



Conflict

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

Group members do not always get along well with one another. Even in the most serene circumstances the group's atmosphere may shift rapidly, so that once close collaborators become hostile adversaries. Because conflict is a ubiquitous aspect of group life, it must be managed to minimize its negative effects.

- What is conflict?
- What are the sources of conflict in groups?
- Why does conflict escalate?
- How can group members manage their conflict?
- Is conflict an unavoidable evil or a necessary good?

CHAPTER OUTLINE

The Roots of Conflict

Winning: Conflict and Competition
Sharing: Conflict over Resources
Controlling: Conflict over Power
Working: Task and Process Conflict
Liking and Disliking: Personal Conflicts

Confrontation and Escalation

Uncertainty → Commitment
Perception → Misperception
Soft Tactics → Hard Tactics
Reciprocity → Upward Conflict Spiral
Few → Many
Irritation → Anger

Conflict Resolution

Commitment → Negotiation
Misperception → Understanding
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iConflict: When Group Members Turn Against Each Other

It was a time before the iPod, iPhone, and iMac. Apple Computers had started strong under the leadership of co-founder Steve Jobs, but now was struggling to hold its own during a downturn in sales of technology and software. Jobs and the executive board decided they needed a chief executive officer (CEO) with a more traditional background in business. They picked John Sculley, of Pepsi, hoping that he would stabilize Apple, improve efficiency, and increase sales.

All worked well, for a time. Jobs and Sculley admired each other's strengths as leaders and visionaries, and they conferred constantly on all matters of production and policy. But they did not see eye-to-eye on key issues of corporate goals. Their working relationship dissolved into a series of disagreements, each one more problematic than the last. Both men played central roles as leaders in the company, but their differences in direction, vision, and style were disruptive. As the conflict over Jobs's pet project, the Macintosh (predecessor of the iMac), reached a peak, Sculley asked the executive board to strip Jobs of much of his authority. The group did so, reluctantly (Linzmayr, 2004).

Jobs did not go quietly into the night. He met individually with the board members, seeking to reverse the decision and to win approval for his plan to fire

Sculley in a corporate coup. He waited to spring his plan when Sculley was traveling in China, but Sculley was tipped off by one of the board members. Sculley canceled his trip, called a board meeting, and confronted Jobs:

"It's come to my attention that you'd like to throw me out of the company, and I'd like to ask if that's true."

Jobs's answer: "I think you're bad for Apple and I think you're the wrong person to run this company. . . . You really should leave this company. . . . You don't know how manufacturing works. You're not close to the company. The middle managers don't respect you."

Sculley, voice rising in anger, replied, "I made a mistake in treating you with high esteem. . . . I don't trust you, and I won't tolerate a lack of trust."

Sculley then polled the board members. Did they support Sculley or Jobs? All of them declared great admiration for Jobs, but they felt that the company needed Sculley's experience and leadership. Jobs then rose from the table and said, "I guess I know where things stand," before bolting from the room (Sculley, 1987, pp. 251–252). Jobs later resigned from the company he had founded. He would return, eventually, but not until Sculley had resigned.

Jobs versus Sculley was one of corporate America's most spectacular conflicts, but it was no anomaly. Groups of all kinds experience periods of disagreement, discord, and friction. Good friends disagree about their weekend plans and end up exchanging harsh words. Families argue over finances, rules, and responsibilities. Struggling work teams search for a person who can be blamed for their inefficiency. College classes, angered by their professors' methods of teaching, lodge formal complaints with the dean. Rock bands split up when artistic tensions between members become unacceptable. When **conflict**

occurs in a group, the actions or beliefs of one or more members of the group are unacceptable to and resisted by one or more of the other group members. Members stand against each other rather than in support of each other (Levine & Thompson, 1996; Pruitt & Kim, 2004; Wilmot & Hocker, 2007).

Why do allies in a group sometimes turn into adversaries? This chapter answers that question by tracing the course of conflict in groups. As Figure 13.1 suggests, the process begins when the routine course of events in a group is disrupted by an *initial conflict*—differences of opinion, disagreements over who should lead the group, individuals competing with each other for scarce resources, and the like. Whatever the cause of the initial disunity, the conflict grows as persuasion gives way to arguing, emotions take the place of logic, and the once unified group splits into factions and coalitions. This

conflict Disagreement, discord, and friction that occur when the actions or beliefs of one or more members of the group are unacceptable to and resisted by one or more of the other group members.

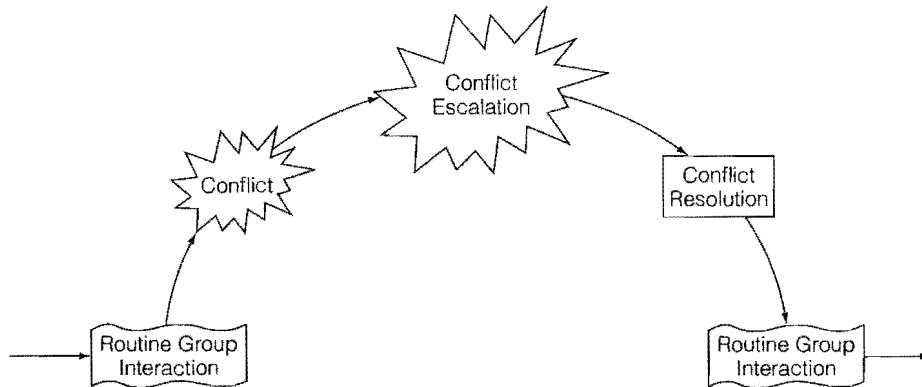


FIGURE 13.1 The course of conflict in groups.

period of *conflict escalation* is, in most cases, followed by a reduction in conflict through *conflict resolution*. The board of directors at Apple, for example, managed their conflict by backing Sculley and demoting Jobs—a rather severe means of dealing with the dispute. This chapter, then, focuses on conflict inside a group—between two or more members—or **intragroup conflict**. A second form of conflict—conflict between groups, or **intergroup conflict**—is examined in the next chapter.

THE ROOTS OF CONFLICT

Conflict is everywhere. When the members of 71 groups were asked, “Did your group experience any conflict?” they identified 424 instances of interpersonal irritation (Wall & Nolan, 1987). When Robert Freed Bales and his colleagues used *Interaction Process Analysis* (IPA) to record group interactions, some of the groups they observed spent as much as 20% of their time making hostile or negative comments (Bales & Hare, 1965). Researchers who asked group

members to work together on a frustrating, impossible-to-solve task were startled by the intensity of the conflict that overtook the groups. In one particularly hostile group, members averaged 13.5 antagonistic comments *per minute* (French, 1941).

Most people, if given the choice, avoid situations that are rife with conflict (Witteman, 1991). Yet conflict seems to be an unavoidable consequence of life in groups. When individuals are sequestered away from other people, their ambitions, goals, and perspectives are their own concern. But a group, by its very nature, brings individuals into contact with other people—people who have their own idiosyncratic interests, motivations, outlooks, and preferences. As these individuals interact with one another, their diverse interests and preferences can pull them in different directions. Instead of working together, they compete against one another. Instead of sharing resources and power, members selfishly claim more than their fair share. Instead of accepting each other for who they are, members treat those they like better than those they dislike.

Winning: Conflict and Competition

Before Sculley joined Apple, Sculley was *independent* of Jobs. Sculley’s success or failure in manufacturing and marketing Pepsi did nothing to influence Jobs’s outcomes and vice versa. When they both worked at Apple, that changed. At first, the two worked

intragroup conflict Disagreement or confrontation between members of the same group.

intergroup conflict A disagreement or confrontation between two or more groups and their members that can include physical violence, interpersonal discord, and psychological tension.

together cooperatively, for each one's success helped the other succeed. Their relationship changed yet again when they ran headlong into a dispute over the Mac. The two men refused to change their minds, and so their once *cooperative* relationship turned into a *competitive* one. For Sculley to succeed, Jobs would have to fail. For Jobs to succeed, Sculley would have to fail.

When people are independent of each other, their pursuit of their aims and objectives influences no one else. The lone artist and craftsperson struggle alone in the pursuit of their goals, but their **independence** from others means that should they succeed or fail only they are influenced. But people in groups are, by definition, interdependent, so their outcomes are often linked together. Many such situations promote **cooperation** between members, for the success of any one member of the group will improve the chances of success for the other members. Morton Deutsch called this form of interaction *promotive interdependence* (Deutsch, 1949b). But situations can also pit individuals against one another. When two people play backgammon, one must win and the other must lose. When two coworkers both want to be promoted to office manager, if one succeeds the other will fail. In a footrace, only one runner will end up in first place. As Deutsch explained, such situations involve **competition**: The success of any one person means that someone else must fail. Deutsch (1949b) called this form of interaction *contrast interdependence*.

Competition is a powerful motivator of behavior. When individuals compete against one another, they typically expend greater effort,

independence A performance situation that is structured in such a way that the success of any one member is unrelated to the chance of other members' succeeding.
cooperation A performance situation that is structured in such a way that the success of any one member of the group improves the chances of other members' succeeding.

competition A performance situation that is structured in such a way that success depends on performing better than others.

express more interest and satisfaction in their work, and set their personal goals higher (Tjosvold et al., 2006). But competition can also promote conflict between individuals. When people compete, they must look out for their own interests, even at the cost to others. They cannot take pride in other group members' accomplishments, for each time someone else in the group excels, their own outcomes shrink. In cooperative groups, members enhance their outcomes by helping other members achieve success, but in competitive groups, members profit from others' errors. Because competing group members succeed if others fail, they have two options open to them. First, they can improve their own work in the hopes that they rise above the others. Second, they can undermine, sabotage, disrupt, or interfere with others' work so that their own becomes better by comparison (Amegashie & Runkel, 2007).

Deutsch studied the dark side of competition by creating two different grading systems in his college classes. In competitive classes, students' grades were relative: The individual who did the best in the group would get the highest grade, whereas the individual who did the worst would get the lowest grade. Deutsch created cooperative groups as well. These students worked together in groups to learn the material, and everyone in the group received the same grade. As Deutsch predicted, conflict was much more pronounced in the competitive groups. Members reported less dependency on others, less desire to win the respect of others, and greater interpersonal animosity. Members of cooperative groups, in contrast, acted friendlier during the meetings, were more encouraging and supportive, and communicated more frequently (Deutsch, 1949a, 1949b, 1980).

Other researchers, too, have found that cooperative situations tend to be friendly, intimate, and involving, whereas competitive situations are viewed as unfriendly, nonintimate, and uninvolved (Graziano, Hair, & Finch, 1997; King & Sorrentino, 1983). Work units with high levels of cooperation have fewer latent tensions, personality conflicts, and verbal confrontations (Tjosvold, 1995). Sports teams tend to be more cohesive and—depending on the

demands of the particular sport—more successful when coaches instill a desire for team success rather than individual success (Schmitt, 1981). Students in classrooms that stress cooperation rather than individualism or competition work harder, show greater academic gains, and display better psychological adjustment. They also foster stronger and more emotionally satisfying student-to-student relations (Roseth, Johnson, & Johnson, 2008).

Mixed-Motive Conflict Few situations involve pure cooperation or pure competition; the motive to compete is often mixed with the motive to cooperate. Sculley wanted to gain control over the Mac division, but he needed Jobs's help with product development. Jobs valued Sculley's organizational expertise, but he felt that Sculley misunderstood the company's goals. The men found themselves in a **mixed-motive situation**—they were tempted to compete and cooperate at the same time.

