

A Look Inside Conflict: Critical Thinking for the Conflict Resolution Professional

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Immersed in conflict, interesting things happen to us as humans. Based on the work of psychologists Rubin, Pruitt, and Kim, this session explores the socio-psychological factors behind student's behaviors and reactions in conflict situations as a means of informing how we work with students on campus.

Session Roadmap

- We will cover:
 - Creation
 - Escalation
 - Stalemate
- We will not cover:
 - Settlement options or mechanisms
 - Nuances related to group conflicts
 - Conditions that discourage conflict

Where Does Conflict Come From?

- Various theories:
 - Individual/characteristic
 - Social process
 - Social structure
 - Identity

How Does Conflict Start?

Three conditions

1. Individual interests & aspirations
2. Perceived divergence of interests
3. Relative deprivation
 - Alerts you to the existence of conflict
 - Creates energy for coping mechanisms

Will Conflict Escalate?

- Perceptive Factors
 - Lens of Self
 - Lens of Other
- Situational Factors
 - Personal
 - Environmental
 - Relational
 - Communal

Which Strategy Will Be Employed?

- Avoiding
- Yielding
- Problem-Solving
- Contending

Contentious Tactics

- Ingratiation
- Gamesmanship
- Guilt trips
- Persuasive argument
- Threats
- Irrevocable commitments
- Engagement

Escalation: Structural Changes

- Tactics: light to heavy
- Size: small to large
- Issues: specific to general Goals: doing well to winning, to hurting other
- Participants: few to many

Escalation: Psychological Changes

- Attributional Bias
- Reactive Devaluation
- Deindividuation
- Dehumanization

Escalation: Perceptive Changes

- Other seen as morally deficient, dishonest, incapable, unfriendly, selfish, inhumane, or warlike
- Party seen as morally virtuous, trustworthy, able, honest

Why Do Conflicts Remain Escalated?

- Residue
- Confirmatory Mechanisms

Confirmatory Mechanisms

- Self-fulfilling prophecies
- Rationalization of behavior
- Selective perception
 - Selective evaluation of behavior
 - “Discovery” of confirming evidence
 - Attributional distortion
- Autistic hostility
- Overcommitment and entrapment

Effects of Sustained Escalation

- Easier to blame other for party's suffering
- Ambiguous actions now seen as threatening
- Inhibitions against retaliation are diminished
- Empathy is reduced
- Communication slows/stops
- Zero-sum thinking/planning

When Does Escalation Stop?

- Party Contends to Success By:
 - overwhelming other
 - taking unilateral advantage of other
- Party yields
- Party avoids
- Conflict is perceived as intolerable and as something that needs to be ended in an alternative fashion
 - STALEMATE!

Why Does Stalemate Occur?

- Failure of contentious tactics
- Exhaustion of necessary resources
- Loss of social support
- Unacceptable costs

What Happens Next?

- At first, very little...
- Reassessment of options:
 - Self-Help
 - Trial
 - Arbitration
 - Problem-Solving
 - Mediation
 - Negotiation
 - Yielding
 - Avoiding

Questions?

Comments?

Advice?

Requests?

Thank You!

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Conflict Resolution Committee Mtg.
Friday, 2:00-3:00pm - Sawgrass Room