Resolved Conflict
Conflict Resolution

The Challenge of
Figure 1.1 Conflict Resolution seen as a cyclical process

A Simplified View of Conflict Resolution

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So, why do we face such a picture of conflict resolution as a cyclical process seen as a challenge? Often, the first step in resolving conflict is to consider the underlying issues and factors that contribute to the conflict. This involves understanding the perspectives and needs of all parties involved. The potential for conflict can be minimized when all parties work towards a common goal, considering the needs and interests of each other.

Interpersonal, Organizational, or Community Conflict: Informational,
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When a conflict arises, the first step is to resolve the issue. However, if the conflict cannot be resolved immediately, it is important to understand the underlying causes and work towards a long-term solution. Communication is key in resolving conflicts, as it allows parties to express their feelings and concerns, and to listen to the perspectives of others.

Despite the importance of communication, it can be difficult to have an open and honest dialogue, especially when emotions are high. It is important to approach the conflict with empathy and understanding, and to avoid making assumptions or jumping to conclusions.

In the end, the goal of conflict resolution should be to create a win-win situation for all involved, where both parties feel heard and understood, and are able to move forward in a positive and constructive manner.
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Conflict Resolved?

to be created. Possible ways of helping students understand conflicts include providing a good background briefing of where the potential hazards might lie.

In the remainder of this chapter a brief history of the development of Western conflict resolution is presented. This history provides the reader with a better understanding of the emergence of the field, where it began and perhaps where it is headed. In Chapter 2 the popular conception of conflict handling is considered. Chapters 3 and 4 focus on theory, with Chapter 3 examining the theoretical schools which spotlight the origins of conflict. Chapter 4 provides the reader with a brief overview of some of the major theorists of conflict resolution. Chapter 5 focuses on the role that communication and language play in both assisting and inhibiting conflict resolution. Chapter 6 examines the role of history, both as a source of motivation and as an analytical tool. Chapter 7 focuses on the process of enmity. Chapter 8 considers conflict resolution processes, specifically examining the ways in which values impact upon process. Finally, Chapter 9 provides the reader with some concluding thoughts on the nature of conflict resolution.

History of Conflict Resolution

The study of conflict resolution has been profoundly influenced by a variety of factors, ranging from the founding of the UN to the authorship of such popular books as Getting to Yes. Conflict resolution has its tradition in three different areas: organizational development and management science; international relations and the peace movement; and alternative dispute resolution. Each of these three traditions influenced and directed the course of modern day conflict resolution. There have been, of course, many other sources of influence in conflict resolution, but these three represent the most consistent and powerful influences. Equally, there are many antecedents to the influences that are described below. One should not accept this brief history as being anything like complete; rather it is presented to provide the reader with a sense of where conflict resolution came from and where it is going.

The phrase conflict resolution means different things to different people, reflecting its varied historical development. Some see conflict resolution as any process by which conflicts are handled. This would include warfare, violence, management solutions, deterrence, contracts and so on. Others, however, have developed more narrowly defined meanings. Burton, for example, argues that conflicts concern only situations where human needs satisfaction is denied. Resolution of such conflicts occurs only after relationships have been re-examined and realigned.

Burton's use of the term is narrowed further when he defines disputes as concerning negotiable interests. The process of conflict resolution, one concerning non-negotiable needs, differs markedly from dispute resolution, concerning negotiable interests. The test to differentiate conflicts and disputes is in action. This intellectual debate, over the scope of conflict resolution, reflects the difficulty in knowing whose history of conflict resolution is being examined.

Conceptually, Burton views conflicts and disputes as quite separate (see Figure 1.2). However, a logical problem exists, in that one cannot know whether a negotiation failed because of intransigence or bad negotiation behaviour, or whether it was due to the existence of non-negotiable needs.

It may be preferable to view the distinction between disputes and conflicts as a continuum (Figure 1.3), in which there exists no fine distinction between disputes and conflicts, rather only a difference of degree. Disputes are generally less intense over time and have a greater degree of negotiability, whereas conflicts are more intense over time and have a lesser degree of negotiability. Unsatisfied needs are found in conflicts, whereas disputes do not possess the same level of dissatisfaction.
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She pleaded in 1925, 'As conflict – difference – is here in the world, as we cannot avoid it, we should. I think, use it. Instead of condemning it, we should set it to work for us. Why not?' (Follett, 1995). She believed that conflicts emerged from limited thinking, in which the only way to manage conflict was through compromise. Thus, in compromise, no party got what they wanted, rather only a portion of what they originally sought. She believed, on the other hand, that conflict could be constructively managed if parties thought outside expected or usual barriers. Constructively managed conflict was that which emanated from the invention of alternatives. She coined the term integration to refer to those solutions to conflict that invented solutions outside of expectation.

After Follett, however, there has been an explosion of writers who address the subject of conflict within an organization. Perhaps most notable are Robert Blake and Jane Mouton, authors of The Managerial Grid, first published in 1964. Scimecca (1991, p. 22) explains:

They pointed to five ways of dealing with conflict. The first is withdrawal. A second way is to try and smooth over the differences that are seen as the basis of the dispute. Third, one or more parties to a conflict may force a win-or-lose resolution. The fourth way is the most commonly used approach, that of compromise. These four ways, however, are problematic, in that, with the possible exception of total withdrawal, the conflict will usually reoccur. In order to resolve conflicts so that they will not reoccur ... [the authors] advocated a fifth way, the use of a problem-solving attitude.

Since the publication of The Managerial Grid, problem-solving has become common language in management theory. Further developments in organizational conflict result in a view of conflict as a useful and increasingly important tool in the maintenance of a healthy organizational life. Robert Tanner Pascale, author of Managing on the Edge, has argued that conflict can often be a positive force in organizations. He writes:

Problems [read conflicts], then, are not just hassles to be dealt with and set aside. Lurking inside each problem is a workshop on the nature of organizations and a vehicle for personal growth. This entails a shift: we need to value the process of finding the solution – juggling the inconsistencies that meaningful solutions entail. (Pascale, 1990, p. 263)

An organizational perspective on conflict is useful in any
functions

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The academic community was sharply divided between those who


International Relations and the Peace Movement

In the study of society and social sciences, a good deal of

Resolution strategies to real-life situations

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the problem concerned

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...
Before the Family Court was established, children had been addressed to problems with their parents and their... legal processes.

(1997, p. 5) 'Explain'.

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Resolutions of family law, conflict, and children's needs cannot be addressed in the current system of dispute resolution. The Family Court of Australia is responsible for matters relating to children and families. For example, the Family Court in Australia began in 1975.

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An alternative dispute resolution process is referred to as an ADR process. ADR processes are designed to provide a resolution to disputes without going to court.

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Alternative Dispute Resolution

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The court cases mentioned earlier highlight the complexities and challenges associated with conflict resolution. These cases involve issues of public interest, community impact, and institutional structures. The case law reflects a trend towards recognizing the importance of resolution processes that are fair, effective, and culturally sensitive.

The need for conflict resolution mechanisms that cater to diverse communities and contexts is evident. This requires a multidisciplinary approach encompassing legal, psychological, and cultural perspectives.

Conclusion: Trends and Currents in Conflict Resolution

The literature review reveals a growing consensus on the importance of conflict resolution in the context of community conflicts. The challenges highlighted include the need for inclusive processes, community participation, and the role of cultural and contextual factors.

The court cases and legal decisions illustrate the evolution of conflict resolution practices, emphasizing the importance of equitable and participatory processes.

References