Researchers use a specialized technique, known as the **prisoner's dilemma game (PDG)**, to study conflict in mixed-motive situations (Poundstone, 1992). This procedure takes its name from an anecdote about two prisoners. The criminals, when interrogated by police detectives in separate rooms, are both offered a deal. They are told they can retain their right to remain silent, or they can confess and implicate their accomplice. If both remain silent, then they will be set free. If both confess, both will receive a moderate sentence. But if one confesses and the other does not, then the one who confesses will receive a minimal sentence, and his partner will receive the maximum sentence. The prisoners, as partners in crime, want to cooperate with each other and resist the demands of the police. However, by defecting—competing with each other

by confessing—then they may end up with a lighter sentence (Luce & Raiffa, 1957).

When researchers use the prisoner's dilemma to study conflict, the participants play for points or money (see Figure 13.2). The two participants must individually pick one of two options, labeled C and D. Option C is the cooperative choice. If both players pick C, then both will earn money. Option D is the defecting, *competitive choice*. If only one of the two players defects by picking D, that player will make money, and the other will lose money. But if both pick D, both will lose money. Figure 13.2 shows the payoff matrix that summarizes how much money the two will win or lose in each of the four possible situations:

1. If John chooses C and Steve chooses C, both earn 25¢.
2. If John chooses C and Steve chooses D, John loses 25¢ and Steve wins 50¢.

		John's choice	
		C	D
Steve's choice	C	John wins 25¢ Steve wins 25¢	John wins 50¢ Steve loses 25¢
	D	John loses 25¢ Steve wins 50¢	John loses 10¢ Steve loses 10¢

FIGURE 13.2 The prisoner's dilemma game. Two players, John and Steve, must select either option C (cooperation) or option D (defection). These choices are shown along the sides of the matrix. The payoffs for these joint choices are shown within each cell of the matrix. In each cell, John's outcomes are shown above the diagonal line, and Steve's outcomes are shown below. For example, if Steve picks C and John picks C, they each earn 25¢. But if Steve picks C and John picks D, then Steve loses 25¢ and John wins 50¢.

mixed-motive situation A performance setting in which the interdependence among interactants involves both competitive and cooperative goal structures.

prisoner's dilemma game (PDG) A simulation of social interaction in which players must make either cooperative or competitive choices in order to win; used in the study of cooperation, competition, and the development of mutual trust.

3. If John chooses D and Steve chooses C, John wins 50¢ and Steve loses 25¢.
4. If John chooses D and Steve chooses D, both lose 10¢.

The PDG captures the essence of a mixed-motive situation. Players want to maximize their own earnings, so they are tempted to defect (Option D). But most people realize that their partner also wants to maximize his or her profit—and if both defect, then they will both lose money. So they are drawn to cooperate (Option C), but are wary that their partner may defect. Players usually cannot communicate with each other, and they cannot wait to pick until after they learn their partner's choice. In most cases, players also make their choices several times. Each pair of choices is termed a *trial* or *round*.

How do people react when asked to make a choice in the prisoner's dilemma game? Some cooperate and some compete, but the proportion of cooperators to competitors varies depending on the relationships between members, their expectations and personalities, and a variety of other factors (Weber & Messick, 2004; see Focus 13.1). If, for example, the gains for competing relative to cooperating are increased, people compete more. When people are told they are playing the "Wall Street Game" they compete more than if the simulation is called the "Community Game" (Ross & Ward 1995). If the instructions refer to the other person as the "opponent" then competition increases, but the label "partner" shrinks competitiveness (Burnham, McCabe, & Smith, 2000). And, if people know they will be playing multiple trials against the same person, then cooperation increases. In one study, for example, people played the PDG in large groups of 30 to 50 other people. The game randomly paired people together on each trial, but the odds of being paired with the same person repeatedly were varied experimentally from low to high. The greater the chances of playing with a person in the future, the more cooperative players became (B6, 2005).

When played for several rounds, people's actions in the PDG are also profoundly influenced by their partner's choices. When playing with

someone who consistently makes cooperative choices, people tend to cooperate themselves. Those who encounter competitors, however, soon adopt this strategy, and they, too, begin to compete. Gradually, then, **behavioral assimilation** occurs as group members' choices become synchronized over time.

This behavioral assimilation is an outward expression of a strong regulatory social norm: **reciprocity**. Reciprocity suggests that when people who help you later need help, you are obligated to return their favor. However, reciprocity also implies that people who harm you are also deserving of harm themselves. The converse of "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours" is "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (Falk & Fischbacher, 2006). If one group member criticizes the ideas, opinions, or characteristics of another, the victim of the attack will feel justified in counterattacking unless some situational factor legitimizes the aggression of the former. Unfortunately, negative reciprocity tends to be stronger than positive reciprocity. A cooperative person who runs into a competitive partner is more likely to begin to compete before the competitive person begins to cooperate (Kelley & Stahelski, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c). Negative reciprocity is kept in check if cooperatively oriented individuals have the opportunity to withdraw from the interaction or can communicate their "good" intentions to their partners, but in most situations, a partner turns into an opponent faster than an opponent turns into an ally (Kollock, 1998; Miller & Holmes, 1975).

SVO: Social Values Orientation Both Jobs and Sculley were successful, tough-minded business professionals. As they strategized and schemed, their choices were shaped by their most basic of motivations. Should they act in ways that will maximize

behavioral assimilation The eventual matching of the behaviors displayed by cooperating or competing group members.

reciprocity The tendency for individuals to pay back in kind what they receive from others.

Focus 13.1 Are You a Friend or Foe?

Ah, who is nigh? Come to me, friend or foe, and tell me who is victor.

—Shakespeare, *Henry VI, Part 3*

Television game shows, such as *Jeopardy*, *Weakest Link*, *Wheel of Fortune*, and *Survivor*, allow the audience to watch competition trigger conflict in groups. On *Survivor*, for example, only one contestant can win the grand prize, and members must vote a person out of the group each time their team loses. On *Weakest Link*, members cooperate by answering strings of questions, but after each round they vote to identify and eliminate the weakest player from their teams. The competition among players invariably introduces tension, conflict, and hostility, dividing the players one against the other.

One game show, *Friend or Foe*, is so similar to the prisoner's dilemma game that researchers have studied it to learn about people's choices in high-stakes competitions. The six players pair up into three teams who compete to build up winnings. After each round, the team with the lowest score drops out, until only one team is left. But all the teams, as they leave, must decide how they will split their earnings. Each player has a button, which no one else can see, and they can press the button if they wish to compete instead of cooperate. The possible outcomes are: *Friend-Friend*: Neither player presses the button and they split their earnings; *Friend-Foe*: The player who presses the button keeps

all the earnings; and (c) *Foe-Foe*: Both players press the button and they lose all their earnings.

The situation has some unique features. The groups work together to make their money, and their choices are public ones—everyone watching knows if they pick friend or foe. They are also playing for real money, and substantial amounts in some cases. The average amount that the group plays for is \$3,705, although some teams try for much more—as much as \$16,400 in one case. Will people cooperate or compete in such a context?

When behavioral economists examined the choices of over 100 teams making their choice in the game, they discovered that players defected, trying to take all the money, 50% of the time. Men tended to compete more than women (55% vs. 46%), and younger players were much more competitive than older ones (59% vs. 37%). Hence, competitive men who were paired with older women tended to take home much more money than all other players. Money, however, did not make people either more or less cooperative. Even when people were playing for substantial amounts, they were as likely to cooperate as they were to compete. This competitive urge ended up saving the game show producers a considerable amount of money. Contestants left nearly \$100,000 behind as a result of two players making the fatal foe-foe choice (List, 2005; Oberholzer-Gee, Waldfogel, & White, 2003).

their outcomes and minimize their costs; does the self come first? Or, should they seek first to benefit others and, if necessary, sacrifice their own interests for the greater good?

Degree of concern for other people's outcomes relative to one's own determines a person's **social values orientation (SVO)**. Many people seek to maximize their gains; when they play the PDG they want to earn as many points as they can; they are said to be *proself*. But some people are also

concerned with other's gains and losses. These *prosocials* wish to maximize everyone's outcomes (Van Lange et al., 2007). Individualistic and competitive SVOs are *proself*, and cooperative and altruistic SVOs are *prosocial*:

- **Individualistic orientation:** Proself individualists are concerned only with their own outcomes. They make decisions based on what they think they personally will achieve, without concern for others' outcomes. They neither interfere with nor assist other group members, for they focus only on their own outcomes. Their actions may indirectly impact other group members, but such influence is not their goal.
- **Competitive orientation:** Competitors are proself individuals who strive to maximize their own

social values orientation (SVO) The dispositional tendency to respond to conflict settings in a particular way; cooperators, for example, tend to make choices that benefit both parties in a conflict, whereas competitors act to maximize their own outcomes.

outcomes, but they also seek to minimize others' outcomes. They view disagreements as *win-lose situations* and find satisfaction in forcing their ideas on others. Concessions and compromise, they believe, are only for losers. A competitor believes that "each person should get the most he can" and plays to win even when playing a game with a child (Brenner & Vinacke, 1979, p. 291).

- **Cooperative orientation:** Prosocial cooperators strive to maximize their own outcomes and others' outcomes as well. They value accommodative interpersonal strategies that generate *win-win situations*. A cooperator would argue that "when people deal with each other, it's better when everyone comes out even." If they play a game with a child they would be more likely to make sure "no one really wins or loses" (Brenner & Vinacke, 1979, p. 291).
- **Altruistic orientation:** Altruists are motivated to help others who are in need. They are low in self-interest and highly prosocial. They willingly sacrifice their own outcomes in the hopes of helping others achieve some gain.

Individuals with competitive SVOs are more likely to find themselves in conflicts. The competitor's style is abrasive, spurring cooperative members to react with criticism and requests for fairer treatment. Competitors, however, rarely modify their behavior in response to these complaints, because they are relatively unconcerned with maintaining smooth interpersonal relations (De Dreu, Weingart, & Kwon, 2000). Hence, competitors try to overwhelm cooperators, who sometimes respond by becoming competitive themselves. For cooperators, the perception of others' cooperativeness is *positively* correlated with their own cooperativeness. If they think that others will cooperate, they cooperate. For competitors, perceptions of others' cooperativeness is *negatively* correlated with their own cooperativeness. If they think that others will cooperate, they compete (Smeesters et al., 2003). When two competitors meet, the result is an intense conflict like that seen at Apple, and when competitors lose, they often withdraw from the group altogether (Shure & Meeker, 1967).

These differences in SVOs have been linked to other personal qualities, including agreeableness, achievement orientation, interpersonal orientation, and trust in others (Van Lange et al. 2007). SVOs also vary systematically across cultures. Many Western societies, for example, openly value competition. Their economic systems are based on competition, their schools teach children the importance of surpassing others' achievements, and popular games and sports have winners and losers. More cooperative—and more peaceful—societies, in contrast, condemn competition, devalue individual achievement, and avoid any kind of competitive games (Van Lange et al., 1997).

Men, Women, and Competition What if John Sculley were Joanna Sculley—a woman rather than a man? Would she and Jobs have battled as fiercely? Or would Joanna have used other, less competitive methods for settling the dispute?

Common gender role stereotypes generally assume that men are more competitive than women. Stories of executives conjure up images of individuals who are driven, ruthless, self-seeking, and male. Yet experimental studies of cooperation and competition suggest that women are just as competitive as men (Sell, 1997). One review of previous work found that in 21 experiments, women were more competitive, but 27 other studies suggested that women were less competitive (Rubin & Brown, 1975). Both men and women use more contentious influence methods when they are paired with a man than with a woman, perhaps because they anticipate more conflict (Carli, 1989, 1999). When sex differences do emerge, they suggest that men are somewhat more competitive than women, particularly when competition is a riskier alternative or will yield a greater payoff (Simpson, 2003). Women are also more likely to endorse prosocial SVOs, relative to men (Knight & Dubro, 1984). Women's reactions during conflicts are also more nuanced than men's. If, for example, their partner is attractive, women make more cooperative choices. If they do not like their partner, they are more likely to compete. Men, on the other hand, simply compete (Kahn, Hottes, & Davis, 1971).

