

Conflict & Its Management in Systems of Care: Concept Mapping

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Abstract

- Conflict is a common, but infrequently studied aspect of inter-organizational efforts to provide care, such as systems of care (SOC) for children with mental health disorders and their families. This multi-year, multi-method study sought to understand the types of conflict experienced in the governing boards of SOC, the impact of these conflicts and conflict management approaches. It also developed recommendations for conflict management. The first phase was a mail and web-based needs assessment of all federally-funded and graduated SOCs (N=59). Results indicated sources of conflict included goals, relationships, and authority. Management techniques included developing a resolution strategy, ignoring it or dealing with it behind the scenes. The presence of conflict negatively impacted functioning of the SOC. Two SOCs were selected for site visits that included concept mapping, interviews with key stakeholders and document review. These maps and their common themes are presented. The third data collection method was hosting two two-hour conference calls with participants representing a variety of roles in SOCs to share experiences with conflict and its effects. Fourteen major themes were identified including issues related to systems change, partnering, conflict and sustainability. From these data collection efforts a Conflict Self-Assessment instrument and recommendations for identifying and managing conflict in SOC have been developed.

Purpose

- ❖ The primary purpose of this project was to learn about the impact of conflict in the development and sustainability of systems of care.
- ❖ A second purpose is to assist systems of care in identifying, understanding and managing conflict.

Needs Assessment of Governing Board Members

- ❖ 301 individual responses from 59 of the 111 sites
- ❖ Most common sources of conflict:
 - ❖ Incompatible goals (86%)
 - ❖ Personal relationships (83%)
 - ❖ Authority & decision making (80%)
- ❖ Behaviors engaged in when conflict was present:
 - ❖ Analyzed the problem & developed a plan (39%)
 - ❖ Dealt with behind the scenes (28%)
 - ❖ Ignored it (25%)

Summary of Needs Assessment

- ❖ Assessment results suggest that conflict is a common occurrence across all sites.
- ❖ The more conflict people reported, the less effective they perceived their SOC.
- ❖ Respondents who identified existing conflict AND perceived their system to be effective tended to view the impact of conflict more positively.

Concept Mapping

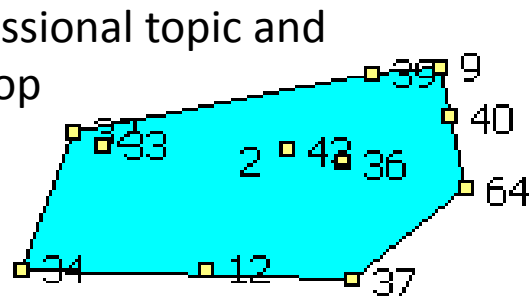
- ❖ Concept mapping is a mixed methods approach that results in a graphic display of conflict resolution methods.
- ❖ Focus question: when there is disagreement or conflict at this site, we..
- ❖ Brainstorming surfaces underlying conflicts
- ❖ Maps illustrate site's predominant approaches

Stages of Development

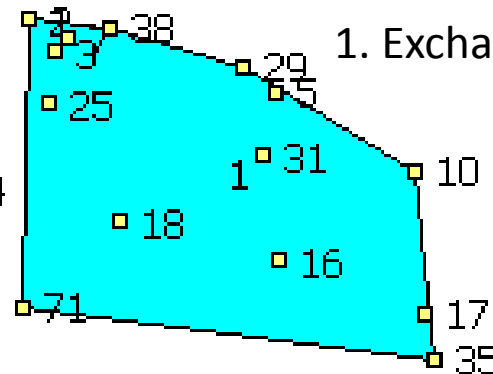
- Conflict Avoidant Sites
 - Deny conflict exists or is a problem
- Conflict Sensitive Sites
 - Acknowledge conflict but remain uncomfortable
 - Lack conflict management skills
- Conflict Informed Sites
 - See conflict (“differences”) as normal and as a source of creativity
 - Teach and model conflict management skills
 - Have established problem-solving processes

