

Aggression and conflict

What's it about?

(*Social Psychology pp. 482–525*)

Conflict is seen as the perceived incompatibility of goals, where what is wanted by one group may be against the desires of another group. **Aggression** is defined by social psychologists as a behaviour whose immediate intent is to hurt someone. There are generally two distinct categories of aggression: *instrumental aggression* and *hostile aggression*. Group norms often promote aggressive behavior rather than restraining it. Models can reduce aggression, but often also enhance it. Factors that increase the chances of aggression include emotional arousal, alcohol, and time pressure, but similarity reduces aggression.

The **realistic conflict theory** argues that intergroup hostility, conflict, and aggression arise from competition among groups for mastery of scarce but valued material resources.

The **relative deprivation theory** suggests that social comparison, not objective reality, determines how satisfied or dissatisfied people are with what they have.

Approaches to reduce aggression and conflict include minimizing or removing aggressive cues; altering perceptions; encouraging cooperation; encouraging careful interpretation and identification with others; trying to find mutually acceptable solutions; or working together toward a shared goal.

Negotiation is reciprocal communication designed to reach agreement in situations where some interests are shared, and some are in opposition.

Superordinate goals are shared goals that can be attained only if groups work cooperatively as a team.

Chapter topics

- The nature of aggression and conflict (*SP pp. 483–485*)
- Interpersonal aggression (*SP pp. 486–496*)
- Intergroup conflict (*SP pp. 497–512*)
- Reducing interpersonal and intergroup conflict and aggression (*SP pp. 513–524*)

THE NATURE OF AGGRESSION AND CONFLICT

Ask yourself

- How can aggression be explained according to evolutionary arguments?
- How can conflict be defined?
- What is aggression according to social psychologists, and what goal does it usually serve?

What you need to know

DEFINING AGGRESSION AND CONFLICT (<i>SP pp. 483–484</i>)
ORIGINS OF AGGRESSION (<i>SP p. 484</i>)
RESEARCH ON AGGRESSION(<i>SP p. 485</i>)

In the Robbers Cave experiment, Sherif and colleagues (1961) created a situation to find out how intergroup hostilities develop, and how they can be resolved.

Weblink: Learn more about the Robbers Cave experiment

www.sociallypsyched.org/item/robbers-cave-experiment

Weblink: A road trip to Robbers Cave Campground

<http://ahp.apps01.yorku.ca/?p=3444>

DEFINING AGGRESSION AND CONFLICT

(*SP pp. 483–485*)

Aggression is behavior whose immediate intent is to hurt someone. It is defined by a behavior's immediate goal, even when the ultimate goal is something else. Conflict often leads to aggression, but aggression also has other origins, for example negative emotions such as anger or frustration.

Conflict is defined as a perceived incompatibility of goals. Conflict can be acted out in various ways. The word “aggression” is used in a lot of different ways in everyday speech, but for social psychologists this term is defined by the motive of the actor.

Aggression is seen in many forms, but there are generally two distinct categories:

1. *Instrumental aggression* or aggression serving mastery needs: This is aggression used as a means to an end, to control other people, or to obtain valuable resources.
2. *Hostile aggression* is often driven by spontaneous anger resulting from insult, disrespect, or other threats to self-esteem.

These two forms of aggression show somewhat different patterns, but the line between them is not always clear.

Weblink: An example of hostile aggression in women’s soccer

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PJiRQsyrBoI>

ORIGINS OF AGGRESSION

(SP p. 484)

A popular evolutionary explanation of aggression is the “beast within” view. According to this view, “survival of the fittest” has bred aggression in human beings. It is thus “human nature” to be aggressive. Modern evolutionary psychology has a more sophisticated view. This view states that “human nature” includes a lot of psychological mechanisms and motives. Men are generally more physically and verbally aggressive than women. Aggression is just one technique *among many others* that humans use as they strive for mastery of material resources, as well as for respect from and connectedness to others.

RESEARCH ON AGGRESSION

(SP p. 485)

Studying aggression in the laboratory is difficult for ethical reasons.

So what does this mean?

Conflict is seen as the perceived incompatibility of goals, where what is wanted by one group may be against the desires of another group. **Aggression** is defined by social psychologists as a behaviour whose immediate intent is to hurt someone. Conflicts between two parties often lead to aggression. There are generally two distinct categories of aggression: *instrumental aggression* and *hostile aggression*.