Sharing: Conflict over Resources

Steve Jobs faced a dilemma. The board of directors of Apple had hired John Sculley to be CEO, and they expected all the company's employees to support Sculley's initiatives. But Sculley called for sacrifices, for he wanted to shift personnel and financial resources away from Jobs's division. Jobs could have accepted this decision and gone along with the group's decision, but instead he chose his own path.

Group life, by its very nature, creates **social dilemmas** for group members. As noted in Chapter 3, the members, as individuals, are motivated to maximize their own rewards and minimize their costs. They strive to extract all they can from the group, while minimizing the amount of time and energy the group takes from them. Yet, as group members, they also wish to contribute to the group, for they realize that their selfishness can destroy the group. Conflicts arise when individualistic motives trump group-oriented motives, and the collective intervenes to redress the imbalance.

Commons Dilemmas Consider the "tragedy of the commons." Shepherds with adjoining farms all share a common grazing field. The large pastures can support many sheep, so the shepherds grow prosperous. Then, one or two shepherds decide to add a few sheep to their flock, so that they can make more profit. Others notice the extra sheep, so they, too, add to their flocks. Soon, the commons is overgrazed, and all the sheep die of starvation (Hardin, 1968).

This **social trap**, or **commons dilemma**, occurs when members share a common resource that they want to maintain for their group, but individual members are tempted to take more than their fair share (Pruitt, 1998). But if everyone acts selfishly,

the common resource will be destroyed. Members are tempted by the short-term gains that will bring about long-term losses to the collective (Komorita & Parks, 1994; Shepperd, 1993).

Researchers have studied when people choose self-interest over group interest by giving groups of four or five people the chance to draw as many tokens as they want from a pool of available tokens. The pool is a renewable resource, for after each round of harvesting, it regenerates in direct proportion to the number of tokens remaining in the pool. If members quickly draw out all the tokens, the pool is permanently exhausted; cautious removal of only a small number of tokens ensures replenishment of the resource. Nonetheless, group members tend to act in their own self-interest by drawing out all the tokens, even when they realize that the pool is quite small (Brewer & Kramer, 1986; Yamagishi, 1994).

How can groups escape this dilemma? Both experience with the situation and communication among members appear to be critical factors (Allison & Messick, 1985a; Bischoff, 2007). In one study, triads harvested from either a large or a small token pool. The members of half of the groups could communicate with one another, but the rest could not. The differences between these groups were striking. More than 80% of the groups that could not communicate bankrupted their pool within a minute. Even when the pool was large, the noncommunicating groups still had problems with overharvesting. Many of these groups realized the long-term negative consequences of overharvesting, but they did not manage their resources as well as the communicating groups. These results suggest that groups can avoid traps if their members can plan a strategy for dealing with the situation through communication (Brehner, 1977).

Public Goods Dilemmas In a commons dilemma, group members take more than their fair share. In a **public goods dilemma**, they fail to

social dilemma An interpersonal situation where individuals must choose between maximizing their personal outcomes or maximizing their group's outcomes.

social trap (or **commons dilemma**) A social dilemma where individuals can maximize their outcome by seeking personal goals rather than the collective goals, but if too many individuals act selfishly then all members of the collective will experience substantial long-term losses.

public goods dilemma A social dilemma where one may not contribute any resources in support of a public good (such as a park or a highway system) but also cannot be excluded for failing to contribute.

give as much as they should (Komorita & Parks, 1994). At the community level, individuals may be able to use public parks, enjoy the protection of the police, and send their children to public school, even though they do not contribute to the community by paying taxes. At the group level, members who have not contributed their time, energy, or resources to the group effort—free riders—may nonetheless benefit from group activities and experiences. When students work on class projects as teams, one member may miss meetings and leave assignments undone, but still get a good grade because the group scores well on the final project. When everyone is asked to bring a covered dish to a reception, a few attendees will show up empty-handed.

Free riding can spark group conflict. When group members in a college class described the sources of conflicts in their project groups, more than 35% of their comments targeted disputes over work load. People had much to say about the dedication of their comembers to the group's goals, for some did not put in as much time, effort, and resources as the others expected (Wall & Nolan, 1987). Some groups respond to free riding by extracting promises of satisfactory contributions from members and by imposing costs on the free riders—criticism, public humiliation, physical punishment, and fines are all ways to punish free riders. People are even willing to impose costs on themselves if it means that free riders can be punished in some way (Kiyonari & Barclay, 2008). But some individual group members, to counter the inequity of working in a group with free riders, may reduce their own contributions or withdraw from the group altogether (the “sucker effect”; see Komorita & Parks, 1994, for a review).

Fairness Dilemmas Groups must often make decisions about how their resources will be apportioned among and made available to members. A company issues wages to workers. More personnel must be assigned to more important work units. Office space must be allocated to executives, along with company cars, staff support, and budgets. Because resources are limited, groups must develop a fair means of doling them out to members.

Fairness judgments are determined by two forms of social justice: procedural and distributive. As discussed in Chapter 11, *procedural justice* is concerned with the methods used to make decisions about the allocation of resources. Questions of procedural justice arise when groups do not use consistent, open, and agreed-upon methods for allocating their resources. Procedural justice asks, “Did we make the decision in a fair way?” (van den Bos, Wilke, & Lind, 1998). **Distributive justice**, in contrast, concerns how rewards and costs are shared by (distributed across) the group members. When one's piece of cake seems smaller than it should be, when others get the best seats right up near the front of the bus, when workers who do the same job are paid different salaries, or when group leaders give all their attention to one or two favorite members and ignore the others, group members feel that distributive justice has not been done. Distributive justice asks, “Did I get my fair share?” and the answer often depends on distributive norms:

- *Equity*: Base members' outcomes on their inputs: An individual who has invested a good deal of time, energy, money, or other type of input in the group should receive more from the group than individuals who have contributed little.
- *Equality*: All group members, irrespective of their inputs, should be given an equal share of the payoff. For example, even though a person contributes only 20% of the group's resources, he or she should receive as much as the person who contributes 40%.
- *Power*: Those with more authority, status, or control over the group should receive more than those in lower-level positions (“to the victor go the spoils”).
- *Need*: Those with the greatest needs should be provided with the resources they need to meet those needs.

distributive justice Perceived fairness of the distribution of rights and resources.

Focus 13.2 Are Humans the Only Species That Can Judge What Is Fair?

Conflict is best understood as an integral part of the social network. It operates within a set of constraints as old as the evolution of cooperation in the animal kingdom.

—Frans de Waal (2000, p. 590)

Humans are not the only species with a highly evolved sense of distributive justice, at least according to research conducted by Frans de Waal and his colleagues. They trained capuchin monkeys to work for food rewards. The monkeys, when given a token, would be rewarded with a small portion of food when they handed the token back. These monkeys would work for bit of cucumber (low-value reward), but they preferred a grape above all else (high-value reward).

Once trained, de Waal set up several different payment conditions to see how the worker monkeys would respond. In the equity condition, two monkeys worked side-by-side for the same low-value reward; and work they did, diligently exchanging a coin for food. In the inequity condition, the monkeys did the same amount of work, but one of them received the high-value reward and the other was only given the low-value reward. The latter monkeys were none

too pleased. In addition to vocalized complaints and gestures of defiance, they refused to continue exchanging the tokens for food, and when given their food reward they would indicate their displeasure by returning it—aiming for the researchers. These reactions were worse still in a third, “free food,” condition. Conflict reached its peak when the one monkey was given grapes without even having to trade coins back and forth (Brosnan & de Waal, 2003; de Waal, 2006).

De Waal concludes that these monkeys’ reactions were guided by their instinctive sense of fairness, for they appeared to recognize the inequity of the situation. He adds, however, that not all primate species react so negatively to such inequities. Rhesus monkeys, for example, do not seem to be sensitive to distributive justice, perhaps because they live in small groups with very differentiated chains of authority that create great inequalities in the distribution of rewards. De Waal also notes that the monkeys that prospered under the inequitable arrangement showed no sign of concern over getting more than their fair share. They were not so altruistic that they shared their ill-gotten gains with their unrewarded partner. But would *Homo sapiens* have acted any more generously?

- **Responsibility:** Those who have the most should share with those who have less.

Money (and other resources) may not be the root of all evil, but its distribution often causes conflicts within groups (Allison & Messick, 1990; Samuelson & Allison, 1994; Samuelson & Messick, 1995). Members who contribute less to the group often argue in favor of the equality norm, whereas those who contribute more tend to favor the equity norm. Women prefer equality over equity even when they outperform their coworkers (Wagner, 1995). Members of larger groups prefer to base allocations on equity, whereas members of smaller groups stress equality (Allison, McQueen, & Schaerfl, 1992). Some countries stress equality and need more than equity, as do different organizations and groups within each country (Fischer et al., 2007). Members of groups working on tasks where one individual’s contributions are critically important

for success prefer equitable distributions over egalitarian ones.

Group members who feel that they are receiving too little for what they are giving—*negative inequity*—sometimes withdraw from the group, reduce their effort, or turn in work of lower quality. Receiving too much for what one has given—*positive inequity*—sometimes causes people to increase their efforts so they deserve what they get, but it is negative inequity that causes conflict (Fortin & Fellenz 2008; Rivera & Tedeschi, 1976). Even monkeys, as Focus 13.2 explains, respond with hostility when they are the victims of negative inequity.

These reactions are driven, in part, by self-interest. Group members strive to maximize their personal rewards, so they react negatively when they are denied what they feel they deserve. But group members are also concerned with the issues of fairness and justice, because these are indications of their status and inclusion in groups. When group

members feel that their group has acted with integrity while allocating rewards, they feel a sense of pride in their group. They also feel that the rewards they receive from the group are an indication of their prestige and respect within the group. These reactions are shaped more by the group's procedural justice than by its distributive justice (Blader & Tyler, 2003; Tyler & Blader, 2003).

Responsibility Dilemmas When a group completes its work, members often dispute who deserves credit and who deserves blame. The board of directors at Apple blamed Jobs's devotion to the Mac for the company's economic misfortunes. Sculley credited his skilled marketing interventions for Apple's prosperity in the years following Jobs's dismissal. Jobs blamed Sculley for ruining the company.

Just as individuals carry out extensive appraisals of their own successes and failures, so do group members devote significant cognitive resources to the analysis and comprehension of their collective endeavors. This appraisal, however, is complicated by the collaborative nature of group activities. Group members must identify the factors that contributed to each member's performance, assign credit and blame, and make decisions regarding rewards, power, and status. Each group member, however, generally sees himself or herself as somewhat more worthy of credit than others in the group. This tendency, termed **egocentrism**, can be easily documented just by asking people to indicate how responsible they feel they are for any group activity, where 0% means they are not responsible at all and 100% that they alone are responsible for what the group has achieved. These scores, when summed across group members, invariably exceed 100% (Ross & Sicoly, 1979; Savitsky, 2007).

egocentrism Giving oneself more responsibility for an outcome or event than is warranted; often indexed by comparing one's own judgments of personal responsibility to judgments of responsibility allocated by others.

