power struggles in hierarchical teams. However, now that the intrateam resource pool is likely to get expanded, members may also try to improve their position in order to improve their chances of getting a larger piece of the pie. We would not expect there to be a difference between the underdog or top dog position in egalitarian teams, as the mechanism we describe for these teams (i.e., a common fate stimulates a team focus and thus unification) still applies. Future research would benefit from taking the power balance of the teams involved in the interteam conflict into account.

Considering team-level moderators, such as intrateam power structure stability and legitimacy would also be interesting. When the power structure is less stable (more mutable), power struggles have been found to be more likely (Hays & Bendersky, 2015; Mead & Maner, 2012a). We expect that interteam conflict may further intensify power dynamics in teams with an unstable power structure (both hierarchical and egalitarian), as it further pressurizes the situation. Similarly, when the power structure is considered illegitimate by team members, actions aimed at changing the existing power hierarchy are more common (Martorana et al., 2005). We predict interteam conflict to exacerbate power struggles in teams with an illegitimate power structure, as it highlights the intrateam power structure, and as such the illegitimacy of the power structure. Also, in addition to non-linearity at the lower end of the

hierarchical power structure spectrum, it is also possible that when there is a very clear and strong hierarchical power structure—a prototypical example would be the military—there are also less power struggles. Such strong hierarchical power structures are presumably less common in the organizational context, but it is good to realize that the relationship between hierarchy and power struggles may be non-linear when considered across the full range of hierarchical power structures, even when many organizational contexts may only show a (mid-range) linear relationship. Future research would benefit from examining these types of boundary conditions.

Other potentially interesting moderators would be the source and intractability of the interteam conflict. Our theory refers explicitly to interteam conflicts based on scarce resources, which are indeed very prevalent in organizations (Kramer, 1991). However, our theory may also apply to other types of interteam conflict (e.g., ideological, strategic), as all conflicts put pressure on internal team resources. That is, when a team gets into a conflict with another team, internal team resources, such as money, time, and energy, need to be expended toward the conflict. We thus expect other types of interteam conflicts to lead to similar intrateam dynamics as interteam conflicts about scarce resources, albeit to a lesser extent. This is because in interteam conflicts about resources, the threat to internal team resources is more explicit and poignant, and therefore likely more powerful in its effects. The intractability of the interteam conflict may also affect the way in which interteam conflict relates to intrateam dynamics. One can imagine that when interteam conflicts are intractable, and chances of conflict resolution slim, internal turmoil increases—regardless of the intrateam power structure. This is because members will get frustrated with the interteam conflict and likely take it out on one another. Taking these types of characteristics of interteam conflict into account are promising avenues for future research.

Related to this, in our study we focused on interteam conflicts rather than interteam competition. There is much overlap between competition and conflict at a theoretical level in the literature (in particular resource conflicts), and in many instances these terms have been used interchangeably (Bornstein, 2003; Halevy, Bornstein, & Sagiv, 2008; Maner & Mead, 2010). For instance, realistic group conflict theory defines interteam conflict as competition between teams over scarce resources due to incompatible needs (see Sherif, 1966; Sherif et al., 1961; Sherif & Sherif, 1953). Deutsch (1973) has

defined competition as people or teams believing that their goals are negatively related, so that one's successful goal attainment makes others less likely to reach their goals—which is very similar to the definition of resource conflict. However, attempts have been made to tease the two apart (for an overview, see Fink, 1968; Schmidt & Kochan, 1972). For instance, conflict has been argued to be a subset of competition (Boulding, 1963; Lasswell, 1931), and to have less clear rules and regulated behavior than competition (Fink, 1968; Mack, 1965). In terms of behavior, competition has been argued to involve parallel striving, whereas conflict involves mutual interference (Fink, 1968; Ross, 1930). Therefore, an example of pure competition (without conflict) would be an intra-organizational contest that rewards the team that has the most creative idea for a new company slogan. What is essential though in terms of our theory is that such competitions tend to evoke less of an explicit resource threat to the team and its members, and therefore our theory may be less applicable in such situations. However, it would be interesting for future research to examine the extent to which interteam competition and interteam conflict elicit similar intrateam dynamics.