An evolutionary view of aggression shows that this is one technique among many others that humans use as they strive for mastery of material resources, as well as respect and connectedness to others. Both individual thoughts and social influences affect the experience and expression of aggression.

INTERPERSONAL AGGRESSION

Ask yourself

- What triggers interpersonal aggression?
- What factors increase the likelihood of a person becoming aggressive, and what factors decrease that likelihood?
- How do norms regulate aggression?

What you need to know

WHAT CAUSES INTERPERSONAL AGGRESSION? THE ROLE OF REWARDS AND RESPECT (*SP pp. 486–496*)

- Counting rewards and costs
- Responding to threats
- The role of negative emotions
- Increasing aggression: Models and cues
- Aggressive models in the media
- Learned cues to aggression
- Deciding whether or not to aggress

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: THE GENERAL AGGRESSION MODEL (*SP pp. 496–497*)

WHAT CAUSES INTERPERSONAL AGGRESSION? THE ROLE OF REWARDS AND RESPECT

(*SP pp. 486–487*)

Aggression depends on the individual's perceptions and interpretations of other people, their behavior, and the situation in which the behavior occurs.

Counting rewards and costs

Instrumental aggression often involves more systematic thinking about the situation, as opposed to an immediate emotional reaction. When aggression pays, it becomes more likely, but when rewards are withdrawn, aggression usually subsides. If aggression depends on mastery motivation (people's perceptions of potential rewards and costs), the factors that influence those perceptions are personal abilities, gender differences, and possible losses.

Responding to threats

Threats to self-esteem may lead people to act aggressively without thinking about the consequences. Hostile aggression can involve immediate reactions in blind fury, or carefully planned and deliberate acts. A blow to self-esteem is worse in public, and thus the presence of an audience may make aggressive responses more likely.

People who react aggressively to threats to self-esteem typically have low self-esteem, because they might not have the inner resources to cope with frustrations. Furthermore, narcissists have a higher than average likelihood of committing aggression, because they have very high, but insecure and fluctuating, self-esteem. Some children have a perceptual bias that leads them to interpret ambiguous acts as intentional disrespect. These children are prone to become chronically aggressive. Although this bias has a strong role in hostile aggression, it has no impact on instrumental aggression.

Most aggression involves multiple motives, feelings of anger, and some concern about rewards and costs.

The role of negative emotions

Hostile aggression is not limited to striking back at the provoker. The *frustration-aggression theory* says that any frustration (the blocking of an important goal) inevitably triggers aggression, but there are more and more critiques of this theory. Berkowitz's (1989) [\[DOI: 10.1037/0033-2909.106.1.59\]](https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.106.1.59) model is broader, and states that any negative

feelings can set off aggression, including not only feelings of frustration and anger, but also pain, fear, and irritation.

Weblink: Global warming can also increase aggression and violence

www.psychologytoday.com/blog/get-psyched/201307/global-warming-can-also-increase-aggression-and-violence

Social norms can either promote or restrain aggression. Because aggression is a potentially destructive force, almost all societies and groups have norms that regulate it. Group norms often promote aggressive behavior rather than restraining it.

The United States has the most assaults among developed countries, so could it be that there is something about US culture that makes aggression easier or more acceptable than in other North American and European countries? There are several norms unique to the US that seem to provide an answer: (1) *The right to bear firearms and to use them*; (2) *the norm of family privacy*; and (3) the “*culture of honor*.”

Culture of honor norms are endorsed in the Southern United States and in some Mediterranean, Middle Eastern, and Latin American cultures. In the South, students report bringing guns to school more often and 75% of the school shootings that took place between 1988–2008 took place in culture-of-honor states.

Weblink: Interactive map of school shootings around the world since 1996

<http://o.canada.com/news/politics-and-the-nation/crime-and-justice/interactive-mass-shootings-around-the-world-since-1996>

INCREASING AGGRESSION: MODELS AND CUES

(*SP pp. 491—492*)

Models of aggression

Unfortunately, aggressive models not only show people ways to act aggressively, but also send the message that an aggressive response is right, correct, and acceptable. Exposure

to aggressive models makes violent behavior seem more appropriate because it stimulates aggressive thoughts and feelings.

Weblink: Bandura's classic Bobo doll study: The influence of aggressive models
www.simplypsychology.org/bobo-doll.html

Aggressive models in the media

Evidence consistently disconfirms the catharsis idea that expressing an emotion can keep it from “building up.” Aggressing or witnessing aggression not only doesn't make people feel calmer, it makes them more angry.