This bias occurs, in part, because people are far more aware of their own contributions than those of others—they literally see themselves busily contributing to the group effort and overlook the work of others. Thus, egocentrism can be reduced by asking group members to think about their collaborators' contributions; a process termed *unpacking*. When, for example, the authors of multi-authored research articles were asked to estimate their responsibility for the joint project, they were less egocentric if they were also asked to estimate how much the other co-authors had contributed (Caruso et al., 2006; Savitsky et al., 2005).

Group members' claims of responsibility can be either group-serving (*sociocentric*) or self-serving (*egocentric*). After success, members may praise the entire group for its good work with such comments as "We all did well," or "Our hard work really paid off." Likewise, after failure, members may join together in blaming outside forces and absolving one another of blame. Because these types of responsibility claims protect and enhance the group, they lower levels of relationship conflict within the group (Peterson & Behfar, 2003). Frequently, however, self-serving members blame one another for the group's misfortunes or take the lion's share of the credit after a success (Forsyth, Zyzanski, & Giammarco, 2002; Rantilla, 2000).

These self-serving attributions result in conflict and a loss of cohesion (Leary & Forsyth, 1987). In one study, members of successful and unsuccessful groups were asked to complete a confidential report of their responsibility and others' responsibilities for the outcome. Then, to their surprise, this report was shared with other group members. Unbeknownst to the group members, the actual reports were switched with standard ones indicating that another group member either took high, moderate, or low responsibility for the outcome. Group members who blamed others for failure or tried to claim the lion's share of responsibility after success were not well-liked (Forsyth, Berger, & Mitchell, 1981). Other studies confirmed that those who engage in self-serving attributions in groups are often viewed as braggarts, narcissists, or even untrustworthy liars, but that those who share responsibility appropriately are

considered trustworthy teammates (Greenberg, 1996; Schlenker, Pontari, & Christopher, 2001).

Controlling: Conflict over Power

The conflict between Sculley and Jobs was rooted in each man's desire to control the company. Jobs thought that he would be content to allow another person to make key decisions about Apple's future, but when those decisions did not mesh with his own vision, he sought to regain control. Sculley believed that Jobs was undermining his authority. Both Jobs and Sculley sought the power they needed to control the company, and their power struggle caused turmoil within the group.

As noted in earlier chapters, the differentiation of members in terms of status, prestige, and power is a ubiquitous feature of groups. As the group strives to coordinate its members' task-directed activities, some individuals will begin to assert more authority over the others. Those who occupy positions of authority have the right to issue orders to others, who are expected to follow those directives. Once individuals gain power over others, they tend to defend their sources of power through manipulation, the formation of coalitions, information control, and favoritism. These power processes occur with great regularity in groups, but they nonetheless cause waves of tension, conflict, and anger to ripple through the group (Coleman, 2000; Sell et al., 2004).

Infighting, power struggles, and disputes are particularly common in business and corporate settings. Calvin Morrill (1995) spent several years collecting ethnographic data on the sources and consequences of conflict between executives in corporations. His analysis confirmed the image of companies as arenas for power struggles, where group members compete with each other for power, promotions, and prominence, often by using manipulative, illicit tactics. Contests of authority and power were so commonplace in one company that the executives developed an elaborate set of terms and expressions pertaining to company politics, which Morrill recorded much like an anthropologist would record the rituals and incantations of the members of an isolated tribe. An *ambush* was a "covert action to inconvenience

an adversary" (synonyms: *bushwhack* and *cheap shot*); *blindsiding* was "an intentional and surprising public embarrassment by one executive at another's expense"; an *outlaw* was "an executive who handles conflict in unpredictable ways but who is regarded as especially task competent." In some cases, this maneuvering would result in a *meltdown*—a "physical fight between executives" (1995, pp. 263–265).

Working: Task and Process Conflict

As the group goes about its work on shared tasks and activities, members sometimes disagree with one another. This type of conflict is termed **task conflict** or *substantive conflict* because it stems from disagreements about issues that are relevant to the group's goals and outcomes. No group of people is so well-coordinated that its members' actions mesh perfectly, so conflicts over the group tasks are inevitable. Groups and organizations use such conflicts to make plans, increase creativity, solve problems, decide issues, and resolve misunderstandings. Sculley and Jobs, as the leaders of Apple, were supposed to argue and debate over substantive issues having to do with making and selling computers.

Although task conflicts help groups reach their goals, these disagreements can spill over into more personal conflicts. People who disagree with the group, even when their position is a reasonable one, often provoke considerable animosity within the group. The dissenter who refuses to accept others' views is liked less, assigned low-status tasks, and sometimes ostracized. As the group struggles to reach consensus on the substantive issues at hand, it responds negatively to those group members who slow down this process (Kruglanski & Webster, 1991). Researchers studied this process by planting a confederate in discussion groups. The confederate deliberately slowed down the group with such

task conflict (or substantive conflict) Disagreements over issues that are relevant to the group's recognized goals and procedures.

interruptions as “What do you mean?” “Do you think that’s important?” or “I don’t understand.” In some groups, the confederate had an excuse: He told the group that his hearing aid was not working that day. Other groups, in contrast, received no exculpatory explanation. At the end of the session members were asked to identify one person to exclude from the group. Everyone (100%) picked the disruptive confederate if there was no excuse for his actions (Burstein & Worchel, 1962).

Task conflict occurs when ideas, opinions, and interpretations clash. **Process conflict**, or procedural conflict, occurs when strategies, policies, and methods clash. Group members may find themselves uncertain about how to resolve a problem, with some championing continued discussion and others favoring a vote. The leader of the group may make decisions and initiate actions without consulting the group; but the group may become irritated if denied an opportunity to participate in decision making (Smoke & Zajonc, 1962). During procedural conflicts, groups do not just disagree—they disagree on *how* to disagree.

Many groups minimize procedural ambiguities by adopting formal rules—bylaws, constitutions, statements of policies, or mission and procedure statements—that specify goals, decisional processes, and responsibilities (Houle, 1989). Many decision-making groups also rely on specific rules to regulate their discussions. The best-known set of rules was developed by Henry M. Robert, an engineer who was irritated by the conflict that characterized many of the meetings he attended. *Robert’s Rules of Order*, first published in 1876, explicated not only “methods of organizing and conducting the business of societies, conventions, and other deliberative assemblies,” but also such technicalities as how motions should be stated, amended, debated, postponed, voted on, and passed (Robert, 1915/1971, p. i). No less than seven pages were used to describe how the group member “obtains the

floor,” including suggestions for proper phrasings of the request, appropriate posture, and timing. More complex issues, such as the intricacies of voting, required as many as 20 pages of discussion. Robert purposely designed his rules to “restrain the individual somewhat,” for he assumed that “the right of any individual, in any community, to do what he pleases, is incompatible with the interests of the whole” (1915/1971, p. 13). As a result, his rules promote a formal, technically precise form of interaction, sometimes at the expense of openness, vivacity, and directness. Additionally, the rules emphasize the use of voting procedures, rather than discussion to consensus, to resolve differences.

Liking and Disliking: Personal Conflicts

Beth Doll and her colleagues (2003) studied conflict at recess—the period of relatively unsupervised interaction that many schoolchildren consider to be an oasis of play in the otherwise work-filled school day. They discovered that many conflicts stemmed from disagreements and power struggles, as children argued about the rules of games, what is fair and what is not, and who gets to make decisions. But the most intense conflicts were personal. Children who disliked each other got into fights. Children who had irritating personal habits were routinely excluded by others. Children in one clique were mean to children in other cliques and to those who were excluded from all cliques. When children who said they had a rotten time at recess were asked why, in most cases they explained “I had to play alone” and, “Other kids would not let me join in” (Doll, Murphy, & Song, 2003).

Adults do not always play well together either. **Personal conflicts**, also called *affective conflict* (Guetzkow & Gyr, 1954), *personality conflicts* (Wal & Nolan, 1987), *emotional conflicts* (Jehn, 1995), or

process conflict (or procedural conflict) Disagreement over the methods the group should use to complete its basic tasks.

personal conflict Interpersonal discord that occurs when group members dislike one another.

relationship conflicts (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003), are rooted in individuals' antipathies for other group members. Personal likes and dislikes do not always translate into group conflict, but people often mention their disaffection for another group member when they air their complaints about their groups (Alicke et al., 1992). Morrill's (1995) study of high-level corporate executives, for example, revealed both task and power conflicts, but more than 40% of their disputes were rooted in "individual enmity between the principals without specific reference to other issues." Disputants questioned each others' moral values, the way they treated their spouses, and their politics. They complained about the way their adversaries acted at meetings, the way they dressed at work and at social gatherings, their hobbies and recreational pursuits, and their personality traits. They just did not like each other very much (Morrill, 1995, p. 69).

Just as any factor that creates a positive bond between people can increase a group's cohesion, so any factor that creates disaffection can increase conflict. In many cases, people explain their conflicts by blaming the other person's negative personal qualities, such as moodiness, compulsivity, incompetence, communication difficulties, and sloppiness (Kelley, 1979). People usually dislike others who evaluate them negatively, so criticism—even when deserved—can generate conflict (Ilgen, Mitchell, & Fredrickson, 1981). Group members who treat others unfairly or impolitely engender more conflict than those who behave politely (Ohbuchi, Chiba, & Fukushima, 1996). People who have agreeable personalities are usually better liked by others, and they also exert a calming influence on their groups. In a study of dyads that included people who were either high or low in agreeableness, dyads with two highly agreeable individuals displayed the least conflict, whereas dyads that contained two individuals with low agreeableness displayed the most conflict (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell, & Hair, 1996). Agreeable people also responded more negatively to conflict overall. When people described their day-to-day activities and their daily moods, they reported feeling unhappy, tense, irritated, and anxious on days when

they experienced conflicts—especially if they were by nature agreeable people (Suls, Martin, & David, 1998). Because, as Chapter 4 explained, similarity usually triggers attraction and dissimilarity disliking, diverse groups must deal with conflict more frequently than more homogenous ones (see Focus 13.3).

CONFRONTATION AND ESCALATION

Early in 1985, Sculley and Jobs began moving toward a showdown, pushed into conflict by their incompatibilities, their marked differences of opinion about the company, the competitive nature of their interdependence, and their refusal to take less than they felt was their due. They tried to quell the tension, but by spring, the men were trapped in an escalating conflict.

Conflicts *escalate*. Although the parties to the conflict may hope to reach a solution to their dispute quickly, a host of psychological and interpersonal factors can frustrate their attempts to control the conflict. As Sculley continued to argue with Jobs, he became more committed to his own position, and his view of Jobs and his position became biased. Sculley used stronger influence tactics, and soon other members of Apple were drawn into the fray. All these factors fed the conflict, changing it from a disagreement to a full-fledged corporate war.

Uncertainty → Commitment

As conflicts escalate, group members' doubts and uncertainties are replaced by a firm commitment to their position. Sculley, for example, became more certain that his insights were correct, and his disagreement with Jobs only increased his commitment to them (Staw & Ross, 1987). When people try to persuade others, they search out supporting arguments. If this elaboration process yields further consistent information, they become even more committed to their initial position. People

Focus 13.3 Which Is Worse: Conflict with a Friend or with a Foe?

Secrets are divulged when friends fight.

—Hindu proverb

People prefer to work in cohesive groups that are free from conflict: where members are not only linked by their communal tasks but also strong relational bonds of friendship. But what happens when conflict erupts in these more personally unified groups? To disagree with a colleague whom you respect but do not think of as a friend is one thing, but this same disagreement with a friend may be far more disruptive. Was the intensity of the dispute between Jobs and Sculley due, in part, to their friendship as much as their substantive disagreement?