In our paper, we focus on power struggles rather than status conflicts. Although power and status are closely related constructs, which tend to feed into each other, there are some notable differences (Magee and Galinsky, 2008). The same holds for power struggles and status conflicts (e.g., Hays & Bendersky, 2015). Whereas power struggles are competitions over resource control (Greer & Van Kleef, 2010), status conflicts are disputes over people's relative status (i.e., respect) positions in their group's social hierarchy (Bendersky & Hays, 2012). While these two types of conflict certainly co-vary, we focus here on power struggles, as power struggles are more proximate to both our independent variable (interteam resource conflict) as our moderating variable (intrateam power structure). That is, we expect that members of teams in which resource control is unequally distributed find themselves in a situation in which their team's resources are threatened (by an interteam resource conflict) to be more likely to start to compete for resource control, than to start to fight for respect. It could well be that status conflicts occur as a secondary process, for instance as a result of shifting power within the team; but to examine this was outside of the scope of the current paper. Further research would however benefit from looking at the interplay between power struggles and status conflicts.

Last, our research focused on how interteam conflict affects intrateam power dynamics contingent on the intrateam power structure. We have shown that a hierarchical power structure may be less functional when interteam relations are tensed, as it can prompt intrateam power struggles. However, we have not examined how this may feed back into the interteam context. In other words, we do not know whether the intrateam power structure affects interteam behavior. Hierarchical teams might perform worse in an interteam conflict because members are less willing to cooperate and join forces against the other team. However, members of hierarchical teams may also get even more competitive toward the other team, due to the competitive power dynamics within the team. Exploring these cross-level effects further will help gain insights into how and when conflicts spill over back and forth across levels.

### Practical Implications

Teams are increasingly important for organizations. In order to capitalize on teams, intrateam dynamics need to be cooperative and members focused more on the team than on their own individual gain. However, as organizations increasingly rely on teams, this means that teams often operate in a multi-team environment, in which they may come into conflict with other teams over scarce organizational resources. Our findings suggest that when teams operate in competitive interteam environments, equipping them with a hierarchical power structure may have detrimental effects for team functioning. Therefore, when teams are required to function in competitive interteam settings, structuring teams in a more egalitarian manner can help prevent negative intrateam dynamics that stand in the way of effective team performance. Similarly, given that interteam conflict is one instantiation of resource scarcity, our research suggests that in other situations that threaten teams' resources, such as economic downturns, budget cuts, or degenerating organizational performance, teams would also be better off having a more egalitarian power structure. The recent advent of holacracy (i.e., removing power from a management hierarchy and distributing it across clear roles, Robertson, 2015) provides one example of how organizations can structure teams internally when teams have to regularly interface with other teams in the organization. When flattening the hierarchy is not feasible, organizations should give considerable consideration to discouraging

interteam conflicts, so that internal power competitions are reduced.

### CONCLUSION

Interteam conflicts have been argued to both encourage members to internally share resources, as well as to fight over resources. Our findings contribute to theory and practice by synthesizing these two contending views through the introduction of the internal power structure of teams as a key moderator. We show that interteam conflicts can bring together members of teams with an egalitarian power structure, but tear apart teams with a hierarchical power structure by promoting performance-detracting intrateam power struggles.