CASE STUDY: Aggressive models in the media [see ch13-CS-01.doc]

In addition, the results of correlational, experimental, and longitudinal studies all show that playing violent video games leads people to behave in more aggressive ways.

Weblink: Why do people deny violent media effects?
www.psychologytoday.com/blog/get-psyched/201302/why-do-people-deny-violent-media-effects

CASE STUDY: This just in –Playing violent video games really does make you more aggressive, really. [see ch13-CS-02.doc]

Learned cues to aggression

The *weapons effect* is the process in which seeing a weapon cues thoughts of aggression, and in turn makes aggressive behavior more likely. The presence of a gun may not only make aggression more deadly, it may also make it more likely in the first place. Also, perceiving a weapon can make aggression more likely. Common stereotypes can make observers more ready to see a gun in the hands of members of some groups than of others.

Weblink: The weapons effect

www.psychologytoday.com/blog/get-psyched/201301/the-weapons-effect

Weblink: Gun control and the culture of violence

www.psychologytoday.com/blog/wired-success/201212/gun-control-and-the-culture-violence

DECIDING WHETHER OR NOT TO AGGRESS

(*SP pp. 494–496*)

Situations that favor superficial thinking often favor aggression. Thinking carefully can reduce aggression, but many factors interfere with people's motivation and ability to process information carefully. Whatever grabs our attention most easily has the greatest impact on our behavior. In anger-inducing situations, the self-esteem threat or other provocation that produced the anger is usually foremost in our attention.

Several factors may limit our ability to process deeply:

- *Emotional arousal.* Threat, trauma, and intense emotions can reduce people's capacity to process information carefully. The presence of weapons increases aggression even more when people are already aroused and angry. The physical and emotional trauma of child abuse diminishes a child's ability to interpret social cues correctly, and to generate imaginative responses to conflict situations. These deficits increase the child's own tendency to turn to aggression.
- *Alcohol use.* Alcohol can diminish people's ability to think systematically. Alcohol plus anger or threat is a recipe for aggression. A second influence of alcohol is that it lessens people's concern for factors that normally restrain aggression.

CASE STUDY: Alcohol-related priming makes people more aggressive [see ch13-CS-03.doc]

- *Time pressure.* When a decision has to be made quickly, an initial tendency to aggress may win more often.

The general aggression model

Interpersonal aggression can be explained by people's appraisals and interpretation of the situation, the importance of accessible cognitions or emotions, the social context in which the behavior occurs, and whether people engage in superficial or more systematic processing.

So what does this mean?

Instrumental aggression often involves more systematic thinking about the situation. When aggression pays, it becomes more likely, but when rewards are withdrawn, aggression usually subsides. Factors that influence instrumental aggression are personal abilities, gender differences, and "having nothing to lose."

Hostile aggression can involve both immediate reactions in blind fury, or carefully planned and deliberate acts. Two theories of hostile aggression are the *frustration-aggression theory* and Berkowitz's model. Group norms often promote aggressive behavior rather than restraining it. Models can reduce aggression, but also send the message that an aggressive response is acceptable. Factors that increase the chances of aggression are emotional arousal, alcohol, and time pressure, but similarity reduces aggression.

INTERGROUP CONFLICT

Ask yourself

- Why do conflicts escalate?
- Name four reasons for the special competitiveness of groups.

- Name three conflict-resolving solutions that are achieved through negotiation, and explain which of these is best, and why.

What you need to know

SOURCES OF INTERGROUP CONFLICT: THE BATTLE FOR RICHES AND RESPECT (*SP pp. 498–502*)

- Realistic conflict theory: Getting the goods
- Relative deprivation: When is enough enough?
- Social competition: Getting a little respect
- The special competitiveness of groups: Groups often value respect over riches

ESCALATING CONFLICT: GROUP COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION (*SP pp. 502–505*)

- Talking to the in-group: Polarization and commitment
- The special competitiveness of groups: When conflict arises, groups close ranks
- Talking to the out-group: Back off, or else!
- Threat and deterrence in international affairs
- Vicarious retribution: They hurt us, now I hurt them
- Coalition formation: Escalation as others choose sides

PERCEPTIONS IN CONFLICT: WHAT ELSE COULD YOU EXPECT FROM THEM? (*SP pp. 506–510*)

- Polarized perceptions of in-group and out-group
- Biased attributions for behavior
- The impact of emotion and arousal: More heat, less light
- The special competitiveness of groups: People expect groups to be supercompetitive, so they react in kind