Such a possibility is suggested by Heider's balance theory. As noted in Chapter 6's analysis of the stability of group structures, balance theory suggests that arguing and fighting with a friend is particularly jarring. Whereas disagreeing with someone you dislike is cognitively "harmonious"—the elements of the situation all "fit together without stress" (Heider, 1958, p. 180)—disagreeing with someone who is liked is an imbalanced state that will create psychological discomfort.

Could arguing with a friend be worse than arguing with someone who is less well liked? Sociologist Howard Taylor examined this question by arranging for male college students to discuss an issue with another student whom they liked or disliked. This student was Taylor's confederate, who unbeknownst to the group members was trained to deliberately agree or disagree on key issues. Taylor then watched the groups for evidence of conflict, including tension (nervousness, stammering, blushing, expressions of frustration, and withdrawal), tension release (giggling, joking, cheerfulness, silliness), and antagonism (anger, hostility, taunting, and defensiveness).

Figure 13.3 partly summarizes the findings. As balance theory suggests, tension was highest in the unbalanced pairs—when disagreeing people liked each other or when people who disliked each other agreed. People did not like disagreeing with friends, or agreeing with their foes. The greatest amount of antago-

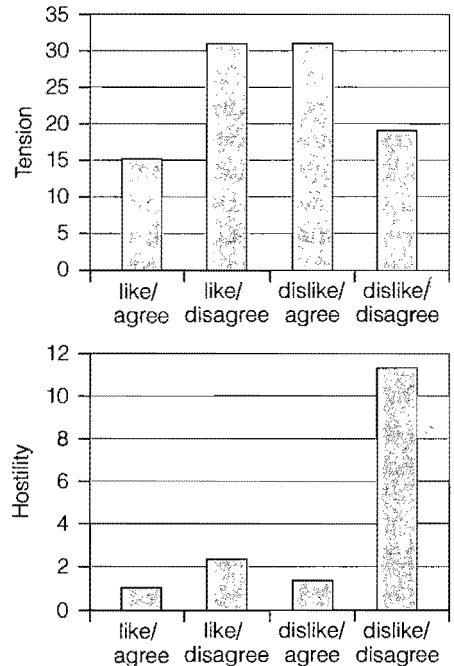


FIGURE 13.3 Levels of tension and hostility when people who disagreed or agreed on an issue and either liked or disliked each other talked for 30 minutes.

SOURCE: Taylor, 1970.

nism, however, occurred when discussants both disagreed and disliked each other. So, the predictions balance theory were only partially confirmed. The most harmonious groups were ones whose members liked each other and found themselves in agreement. However, the least harmonious groups were balanced but by negative rather than positive forces: members disliked each other and they disagreed. Taylor (1971) concluded that such groups would likely not long endure outside the confines of the laboratory.

rationalize their choices once they have made them: They seek out information that supports their views, they reject information that conflicts with their stance, and they become entrenched in their

original position (Ross & Ward, 1995). More people feel that once they commit to a position publicly, they must stick with it. They may realize that they are wrong, but to save face, they con-

to argue against their opponents (Wilson, 1992). Finally, if other group members argue too strongly, *reactance* may set in. As noted in Chapter 8, when reactance occurs, group members become even more committed to their position (Brehm & Brehm, 1981; Curhan, Neale, & Ross, 2004).

The *dollar auction* illustrates the impact of commitment on conflict. Members bid for \$1, but one special rule is added. The highest bidder gets to keep the dollar bill, but the second highest bidder gets no money *and* must pay the amount he or she bid. Bids flow slowly at first, but soon the offers climb over 50 cents toward the \$1 mark. As the stakes increase, however, quitting becomes costly. If a bidder who offers 50 cents for the \$1 is bested by someone offering 60 cents, the 50-cent bidder will lose 50 cents. So he or she is tempted to beat the 60-cent bid. This cycle continues upward—well beyond the value of the dollar bill in some cases. On occasion, players have spent as much as \$20 for the \$1 (Teger, 1980).

Perception → Misperception

Individuals' reactions during conflict are shaped in fundamental ways by their perception of the situation and the people in that situation. Group members' inferences about each others' strengths, attitudes, values, and other personal qualities provide the basis for mutual understanding, but during conflict these perceptions tend to be so distorted that they inflame rather than smooth conflict (Thompson & Nadler, 2000).

Misattribution Sometimes group members settle on explanations that sustain and enhance members' interpersonal relations. Jobs, in trying to explain Sculley's actions, may have assumed Sculley was under pressure from the board, he was unaccustomed to the demands of running a high-tech firm, or that he was dealing with the stress of his relocation. But frequently, people explain their conflicts in ways that make the problem worse. In that case, Jobs would think that Sculley's actions were caused by his personal qualities, such as

incompetence, belligerence, argumentativeness, greed, or selfishness. Jobs might also believe that Sculley was deliberately trying to harm him, and that Sculley therefore deserved to be blamed and punished (Fincham & Bradbury, 1992, 1993). In short, Jobs would fall prey to the *fundamental attribution error* (FAE) and assume that Sculley's behavior was caused by personal (dispositional) rather than situational (environmental) factors (Ross, 1977). If the conflict continued, he may have eventually decided it was an intractable one. People expect intractable conflicts to be prolonged, intense, and very hard to resolve (Bar-Tal, 2007).

Misperceiving Motivations When conflict occurs in a group, members begin to wonder about one another's motivations. "Why," Steve Jobs may have wondered, "is Sculley not supporting my work with the Mac? He must know how important this project is to the company, so why is he not giving it the attention it deserves?"

During conflict members often become distrustful of one another, wondering if their once cooperative motivations have been replaced by competitive ones. This loss of trust is one of the primary reasons why people, when they begin to compete with one another, have difficulty returning to a cooperative relationship. Researchers examined just this process by pairing people playing a PDG-like game with partners who used one of four possible strategies described earlier: competition, cooperation, individualism, and altruism. When later asked to describe their partners' motives, the players recognized when they were playing with an individualist or a competitor, but they had more trouble accurately perceiving cooperation and altruism (Maki, Thorngate, & McClintock, 1979).

People with competitive SVOs are the most inaccurate in their perceptions of cooperation. When cooperators play the PDG with other cooperators, their perceptions of their partner's strategy are inaccurate only 6% of the time. When competitors play the PDG with cooperators, however, they misinterpret their partner's strategy 47% of

the time, mistakenly believing that the cooperators are competing (Kelley & Stahelski, 1970a, 1970b, 1970c; Sattler & Kerr, 1991). Competitors are also biased in their search for information, for they are more likely to seek out information that confirms their suspicions—"I am dealing with a competitive person"—rather than information that might indicate the others are attempting to cooperate (Van Kleef & De Dreu, 2002). Competitors also tend to deliberately misrepresent their intentions, sometimes claiming to be more cooperatively intentioned than they actually are (Steinel & De Dreu, 2004).

Soft Tactics → Hard Tactics

People can influence other people in dozens of different ways; they can promise, reward, threaten, punish, bully, discuss, instruct, negotiate, manipulate, supplicate, ingratiate, and so on. Some of these tactics are harsher than others. Threats, punishment, and bullying are all hard, contentious tactics because they are direct, nonrational, and unilateral. People use softer tactics at the outset of a conflict, but as the conflict escalates, they shift to stronger and stronger tactics. Sculley gradually shifted from relatively mild methods of influence (discussion,

negotiation) to stronger tactics (threats). Eventually, he demoted Jobs (Carnevale & Pruitt, 1992).

One team of researchers studied this escalation process by creating a simulated birthday card factory where people were paid a small amount for each card they manufactured using paper, colored markers, and ribbons. The work went well until one of the group members, a confederate of the researchers, began acting selfishly by hoarding materials that the other members needed. As the hour wore on, it became clear that this person was going to make far more money than everyone else, and the group became more and more frustrated. It responded by using stronger and more contentious influence tactics. As Table 13.1 indicates, the group tried to solve the problem initially with statements and requests. When those methods failed, they shifted to demand and complaints. When those methods failed, they tried problem solving and appeals to a third party (the experimenter). In the most extreme cases, they used threats, abuse, and anger to try to influence the irritating confederate (Mikolic, Parker, & Pruitt 1997).

People who use harder tactics often overwhelm their antagonists, and such methods intensify conflicts. Morton Deutsch and Robert Krauss (1960

TABLE 13.1 Influence Methods Used in Groups Sharing Scarce Resources

Behavior	Example	Percentage Using
Requests	May I use the glue?	100.0
Statements	We need the glue.	100.0
Demands	Give me the glue, now!	88.9
Complaints	What's wrong with you? Why don't you share?	79.2
Problem solving	You can use our stapler if you share the glue.	73.6
Third party	Make them share!	45.8
Angry	I'm mad now.	41.7
Threat	Give me the glue or else.	22.2
Harassment	I'm not giving you any more ribbon until you return the glue.	16.7
Abuse	You are a selfish swine.	0.7

SOURCE: Mikolic, Parker, & Pruitt, 1997.

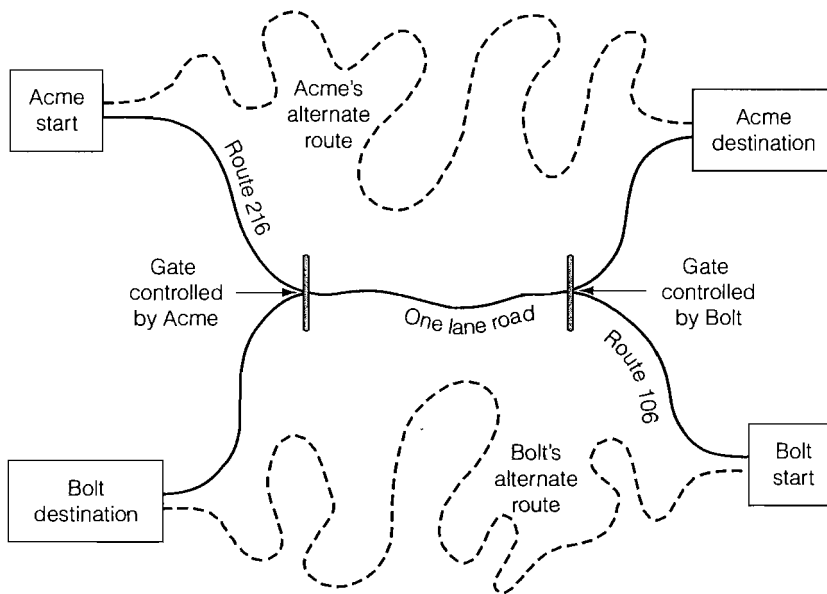


FIGURE 13.4 The Deutsch and Krauss trucking game simulation. Players took the role of either Acme or Bolt, and maneuvered their trucks along Route 216, Route 106, or the longer, alternate routes. In some cases one or both of the players were given gates that they could close to bar access by their opponent.

SOURCE: *The Resolution of Conflict: Constructive and Destructive Processes*, by M. Deutsch. Copyright 1973 by Yale University Press. Reprinted by permission.

examined this intensification process in their classic **trucking game experiment**. They asked pairs of women to role-play the owners of a trucking company. The two companies, Acme and Bolt, carried merchandise over the roads mapped in Figure 13.4. Acme and Bolt each earned 60 cents after each complete run, minus 1 cent for each second taken up by the trip.

The truck route set the stage for competition and conflict between Acme and Bolt. The shortest path from start to finish for Acme was Route 216 and for Bolt was Route 106, but these routes merged into a one-lane highway. When trucks encountered each other along this route, one player had to back up to her starting position to let the other through. Acme and Bolt could avoid this

confrontation by taking the winding alternate route, but this path took longer.

