Conflict

Social dilemmas
A perceived incompatibility of actions or goals

Conflict occurs when one party decides that the way things are is not okay and seeks change, but that change is not agreed to by the other party.
Causes of Conflict

- Competition
- Perceived Injustice
- Misperception
## Causes of Conflict

- There is a perceived breach of faith and trust between individuals
- There is unresolved disagreement that has escalated to an emotional level
- There is miscommunication leading to unclear expectations
- There are personality clashes
- There are differences in acquired values
- There is underlying stress and tension
- There are ego problems
- There are combinations of the above
In Muzafer Sherif’s (1996) experiment, win-lose competition had produced intense conflict, negative images of the outgroup, and strong ingroup cohesiveness and pride.
Perceived Injustice

“That’s unfair!” “What a ripoff!” “We deserve better!”

Such comments typify conflicts bred by perceived injustice.

But what is **Justice**?

- People perceive justice as **equity**—the distribution of rewards in proportion to individuals’ contributions (Walster & others, 1978).

\[
\frac{\text{My outcomes}}{\text{My inputs}} = \frac{\text{Your outcomes}}{\text{Your inputs}}
\]
Many conflicts contain but a small core of truly incompatible goals; the bigger problem is the misperceptions of the other’s motives and goals.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Seeds of Misperception</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Self-serving bias</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Leads individuals and groups to accept credit for their good deeds and shuck responsibility for bad deeds</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Self-justify</strong></td>
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<td>- Inclines people to deny the wrong of their evil acts that cannot be shucked off</td>
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<td><strong>Fundamental attribution error</strong></td>
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<td>- Each side sees the other’s hostility as reflecting an evil disposition</td>
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<td><strong>preconceptions</strong></td>
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<td>- One then filters the information and interprets it to fit one’s preconceptions</td>
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<td><strong>polarize</strong></td>
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<td>- Groups polarize these self-serving, self-justifying, biasing tendencies</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>groupthink</strong></td>
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<td>- One symptom of groupthink is the tendency to perceive one’s own group as moral and strong, the opposition as evil and week</td>
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<td><strong>Ingroup bias</strong></td>
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<td>- The mere fact of being in a group triggers an ingroup bias</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>stereotype</strong></td>
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<td>- Negative stereotypes, once formed, are often resistant to contradictory evidence</td>
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## Misperception

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MIRROR-IMAGE PERCEPTION</th>
<th>SHIFTING PERCEPTIONS</th>
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<td>refer to the reciprocal views of one another often held by parties in conflict; for example, each may view itself as moral and peace-loving and the other as evil and aggressive.</td>
<td>If misperceptions accompany conflict, then they should appear and disappear as conflicts wax and wane. The same process that create the enemy’s image can reverse that image when the enemy becomes an ally.</td>
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Breach of faith and trust

- When one puts faith and trust in another, and that confidence is broken, it can create an emotional response that elevates to conflict.
- To trust someone is to place a high confidence level that the relationship will not be compromised in any way...that I can expect you to do what you say.
- A trusting relationship leads to feelings of confidence and security.
- A breach of trust unleashes our strongest emotions that frequently lead to conflict.
Disagreements are normal. When they are left unresolved, however, the associated feelings and emotions will remain in force, at least at some level. When another situation brings this disagreement back to the forefront, these suppressed emotions can erupt with force, usually far in excess of those associated with the original disagreement. Therefore, it is critically important to resolve disagreements as soon as possible and not let them fester.
The ability to communicate is one of our most commonly used skills.

we use to communicate don't always clearly state the picture in our minds.

When this occurs, errors often result that lead to frustration.

Depending on a multitude of factors (stress level for one), the error sometimes results in conflict if neither person is willing to accept responsibility for it.
These natural sets of differences are some of our greatest strengths as individuals and teams; however, they are also sources of conflict.

If I, for example, prefer to look at only the "big picture," then I may become frustrated by your attempts to discuss details.

You, on the other hand, may see me as irresponsible for not doing the analysis.

Result: potential conflict.
values are the beliefs we hold that help us to make decisions about what is right or wrong, good or bad.

our values come from parents, siblings, friends, mentors, coaches, teachers, books, churches, movies, television, and music...life in general.

no two people ever have the same life experience, so we ultimately have different sets of values and beliefs that guide our decisions and behavior.

people struggle over religion, politics, race, humanitarian issues, ethics and morals, abortion, sex, and more.

in extreme cases, some people will, literally, die for their beliefs.
Our lives today place enormous demands on our time and energy.
But frequently those demands exceed our capacity to deal with them.
Too often, however, this underlying stress surfaces at the slightest provocation, and we find ourselves in conflict.
Ego is another strong driver of our behavior and decisions.

Ego wants us to be "right," and moves us into defending our position, sometimes unreasonably.
Four Cs of Peacemaking

- Contact
- Cooperation
- Communication
- Conciliation
Desegregation - is the process of ending the separation of two groups usually referring to races.
Cooperation

Common External Threat

Superordinate Goals

Cooperative Learning

Having a common enemy unifies groups of competing boys in Sherif’s camping experiments—and in many subsequent experiments (Dion, 1979).

Superordinate Goals—goals that compel all in a group and require cooperative effort. In Sherif’s experiment, he introduced such goals. After working together to achieve the goal, the boys ate together and enjoyed themselves around a campfire.

With cooperative learning in Aronson’s (1967, 1979, 200) experiment, students learn not only the material given but other lessons as well. Cross-racial friendships also begin to blossom. John McConahay (1081) wrote the cooperative learning is the most effective practice for improving race relations.
Communication

Seeking an agreement through direct negotiations between parties.

Bargaining

An attempt by a neutral third party to resolve a conflict by facilitating communication and offering suggestions.

Mediation

Resolution of a conflict by a neutral third party who studies both sides and imposes a settlement.

Arbitration
Conciliation

GRIT (Graduated and reciprocated initiatives in tension reduction)

One approach to de-escalation is GRIT, an approach developed by Charles Osgood.

The basic idea is that disputant can initiate de-escalation by making a small, unilateral (one-sided) concession to the other side, and at the same time, communicating a desire or even an expectation that this gesture will be matched with an equal response from the opponent. If the opponent does respond positively, the first party can make a second concession, and a "peace spiral" is begun.
The End.

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