“FINAL SOLUTIONS”: ELIMINATING THE OUT-GROUP (*SP pp. 510–513*)

- The special competitiveness of groups: Groups offer social support for competitiveness
- Final solutions in history

REDUCING INTERPERSONAL AND INTERGROUP CONFLICT AND AGGRESSION (*SP pp. 513–524*)

ALTERING PERCEPTIONS AND REACTIONS (*SP p. 514–516*)

- Promote norms of non-aggression

- Minimize cues for aggression
- Interpret, and interpret again
- Promote empathy with others

RESOLVING CONFLICT THROUGH NEGOTIATION (*SP pp. 516–520*)

- Types of solutions
- Achieving solutions: The negotiation process
- Building trust
- Negotiating across cultural lines
- Mediation and arbitration: Bringing in third parties

INTERGROUP COOPERATION: CHANGING SOCIAL IDENTITY (*SP pp. 520–524*)

- Superordinate goals
- Why does intergroup cooperation work?

Groups can be more aggressive than individuals, and increasing the feeling of belonging to a group also increases feelings of competitiveness.

SOURCES OF INTERGROUP CONFLICT: THE BATTLE FOR RICHES AND RESPECT

(*SP pp. 498–502*)

Conflicts in groups are often caused by competition for valued material resources, or for social rewards like respect and esteem. These are the same reasons for which individuals turn to aggression. To determine what an acceptable level of resources is, people use social comparisons. Groups in conflict are often more focused on social rewards than on material ones.

Realistic conflict theory: Getting the goods

The **realistic conflict theory** argues that intergroup hostility, conflict, and aggression arise from competition among groups for mastery of scarce but valued material resources.

Relative deprivation: When is enough enough?

The **relative deprivation theory** suggests that social comparison, not objective reality, determines how satisfied or dissatisfied people are with what they have. *Egoistic relative deprivation* is the sense that you are doing less well than other individuals. *Fraternal relative deprivation* is the sense that one's group is not doing as well as other groups. Fraternal deprivation is much more likely to cause intergroup conflict than egoistic deprivation is.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: The relative deprivation theory [see ch13-RA-01.doc]

Social competition: Getting a little respect

Groups, like individuals, not only fight over material goods but also over social goods: respect, esteem, and “bragging rights.” People’s strivings for positive social identity might be the cause of intergroup conflict.

The special competitiveness of groups: Groups often value respect over riches

The first reason for the greater competitiveness of groups than individuals is that when groups want to be “Number One,” social competition and the effort to outdo one’s opponent frequently overshadow competition for material resources. In this supercompetitiveness, groups sometimes give up absolute gain in order to dominate their rivals.

ESCALATING CONFLICT: GROUP COMMUNICATION AND INTERACTION

(SP pp. 502–505)

Poor communication can make conflicts worse. In-group interaction hardens in-group opinion, threats are directed at the out-group, each group retaliates more and more harshly, and other parties choose sides. All of these processes tend to escalate the conflict. The same social and cognitive processes responsible for other forms of social behavior play a role in this too.

Talking to the in-group: Polarization and commitment

Group polarization is the process in which group members' views become more and more extreme because they talk with like-minded others. Furthermore, we also become more committed to our views during discussion.

The special competitiveness of groups: When conflict arises, groups close ranks

Processes of commitment and polarization represent the second reason for the special competitiveness of groups.

Talking to the out-group: Back off, or else!

Groups find it increasingly difficult to communicate productively when conflicts rise. Most people believe that threats increase their bargaining power and their chances of getting their way. But threats provoke counterthreats, diminish people's willingness to compromise, and generate hostility. Once people have coercive means at their disposal, they shift from reward-seeking to socially competitive behavior. Finally, when threats dominate communication, they crowd out messages about cooperative solutions.

Threat and deterrence in international affairs

A *policy of deterrence* is a political strategy in which one side threatens to use force in the hope of preventing the other side from using force. Deterrence, like other uses of threats, can elicit counterthreats and escalation. A group without power may appear to be easy prey for strong aggressors who have little fear of retaliation. But even equality in power and command of threats cannot guarantee an absence of conflict.

Weblink: World map of international conflicts

www.incore.ulst.ac.uk/services/cds/countries/

Vicarious retribution: They hurt us, now I hurt them

Members of a group who were not themselves directly harmed by an attack may lash out at members of the offending group, who themselves need to be the ones who committed the original attack. This process is called *vicarious retribution*.