All the pairs played the same basic game, but some were provided with the power to threaten their opponents, and others were not. In the *unilateral threat* condition, Acme was told that a gate, which only she could open and close, was located at the fork in Route 216. When the gate was closed, neither truck could pass this point in the road, making control of the gate a considerable benefit to Acme. If Bolt attempted to use the main route, all Acme had to do was close the gate, forcing Bolt to back up and enabling Acme to reopen the gate and proceed quickly to her destination. Thus, when only Acme possessed the gate, Bolt's profits were greatly threatened. In the *bilateral threat* condition, both sides had the use of gates located at the ends of the one-lane section of Route 216, and in the *control* condition, no gates were given to the players.

Deutsch and Krauss's control participants soon learned to resolve the conflict over the one-lane road. Most of these pairs took turns using the

trucking game experiment A research procedure developed by Morton Deutsch and Robert Krauss in their studies of conflict between individuals who differ in their capacity to threaten and punish others.

main route, and on the average, each participant made a \$1 profit. Winnings dwindled, however, when one of the players was given a gate. Participants in the unilateral threat condition lost an average of \$2.03. Bolt's losses were twice as great as Acme's, but even Acme lost more than \$1 at the game. Conflict was even worse when both Acme and Bolt had gates. In the bilateral threat condition, both players usually took the longer route because the gates on the main route were kept closed, and their losses in this condition averaged \$4.38.

These findings convinced Deutsch and Krauss that the capacity to threaten others intensifies conflict. They also noted that establishing a communication link between adversaries does not necessarily help them to solve their dispute (Krauss & Morsella, 2000). If one party can or does threaten the other party, the threatened party will fare best if he or she cannot respond with a counterthreat (Borah, 1963; Deutsch & Lewicki, 1970; Froman & Cohen, 1969; Gallo, 1966). Equally powerful opponents, however, learn to avoid the use of their power if the fear of retaliation is high (Lawler, Ford, & Blegen, 1988).

Reciprocity → Upward Conflict Spiral

Conflict-ridden groups may seem normless, with hostility and dissatisfaction spinning out of control. Yet upward conflict spirals are in many cases sustained by the norm of reciprocity. If one group member criticizes the ideas, opinions, or characteristics of another, the victim of the attack will feel justified in counterattacking unless some situational factor legitimizes the hostility of the former (Eisenberger, et al., 2004).

If interactants followed the norm of reciprocity exactly, a mild threat would elicit a mild threat in return, and an attack would lead to a counterattack. But interactants tend to follow the norm of *rough* reciprocity—they give too much (*overmatching*) or too little (*undermatching*) in return. In one study, women playing a PDG-like game against a confederate could send notes to their opponent and penalize her by taking points from her winnings. Reciprocity guided the player's actions, for the

more often the confederate sent threats, the more often the participant sent threats; when the confederate's threats were large, the participant's threats were large; and confederates who exacted large fines triggered large fines from the participant. This reciprocity, however, was rough rather than exact. At low levels of conflict, the participants overmatched threats and punishments, and at high levels of conflict, they undermatched their threats. The overmatching that occurs initially may serve as a strong warning, whereas the undermatching at high levels of conflict may be used to send a conciliatory message (Youngs, 1986).

Few → Many

During the Jobs–Sculley conflict, Jobs tried to persuade each member of the board to side with him in the dispute. His goal was to form a powerful coalition that would block Sculley's plans and swing the vote of the board in his favor.

Coalitions exist in most groups, but when conflict erupts, group members use coalitions to shift the balance of power in their favor. The initial disagreement may involve only two group members, but as conflicts intensify, previously neutral members often join with one faction. Similarly, even when members initially express many different views, with time, these multiparty conflicts are reduced to two-party blocs through coalition formation. Coalitions can even link rivals who decide to join forces temporarily to achieve a specific outcome (a mixed-motive situation). Although allies may wish to compete with one another, no single individual has enough power to succeed alone. Hence, while the coalition exists, the competitive motive must be stifled (Komorita & Parks, 1994).

Coalitions contribute to conflicts because they draw more members of the group into the fray. Coalitions are often viewed as contentious, heavy-handed influence tactics because individuals in the coalition work not only to ensure their own outcomes but also to worsen the outcomes of non-coalition members. Coalitions form *with* people and *against* other people. In business settings, for example, the dominant coalition can control the

organization, yet it works outside the bounds of the formal group structure. Those who are excluded from a coalition react with hostility to the coalition members and seek to regain power by forming their own coalitions. Thus, coalitions must be constantly maintained through strategic bargaining and negotiation (Mannix, 1993; Murnighan, 1986; Stevenson, Pearce, & Porter, 1985).

Irritation → Anger

Few people can remain calm and collected in a conflict. When disputes arise, tempers flare, and this increase in negative emotions exacerbates the initial conflict. Most people, when asked to talk about a time when they became angry, said that they usually lost their temper when arguing with people they knew rather than with strangers. Many admitted that their anger increased the negativity of the conflict; 49% became verbally abusive when they were angry, and 10% said they became physically aggressive (Averill, 1983). Participants in another study reported physically attacking someone or something, losing emotional control, or imagining violence against someone else when they were angry (Shaver et al., 1987). Even when group members began by discussing their points calmly and dispassionately, as they became locked into their positions, emotional expression begins to replace logical discussion (De Dreu et al., 2007). Unfortunately, all manner of negative behaviors, including the rejection of concessions, the tendering of unworkable initial offers, and the use of contentious influence strategies, increase as members' affect becomes more negative (Pillutla & Murnighan, 1996; Van Kleef, De Dreu, & Manstead, 2004). Anger is also a contagious emotion in groups (Kelly, 2001). Group members, when negotiating with someone who has become angry, tend to become angry themselves (Van Kleef et al., 2004).

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

In one way or another, conflicts subside. Even when members are committed to their own viewpoints, high levels of tension cannot be maintained

indefinitely. Disputants may regain control of their tempers and break the upward conflict spiral. The group may fissure, splitting into two or more subgroups whose members are more compatible. One member may leave the group, as was the result in the Jobs–Sculley dispute. In time, group hostility abates.

Commitment → Negotiation

Just as conflicts escalate when group members become firmly committed to a position and will not budge, conflicts de-escalate when group members are willing to negotiate with others to reach a solution that benefits all parties. **Negotiation** is a reciprocal communication process whereby two or more parties to a dispute examine specific issues, explain their positions, and exchange offers and counteroffers. Negotiation sometimes amounts to little more than simple bargaining or mutual compromise. In such *distributive negotiations*, both parties retain their competitive orientation and take turns making small concessions until some equally dissatisfying middle ground is reached. Hagglings and bartering ("I'll give you \$20 for it, and not a penny more!") illustrate this form of negotiation (Lewicki, Saunders, & Barry, 2006).

Integrative negotiation, in contrast, is a collaborative conflict resolution method (Rubin, 1994). Such negotiators are principled rather than competitive, to use the terminology of the Harvard Negotiation Project. Harvard researchers, after studying how people solve problems through negotiation, identified three basic kinds of negotiators—soft, hard, and principled (see Table 13.2). *Soft bargainers* see negotiation as too close to competition, so they choose a gentle style of negotiation. They make offers that are not in their best interests, they yield to others' demands, they avoid any

Negotiation A reciprocal communication process whereby two or more parties to a dispute examine specific issues, explain their positions, and exchange offers and counteroffers to reach agreement or achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

TABLE 13.2 Comparisons between the Three Approaches to Negotiation

Element	Soft Negotiation	Hard Negotiation	Principled Negotiation
Perception of others	Friends	Adversaries	Problem solvers
Goals	Agreement	Victory	A wise outcome reached efficiently and amicably
Concessions	Make concessions to cultivate the relationship	Demand concessions as a condition of the relationship	Separate the people from the problem
People vs. problems	Be soft on the people and the problem	Be hard on the problem and the people	Be soft on the people, hard on the problem
Trust	Trust others	Distrust others	Proceed independently of trust
Positions	Change your position easily	Dig into your position	Focus on interests, not positions
Negotiation	Make offers	Make threats	Explore interests
Bottom line	Disclose your bottom line	Mislead as to your bottom line	Avoid having a bottom line
Losses and gains	Accept one-sided losses to reach agreement	Demand one-sided gains as a price of agreement	Invent options for mutual gains
Search	Search for a single answer—the one they will accept	Search for a single answer—the one you will accept	Develop multiple options to choose from; decide later
Criteria	Insist on agreement	Insist on your position	Insist on using objective criteria
Contest of will	Avoid a contest of wills	Win the contest of wills	Reach a result based on standards, independent of will
Pressure	Yield to pressure	Apply pressure	Reason and be open to reason; yield to principle, not pressure

SOURCE: Adapted from Fisher & Ury, 1981.

confrontation, and they maintain good relations with fellow negotiators. *Hard bargainers*, in contrast, use tough, competitive tactics during negotiations. They begin by taking an extreme position on the issue, and then they make small concessions only grudgingly. The hard bargainer uses contentious strategies of influence and says such things as "Take it or leave it," "This is my final offer," "This point is not open to negotiation," "My hands are tied," and "I'll see you in court" (Fisher, 1983).

Principled negotiators, meanwhile, seek integrative solutions by sidestepping commitment to specific positions. Instead of risking entrapment, principled negotiators focus on the problem rather

than the intentions, motives, and needs of the people involved. Positional bargaining, they conclude, is too dangerous:

When negotiators bargain over positions, they tend to lock themselves into those positions. The more you clarify your position and defend it against attack, the more committed you become to it. The more you try to convince the other side of the impossibility of changing your opening position, the more difficult it becomes to do so. Your ego becomes identified with your position. (Fisher & Ury, 1981, p. 5)

The Harvard Negotiation Project recommends that negotiators explore a number of alternatives to the problems they face. During this phase, the negotiation is transformed into a group problem-solving session, with the different parties working together in search of creative solutions and new information that the group can use to evaluate these alternatives. Principled negotiators base their choice on objective criteria rather than on power, pressure, self-interest, or an arbitrary decisional procedure. Such criteria can be drawn from moral standards, principles of fairness, objective indexes of market value, professional standards, tradition, and so on, but they should be recognized as fair by all parties (Kolb & Williams, 2003).

Misperception → Understanding

Many conflicts are based on misperceptions. Group members often assume that others are competing with them, when in fact those other people only wish to cooperate. Members think that people who criticize their ideas are criticizing them personally. Members do not trust other people because they are convinced that others' motives are selfish ones. Group members assume that they have incompatible goals when they do not (Simpson, 2007).

Group members must undo these perceptual misunderstandings by actively communicating information about their motives and goals through discussion. In one study, group members were given the opportunity to exchange information about their interests and goals, yet only about 20% did. Those who did, however, were more likely to discover shared goals and were able to reach solutions that benefited both parties to the conflict (Thompson, 1991). Other studies have suggested that conflict declines when group members communicate their intentions in specific terms, make explicit references to trust, cooperation, and fairness, and build a shared ingroup identity (Harinck, 2004; Weingart & Olekalns, 2004).

Communication is no cure-all for conflict, however. Group members can exchange information by communicating, but they can also create gross misunderstandings and deceptions. Communication

offers group members the means to establish trust and commitment, but it can also exacerbate conflict if members verbalize feelings of hatred, disgust, or annoyance. For example, when Deutsch and Krauss (1960) let participants in their trucking game experiment communicate with each other, messages typically emphasized threats and did little to reduce conflict (Deutsch, 1973). Communication is detrimental if these initial messages are inconsistent, hostile, and contentious (McClintock, Stech, & Keil, 1983). Communication can be beneficial, however, if interactants use it to create cooperative norms, if it increases trust among participants, and if it generates increased cohesion and unity in the group (Messick & Brewer, 1983).