Conflict Sensitive Site Concept Map

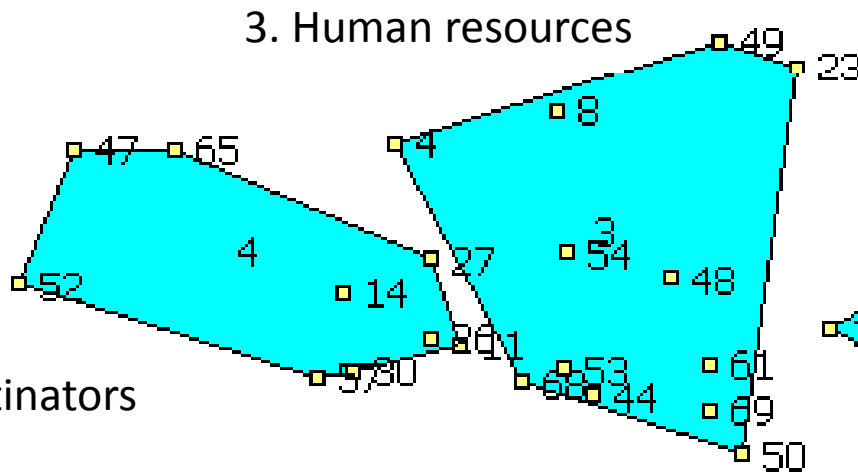
2. Professional topic and workshop



1. Exchange Information

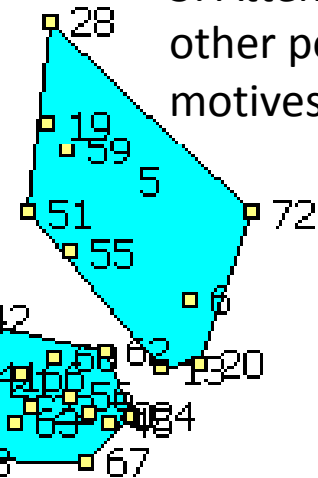


3. Human resources

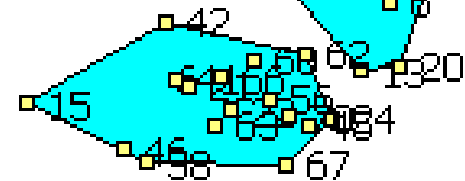


4. Procrastinators

5. Attending to other people's motives



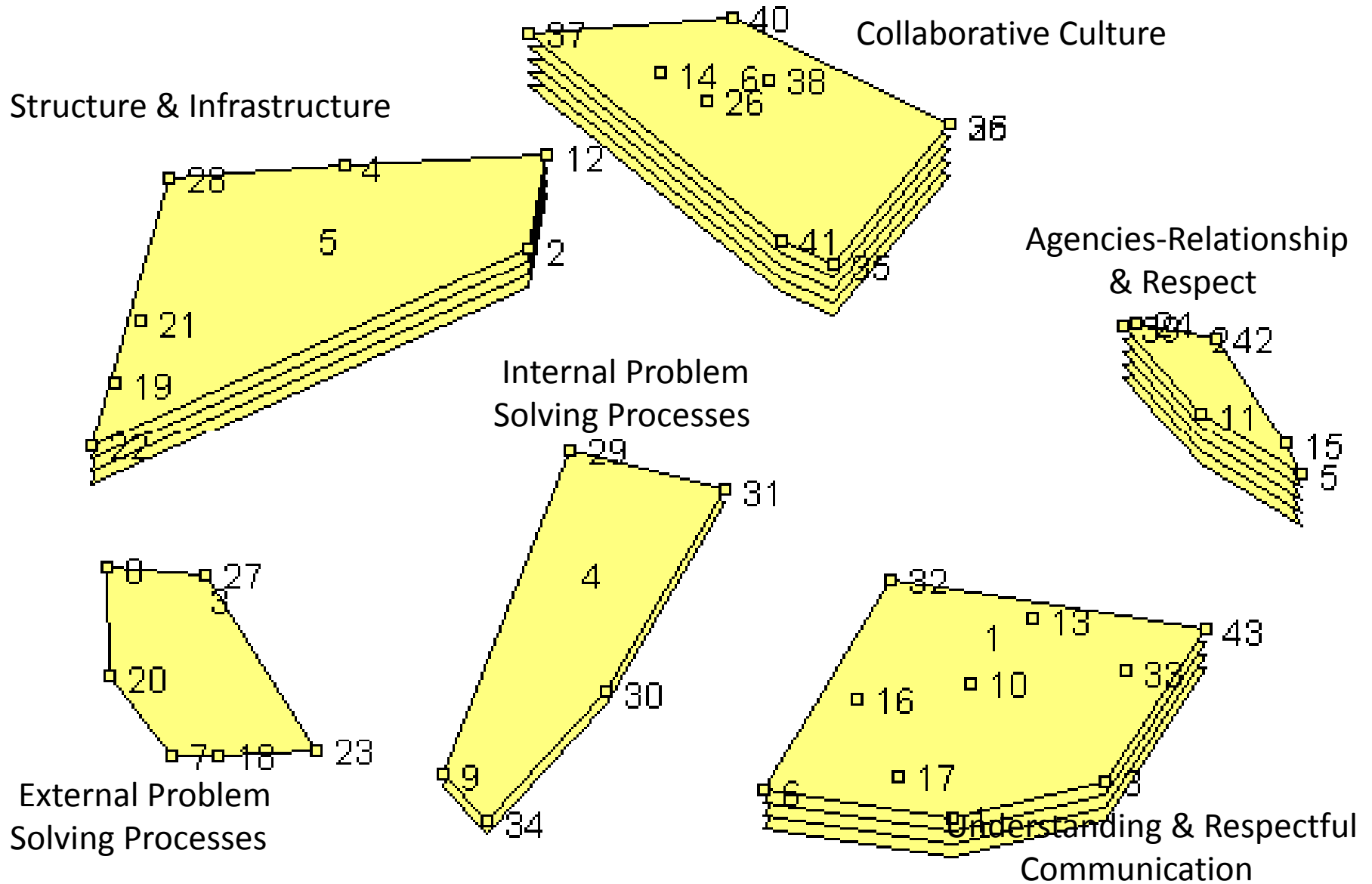
6. Nasty



Conflict Sensitive Site

- Focus on personalities and motives
- Solutions are individually focused
- Collaboration is seen as an exchange of information, not a change in behavior
- Conflict is deferred, delayed, or avoided whenever possible
- Underlying fear that conflict will destroy the SOC

Conflict-Informed Site



Conflict Informed Site

- Focus on structural problems and solutions
- Conflict is embraced as part of the job, a source of energy and creativity
- Collaboration is seen as requiring changes in behavior – in home agencies as well as SOC
- Conflict transformation embedded in training, programs, policies, and leadership
- Believes that addressing conflict will help improve collaborative culture

Recommendations

- Project Directors & Governing Boards of newly funded sites should receive training on identifying & managing conflict
- The Conflict Self-Assessment tool & concept mapping can be used to examine sources & intensity of conflict within sites
- An outside facilitator may be useful during the first year & at transition periods
- Federal site visitors should include questions about how sites are managing conflict