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## APPENDIX A

TABLE A1

## A review of papers that examine the impact of interteam conflict on intrateam dynamics

Study	Setting	Power structure	Findings
Benard (2012)	Team game: Intergroup Prisoner's Dilemma (IPD) game ( $n = 120-144$ )	Equality	Increase in norm enforcement (punishment of non-contributors) and contribution (cooperation) (both marginal). Increase in leadership-support only when the other team contributes at a high level).
Bornstein (1992)	Team game: Intergroup Public Goods (IPG) and Intergroup Prisoner's Dilemma (IPD) ( $n = 180$ ; in teams of 3)	Equality	More intrateam cooperation in IPG than in IPD games; within-team discussion is also more effective in IPG than in IPD.
Bornstein & Ben-Yossef (1994)	Team game: Prisoner's Dilemma Game (PD) contrasted with Intergroup Prisoner's Dilemma Game (IPD) ( $n = 90$ )	Equality	Increase in intrateam contribution (cooperation).
Bornstein, Budescu, & Zamir (1997)	Team game: Various (interteam, $n$ -person, and two-person) chicken games in teams of 2 and 4 ( $n = 100$ , team of 2 and 4)	Equality	Increase in intrateam competition.
Bornstein & Erev (1994).	Social Dilemma (intrateam and interteam) and field (dyads in orange grove) experiment ( $N = 90$ )	Equality	Increase in intrateam contribution (cooperation) & team performance.
Bornstein, Gneezy, & Nagel (2002)	Minimal-effort game (Van Huyck et al., 1990) ( $n = 210$ , teams of 7)	Equality	Increase in intrateam coordination.
Bornstein & Rapoport (1988)	Team game: Intergroup Public Goods (IPG) ( $n = 96$ , in teams of 3)	Equality	Within-team pre-play discussion increases intrateam contribution (cooperation).
Bornstein, Rapoport, Kerpel & Katz (1989)	Team game: Intergroup Public Goods ( $n = 240$ , teams of 3)	Equality	Within-team pre-play discussion maximizes intrateam contribution.
De Dreu et al. (2010)	Team game: IPD-MD game ( $n = 49-75$ )	Equality	Increase in intrateam trust and cooperation due to oxytocin.
Erev, Bornstein & Galili (1993)	Field experiment: Orange picking ( $n = 48$ , teams of 4)	Equality	Reduction in free-riding.
Goldman, Stockbauer, & McAuliffe (1977)	Anagram tasks ( $n = 128$ participants; in teams of 2)	Equality	Decrease in team performance
Gunnthorsdottir & Rapoport (2006)	Team game: Prisoner's Dilemma Game (PD) contrasted with Intergroup Prisoner's Dilemma Game (IPD) ( $n = 112$ )	Equality	Increase in intrateam contribution (cooperation).
Halevy, Weisel, & Bornstein (2012b)	Team game: Intergroup Prisoner's Dilemma (IPD) contrasted with Intergroup Prisoner's Dilemma Maximizing Difference (IPD-MD-game) ( $n = 240$ )	Equality	Increase in intrateam contribution, especially when pre-play communication was allowed.
Julian & Perry (1967)	2 essay questions individually answered ( $n = 157$ , teams of 4)	Equality	Increase in motivation, quantity and quality of overall team performance.
Maner & Mead (2010)	77-160 participants got assigned the leadership role in an ostensibly team task	Leader	Increase in high dominant leaders' perceptions of intrateam affiliation and decrease in perception of intrateam threat. More likely to place threatening member in director role.

**TABLE A1**  
**(Continued)**

Study	Setting	Power structure	Findings
Mead & Maner (2012a)	87–124 participants got assigned the leadership role in an ostensibly team task	Leader	Decrease in perceived intrateam threat and increase in seeking proximity to threatening member of highly dominant leaders.
Mulvey & Ribbens (1999)	LEGO-task ( $n = 351$ , in teams of 3)	Equality	Increase in team efficacy, goals, and productivity and decrease in inefficiency.
Rabbie & Wilkens (1971)	Building a tower ( $n = 72$ , teams of 3)	Equality	Increase in differentiated leadership structure and consensus over the distribution of influence in the team. No greater intrateam solidarity or over-evaluation product.
Rabbie, Benoist, Oosterbaan & Visser (1974)	Labor-management negotiation simulation ( $n = 123$ , teams of 3)	Equality	Increases in cohesiveness, collaboration, and performance (for powerful teams); more focus on task instead of socio-emotional relations.
Rapoport & Bornstein (1989)	Team game: Intergroup Public Goods (IPG) ( $n = 208$ , in teams of 3 and 5)	Equality	Within-team pre-play discussion does not necessarily increase intrateam contribution and team performance.
Rapoport, Bornstein, & Erev (1989)	Team game: Intergroup Public Goods (IPG) ( $n = 72$ , in teams of 3)	Hierarchy	Intrateam endowment differences decreases the likelihood of contribution.
Rempel & Fisher (1997)	Intergroup conflict simulation (ICS, Fisher et al., 1990) ( $n = 128$ , in teams of 4)	Equality	Decrease in problem-solving effectiveness when perceived threat and/or intrateam cohesion increased.
Sherif et al. (1961)	Simulated camp environment (quasi field-experiment) ( $n = 24$ participants, in 2 teams)	Equality	Increase in intrateam solidarity, attraction, cohesion, pride and emergent leadership.
Van Oostrum & Rabbie (1995)	Laboratory organization: reach agreement on a product ( $n = 96$ , teams of 6)	Autocratic vs democratic leadership	Increase in task satisfaction (marginal) and self-reported performance. No interaction between leadership structure (democratic vs autocratic) and interteam setting reported.
Van Vugt and Spisak (2008)	Step-level public-goods game (investment task) ( $n = 50$ )	Leadership	Preference for male over female leaders.
Van Vugt, De Cremer, & Janssen (2007)	Step-level public-goods game ( $n = 90$ –120)	Equality	Increase in male contribution, not in female contribution.