Hard Tactics → Cooperative Tactics

Group members cope with conflict in different ways. Some ignore the problem. Others discuss the problem, sometimes dispassionately and rationally, sometimes angrily and loudly. Still others to push their solution onto others, no matter what the others may want. Some actually resort to physical violence (Sternberg & Dobson, 1987). Some of these tactics escalate conflicts, but others are reliably associated with reduced hostility.

Dual Concerns As with social values orientations, variations in methods of dealing with conflict can be organized in terms of two essential themes: concern for self and concern for the other person. According to the **dual concern model** of conflict resolution, some strategies aim to maximize one's own outcomes; others—such as overlooking a problem until it subsides—de-emphasize proself goals. Some conflict resolution strategies are also more other-focused. Yielding, for example, is prosocial, whereas contending and forcing are less prosocial (Pruitt, 1983; Sheppard, 1983; Thomas, 1992; van de Vliert & Janssen, 2001).

dual concern model A conceptual perspective on methods of dealing with conflict that assumes avoiding, yielding, fighting, and cooperating differ along two basic dimensions: concern for self and concern for other.

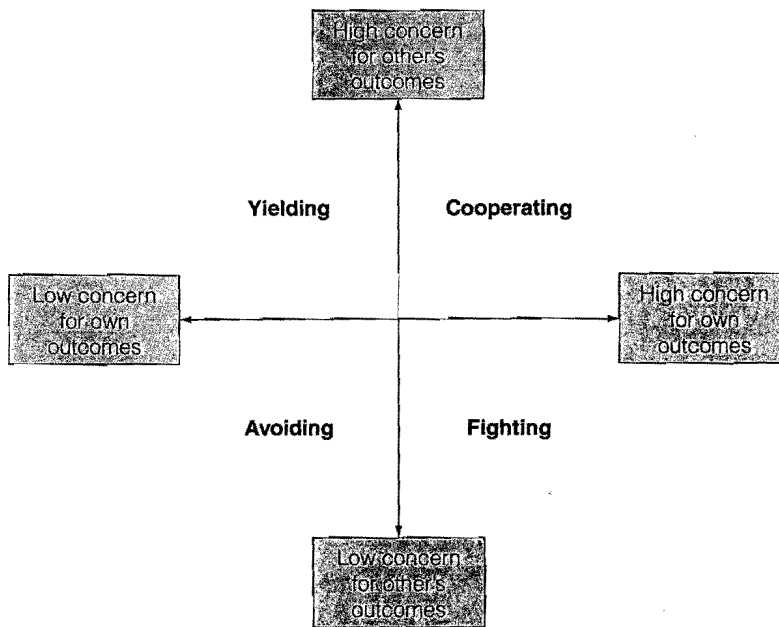


FIGURE 13.5 The dual concern model of conflict resolution. Avoiding, yielding, cooperating, and fighting, as means of dealing with conflict, differ in the degree to which they are based on concern for oneself and concern for the other person.

When both concern for self and concern for other are taken into account, the dual concern model identifies the four core conflict resolution modes shown in Figure 13.5.

- **Avoiding:** Inaction is a passive means of dealing with disputes. Those who avoid conflicts adopt a “wait and see” attitude, hoping that problems will solve themselves. Avoiders often tolerate conflicts, allowing them to simmer without doing anything to minimize them. Rather than openly discussing disagreements, people who rely on avoidance change the subject, skip meetings, or even leave the group altogether (Bayazit & Mannix, 2003). Sometimes they simply agree to disagree (a *modus vivendi*).
- **Yielding:** Accommodation is a passive but prosocial approach to conflict. People solve both large and small conflicts by giving in to the demands of others. Sometimes, they yield because they realize that their position is in error, so they agree with the viewpoint adopted by others. In other cases, however, they may withdraw their demands without really being convinced that the other side is correct, but—for the sake of group unity or in the interest of time—they withdraw all complaints. Thus, yielding can reflect either genuine conversion or superficial compliance.
- **Fighting:** Contending is an active, prosocial means of dealing with conflict that involves forcing others to accept one’s view. Those who use this strategy tend to see conflict as a win–lose situation and so use competitive, powerful tactics to intimidate others. Fighting (*forcing, dominating, or contending*) can take many forms, including authoritative mandate, challenges, arguing, insults, accusations, complaining, vengeance, and even physical violence (Morrill, 1995). These conflict resolution methods are all contentious ones because they involve imposing one’s solution on the other party.
- **Cooperating:** Cooperation is an active, prosocial, and prosocial approach to conflict resolution. Cooperating people identify the issues underlying the dispute and then work together to identify a solution that is satisfying to both

sides. This orientation, which is also described as collaboration, problem solving, or a win-win orientation, entreats both sides in the dispute to consider their opponent's outcomes as well as their own.

Some theorists consider *conciliation* to be a fifth distinct way to resolve conflicts, but trying to win over others by accepting some of their demands can also be thought of as either yielding or cooperating (van de Vliert & Euwema, 1994).

Cooperation and Conflict When conflict erupts, group members can use any or all of the basic modes of conflict resolution shown in Figure 13.5, but most conflict-management experts recommend cooperation above all others: "work things out," "put your cards on the table," and "air out differences," they suggest. This advice assumes that avoidance, fighting, and yielding are only temporary solutions, for they quell conflicts at the surface without considering the source. Avoiding and fighting are generally considered to be negative methods, for they tend to intensify conflicts (Sternberg & Dobson, 1987) and they are viewed as more disagreeable (Jarboe & Witteman, 1996; van de Vliert & Euwema, 1994). The more positive, prosocial methods, yielding and cooperation, mitigate conflict and are viewed as more agreeable. They are more likely to involve more of the members in the solution, and hence they tend to increase unity.

Groups may respond well to cooperation when it is used to deal with task conflicts, but what if the problems stem from personal conflicts—differences in personality, values, lifestyles, likes, and dislikes? Research conducted by Carsten De Dreu and his colleagues suggests that, in such cases, collaborative approaches may aggravate the group conflict more than they mollify it (e.g., De Dreu, 1997; De Dreu & Van Vianne, 2001; De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). In one field study, members of semi-autonomous teams working on complex, nonroutine tasks were asked about the ways they handled conflicts in their teams. All these teams included both men and women, and they ranged in size from 4 to 13 members. Members

of these teams typically interacted with each other in face-to-face settings at least once a week in planning sessions, and they reported interacting with each other informally nearly every day. As expected, negative methods of dealing with conflicts, such as arguing and forcing one's views onto others, were associated with negative team functioning. In these groups, however, collaborative methods of conflict resolution (e.g., "discussing the issues," "cooperating to better understand others' views," "settling problems through give and take") were also negatively correlated with team functioning. Only avoiding responses, such as "avoiding the issues," "acting as if nothing has happened," and "hushing up the quarrel" were associated with increases in group adjustment to the conflict. Apparently, the consistent use of collaboration to deal with intractable differences or petty disagreements distracted the groups from the achievement of their task-related goals (De Dreu & Van Vianne, 2001).

These findings suggest that groups may wish to heed the advice of one member of a successful musical quartet who, when asked how his group managed conflicts, explained, "We have a little saying in quartets—either we play or we fight" (Murnighan & Conlon, 1991, pp. 177–178). As Focus 13.4 suggests, cooperative, prosocial solutions work in many cases, but sometimes groups must ignore the conflict and focus, instead, on the work to be done.

Upward → Downward Conflict Spirals

Consistent cooperation among people over a long period generally increases mutual trust. But when group members continually compete with each other, mutual trust becomes much more elusive (Haas & Deseran, 1981). When people cannot trust one another, they compete simply to defend their own best interests (Lindsfold, 1978).

How can the upward spiral of competition and distrust, once initiated, be reversed? Robert Axelrod (1984) explored this question by comparing a number of strategies in simulated competitions. After studying dozens of different strategies, ranging from always competing with a competitor to always cooperating with one, the most effective competition

Focus 13.4 Is Conflict Managed or Resolved?

Every aspect of organizational life that creates order and coordination of effort must overcome other tendencies to action, and in that fact lies the potentiality for conflict.

—Daniel Katz and Robert Kahn (1978, p. 617).

Conflict is rooted in some basic problems that people face when they must join together in groups. Although people may hope that conflicts can be *resolved* completely so that the group need never face unpleasant disagreements or disruptions, in reality, conflict can only be *managed*: controlled by the group and its members so that its harmful effects are minimized and its beneficial consequences are maximized.

Just as individuals develop certain styles of dealing with conflict—some people are competitive in their orientation, whereas others are more likely to avoid conflicts—groups also develop their own set of typical practices for managing conflict (Gelfand, Leslie, & Keller, 2008). Kristin Behfar and her colleagues (2008) examined the development of these group-level styles of conflict management—these “conflict cultures”—in a detailed quantitative analysis of 57 autonomous work teams. These groups all worked with the same resources, on the same types of projects, and with the same time constraints. Over time, some of the groups became more capable in the task realm, but others did not. Some, too, enjoyed increasingly positive relations among members, whereas others exhibited declines in the quality of their cohesion.

Behfar’s group discovered that these changes in task success and interpersonal bonds were related to the group’s methods of dealing with conflict. All of the groups experienced conflicts as their work progressed, but they dealt with these problems in different ways. The 21 best teams proactively forecasted possible problems before they happened.

They developed schedules and assigned responsibilities carefully, in unemotional, fact-driven discussion to reach consensus. They did not report dealing with relationship conflict, because they did not have any. The second set of 11 high-performance groups had little cohesiveness, but these groups all expressly discuss the importance of social connections. These groups resolved task and process conflicts by voting. The 14 worst teams, who exhibited both declining performance and interpersonal dysfunction, also used discussion, but the discussion never resolved their problems. These groups reported trying to deal with the problems openly, but members would just give in to more dominant members because they grew tired of arguing. They dealt with their performance problem by rotating duties from one member to another, but they never analyzed the effectiveness of this technique.

These findings suggest that the impact of conflict on a group cannot be predicted until the group’s conflict culture is known. Groups that take proactive steps to prevent conflict from arising in the first place tend to be more satisfying to members than those that only respond—and respond poorly at that—to conflicts when they arise. Successful groups also tended to adopt pluralistic strategies for dealing with conflict, rather than particularistic ones. They resolved conflict using methods that applied to the group as a whole, such as developing rules, standardizing procedures, and assigning tasks to members based on skill and expertise rather than status. Less successful groups, in contrast, used strategies that focused on specific individuals’ complaints or the group’s concerns about one or two members. In these groups, the “squeaky wheel would get the grease,” but the repair was not sufficient to restore the group to health.

reverser to emerge was a strategy called **tit for tat** (TFT). TFT begins with cooperation. If the other party cooperates, too, then cooperation continues. But if the other party competes, then TFT competes

as well. Each action by the other person is counted with the matching response—cooperation for cooperation, competition for competition.

The TFT, strategem, is said to be nice, provokable, clear, and forgiving. It is *nice* because it begins with cooperation and only defects follow if the other party competes. It is *provokable* in the sense that it immediately retaliates against individuals who compete, and it is *clear* because people playing against someone using this strategy quickly recognize

tit for tat (TFT) A bargaining strategy that begins with cooperation, but then imitates the other person’s choice so that cooperation is met with cooperation and competition with competition.

contingencies. It is *forgiving*, however, in that it immediately reciprocates cooperation should the competitor respond cooperatively.

TFT is also a *reciprocal* strategy, for it fights fire with fire and rewards kindness in kind. Individuals who follow a tit-for-tat strategy are viewed as "tough but fair"; those who cooperate with a competitor are viewed as weak, and those who consistently compete are considered unfair (McGillicuddy, Pruitt, & Syna, 1984). Because the effectiveness of TFT as a conflict reduction method is based on its provocability; any delay in responding to cooperation reduces the effectiveness of TFT. If a group member competes, and this defection is not countered quickly with competition, TFT is less effective (Komorita, Hilty, & Parks, 1991). TFT also loses some of its strength in "noisy" interactions, when behaviors cannot be clearly classified as either competitive or cooperative (Van Lange, Ouwerkerk, & Tazelaar, 2002; Wu & Axelrod, 1995). It is less effective in larger groups, although this decline is minimized if individual members believe that a substantial subgroup within the total group is basing its choices on the TFT strategy (Komorita, Parks, & Hulbert, 1992; Parks & Komorita, 1997).

Many → Few

Conflicts intensify when others take sides, but they shrink when third-party **mediators** help group members reach a mutually agreeable solution to their dispute (Kressel, 2000). Although uninvolved group members may wish to stand back and let the disputants "battle it out," impasses, unflagging conflict escalation, or the combatants' entreaties may cause other group members or outside parties to help by:

- creating opportunities for both sides to express themselves while controlling contentiousness
- improving communication between the disputants by summarizing points, asking for clarification, and so on

mediator One who intervenes between two persons who are experiencing conflict, with a view to reconciling them.

- helping disputants save face by framing the acceptance of concessions in positive ways and by taking the blame for these concessions
- formulating and offering proposals for alternative solutions that both parties find acceptable
- manipulating aspects of the meeting, including its location, seating, formality of communication, time constraints, attendees, and agenda
- guiding the disputants through a process of integrative problem solving

However, if the disputants want to resolve the conflict on their own terms, third-party interventions are considered an unwanted intrusion (Carnevale, 1986a, 1986b; Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Raiffa, 1983; Rubin, 1980, 1986).

Go-betweens, facilitators, diplomats, advisers, judges, and other kinds of mediators vary considerably in terms of their power to control others' outcomes (LaTour, 1978; LaTour et al., 1976). In an *inquisitorial procedure*, the mediator questions the two parties and then hands down a verdict that the two parties must accept. In *arbitration*, the disputants present their arguments to the mediator, who then bases his or her decision on the information they provide. In a *moot*, the disputants and the mediator openly and informally discuss problems and solutions, but the mediator can make no binding decisions. Satisfaction with a mediator depends on how well the intermediary fulfills these functions and also on the intensity of the conflict. Mediation techniques such as arbitration are effective when the conflict is subdued, but they may not work when conflict intensity is high. Overall, most people prefer arbitration, followed by moot, mediation, and inquisitorial procedures (LaTour et al., 1976; Ross, Brantmeier, & Ciriacks, 2002; Ross & Conlon, 2000).

Anger → Composure

Just as negative emotions encourage conflicts, positive affective responses increase concession making, creative problem solving, cooperation, and the use of noncontentious bargaining strategies (Forgas, 1998; Van Kleef et al., 2004). Hence, when tempers flare, the group should encourage members to regain

control over their emotions. “Count to ten,” calling a “time-out,” or expressing concerns in a written, carefully edited, letter or e-mail are simple but effective recommendations for controlling conflict, as is the introduction of humor into the group discussion (Mischel & DeSmet, 2000). Apologies, too, are effective means of reducing anger. When people are informed about mitigating causes—background factors that indicate that the insult is unintentional or unimportant—conflict is reduced (Betancourt & Blair, 1992; Ferguson & Rule, 1983). Groups can also control anger by developing norms that explicitly or implicitly prohibit shows of strong, negative emotion or by holding meetings on controversial topics online (Yang & Mossholder, 2004).

Conflict versus Conflict Management

Conflict is a natural consequence of joining a group. Groups bind their members and their members’ outcomes together, and this interdependence can lead to conflict when members’ qualities, ideas, goals, motivations, and outlooks clash. Conflict is also an undeniably powerful process in groups. In the case of Apple, the dispute between Jobs and Sculley was resolved, but not without a considerable investment of time, resources, and energy. Two men who were once friends parted as enemies. A company that once profited from the leadership of two visionary thinkers lost one of them to competitors. Before the conflict, Apple was an unconventional, risk-taking trendsetter. After the conflict, the company focused on costs, increasing sales, and turning a profit. Conflict stimulates change—both positive and negative.

Did Apple gain from the conflict, or did it suffer a setback as its top executives fought for power

and control? Conflict, many cases, brings with it dissent, discord, disagreement, tension, hostility, and abuse. It undermines satisfactions, engenders negative emotions, disrupts performance, and can even trigger violence. When Carsten De Dreu and Laurie Weingart (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of dozens of studies of conflict in groups, they discovered that, in study after study, conflict undermined satisfaction and lowered performance. Nor did it matter if the difficulties stemmed from personal conflicts (disruptions of interpersonal bonds between members) or from substantive, task conflicts. Conflict undermined performance and satisfaction.

Is conflict always harmful—a pernicious process that should be avoided? This question remains open to debate, but it may be that the problem is not conflict, per se, but mismanaged conflict. As noted in Chapter 5 many groups pass through a period of conflict as they mature. This conflict phase, so long as it is managed well, expands the range of options, generates new alternatives, and enhances the group’s unity by making explicit any latent hostilities and tensions. Conflict can make a group’s goals more explicit and help members understand their role in the group. It may force the members to examine, more carefully, their assumptions and expectations, and may help the group focus on its strengths and diagnose its weaknesses. A group without conflict may be working so perfectly that no one can identify any improvements, but more likely it is a group that is boring and uninvolving for its members. Conflict, then, is not the culprit. It is poor management of the conflicts that inevitably arise in groups that leads to problems (Bormann, 1975; Jehn, 1997; Jehn & Bendersky, 2003).

SUMMARY IN OUTLINE

What is conflict?

1. When *conflict* occurs in a group, the actions or beliefs of one or more members of the group are unacceptable to and resisted by one or more of the other members.
2. *Intergroup conflict* involves two or more groups, and *intragroup conflict* occurs within a group.
3. Conflict follows a cycle from conflict escalation to resolution.

What are the sources of conflict in groups?

1. Many group and individual factors conspire to create conflict in a group, but the most common sources are competition, conflicts over the distribution of resources, power struggles, decisional conflicts, and personal conflicts.
2. Deutsch's early theorizing suggests that *independence* and *cooperation* lower the likelihood of conflict, whereas competition tends to increase conflict by pitting members against one another.
 - *Mixed-motive situations*, like the *prisoner's dilemma game* (PDG), stimulate conflict because they tempt individuals to compete rather than cooperate. Individuals tend to compete less in the PDG if they play repeatedly against the same partner.
 - *Behavioral assimilation* is caused by *reciprocity*; competition sparks competition and cooperation (to a lesser extent) provokes cooperation.
 - Individuals differ in their basic orientation towards conflict. Those with a *competitive social values orientation* (SVO) are more likely to compete than are those with cooperative, individualistic, or altruistic orientations, even if they think that others will be acting in a cooperative fashion.
 - Men and women are equally competitive, although both sexes use more contentious influence methods when they are paired with a man rather than with a woman, perhaps because they anticipate more conflict.
3. *Social dilemmas* stimulate conflict by tempting members to act in their own self-interest to the detriment of the group and its goals. Disputes arise when members:
 - exploit a shared resource (a *commons dilemma* or *social trap*)
 - do not contribute their share (a *public goods dilemma*, free riding)
 - disagree on how to divide up resources (*distributive justice*) or on the procedures to follow in dividing the resources (*procedural justice*)
 - do not agree on the norms to follow when apportioning resources (e.g., equality, equity, power, responsibility, and need)
 - take more than their fair share of responsibility for an outcome (*egocentrism*), avoid blame for group failure, or take too much personal responsibility for group successes (self-serving attributions of responsibility)
4. These reactions are driven, in part, by self-interest, but group members respond negatively to perceived mistreatment because it calls into question their status and inclusion. Work by de Waal suggests that other species are sensitive to unfair distributions of resources.
5. Power struggles are common in groups as members vie for control over leadership, status, and position.
6. *Task conflict* stems from disagreements about issues that are relevant to the group's goals and outcomes. Even though such substantive conflicts help groups reach their goals, these disagreements can turn into personal, unpleasant conflicts.
7. *Process conflicts* occur when members do not agree on group strategies, policies, and methods. Groups avoid such conflicts by clarifying procedures.
8. *Personal conflict* occurs when individual members do not like one another. Doll's work finds that such conflicts are prevalent in children's groups.
 - Any factor that causes disaffection between group members (e.g., differences in attitudes, objectionable personal qualities) can increase personal conflict.
 - Balance theory predicts that group members will respond negatively when they disagree with those they like or agree with those they dislike, but as Taylor's work

confirmed, conflict is greatest when group members both disagree with and dislike each other.

Why does conflict escalate?

1. Once conflict begins, it often intensifies before it begins to abate.
2. When individuals defend their viewpoints in groups, they become more committed to their positions; doubts and uncertainties are replaced by firm commitment.
3. Conflict is exacerbated by members' tendency to misperceive others and to assume that the other party's behavior is caused by personal (dispositional) rather than situational (environmental) factors (*fundamental attribution error*).
4. As conflicts worsen, members shift from soft to hard tactics. Deutsch and Krauss studied this process in their *trucking game experiment*. Conflict between individuals escalated when each side could threaten the other.
5. Other factors that contribute to the escalation of conflict in groups include:
 - negative reciprocity, as when negative actions provoke negative reactions in others
 - the formation of coalitions that embroil formerly neutral members in the conflict
 - angry emotions that trigger expressions of anger among members.

How can group members manage their conflict?

1. In many cases, members use *negotiation* (including integrative negotiation) to identify the issues underlying the dispute and then work together to identify a solution that is satisfying to both sides.
2. The Harvard Negotiation Project maintains that principled, integrative negotiation is more effective than either soft or hard bargaining.
3. Because many conflicts are rooted in misunderstandings and misperceptions, group

members can reduce conflict by actively communicating information about their motives and goals through discussion.

4. The *dual concern model* identifies four means of dealing with conflicts—avoiding, yielding, fighting, and cooperating—that differ along two dimensions: concern for self and concern for others.
 - In some cases, cooperation is more likely to promote group unity.
 - Personal conflicts—ones that are rooted in basic differences in attitude, outlook, and so on—may not yield to cooperative negotiations. De Dreu and his colleagues suggest that the avoiding method may be the best way to cope with such conflicts.
5. Behfar and her colleagues suggest that groups develop their own approaches to dealing with conflict, and some of the so-called conflict cultures are more effective than others.
6. If a group member continues to compete, the *tit-for-tat* (TFT) strategy has been proven by Axelrod and others to be useful as a conflict resolution strategy.
7. Third-party interventions—*mediators*—can reduce conflict by imposing solutions (inquisitorial procedures and arbitration) or guiding disputants to a compromise (moot and mediation procedures).
8. Just as negative emotions encourage conflict, positive affective responses reduce conflict.

Is conflict an unavoidable evil or a necessary good?

1. Conflict is a natural consequence of joining a group and cannot be avoided completely.
2. Some evidence suggests that conflicts, when resolved successfully, promote positive group functioning, but a meta-analysis by De Dreu and Weingart suggests that conflict causes more harm than good—particularly if it is not adequately managed.