Coalition formation: Escalation as others choose sides

Conflicts often begin as one-on-one confrontations, but *coalition formation* occurs when two or more parties pool their resources to obtain a mutual goal they probably could not achieve alone. Coalition formation tends to polarize multiple parties into two opposing sides. It is usually seen as a threatening action that only intensifies competition. For these reasons, the formation of coalitions and alliances between nations usually increases the possibility of armed hostility.

Weblink: An article with a recent example of escalating conflict

www.alternet.org/story/14600/

PERCEPTIONS IN CONFLICT: WHAT ELSE COULD YOU EXPECT FROM THEM?

(*SP pp. 506–510*)

As escalation continues, the in-group sees the out-group as evil and itself as unrealistically positive. These conflict-driven perceptions affect the group's understanding of what is happening and why. Self-fulfilling prophecies can cause a vicious cycle to begin, in which the out-group is thought to be more hostile and devious.

Polarized perceptions of in-group and out-group

Categorization can make people evaluate their own group more positively than the out-group. These perceptual biases become much stronger in conflict.

There are three blind spots in the thinking of groups:

1. The in-group can do no wrong.
2. The out-group can do no right (and any action taken against them is justified).

3. The in-group is all powerful.

Aggressive posturing or the “hairy chest syndrome,” a preoccupation with appearing powerful, prestigious, tough, and courageous, has dangerous side effects. Because the group’s focus is on winning, this can decrease thinking about the merits or morals of in-group actions.

Biased attributions for behavior

Groups in conflict often attribute the same behaviors of the in-group and the out-group to opposite causes.

These attributions are biased in two different ways:

1. In-group motives are positive; out-group motives are negative.
2. Situations dictate in-group actions; character flaws prompt out-group actions.

The impact of emotion and arousal: More heat, less light

Emotional arousal (i.e., tension, anxiety, anger, frustration, and fear) affects processes of perception and communication, and produces *simplistic thinking*. People tend to perceive members of out-groups negatively, and anxiety, perceived threats, and emotion strengthen this tendency.

The special competitiveness of groups: People expect groups to be supercompetitive, so they react in kind

Biased and extreme perceptions of out-groups are a third reason for which groups act more competitively than individuals. People expect groups to be highly competitive and hostile and, as a result, will try to beat them to it, either to deter them, or at least to defend themselves.

“FINAL SOLUTIONS”: ELIMINATING THE OUT-GROUP

(SP p. 510–512)

When power differences exist between the groups and the out-group is morally excluded, one group may try to eliminate the other. A normal conflict that started over valuable resources can then become a battle for social supremacy, in which the primary concern is defeating the opponent, not controlling the resource.

Three factors seem to be important in pushing a group to seek a “final solution” to intergroup differences:

1. *A difference in power between the groups translates desire into action:* Without power, no group can turn prejudice into discrimination, or discrimination into domination.
2. *Moral exclusion blocks moral outrage:* Moral exclusion is particularly likely when people harm others under orders from their in-group authorities.
3. *Routinization produces desensitization:* Repetition of individual actions becomes routine, until even acts like torture and murder can become mundane.

The special competitiveness of groups: Groups offer social support for competitiveness

The power of groups to define norms for their members is the most fundamental reason for groups so often being more aggressive than individuals.

Final solutions in history

The Holocaust in Nazi Germany is an example of what can happen as the ultimate result of these forces. There was need for a *scapegoat*: Jews. There were three factors that made the Holocaust possible. First, the Nazis had power. Second, the Nazis dehumanized the Jews. Third, killers became desensitized to their acts through routine and repetition.

REDUCING INTERPERSONAL AND INTERGROUP CONFLICT AND AGGRESSION

(*SP pp. 513–523*)

Reducing aggression often involve altering people's immediate perceptions of others, or the situational cues that may increase aggression. Conflict-resolution strategies focus on reconciling the parties' concrete goals and aspirations. Other strategies encourage cooperation.

ALTERING PERCEPTIONS AND REACTIONS

(SP pp. 514–516)

One approach to reducing aggression and conflict is to minimize or remove the cues that often cause individuals to commit aggressive acts, and to encourage careful interpretation and identification with others.

Promote norms of non-aggression

Some groups have developed norms that effectively counteract aggression, but norms are usually most effective in limiting aggression against other in-group members. Similarity reduces aggression, and it does so for two reasons. First, shared group membership breeds liking, and positive feelings for another person are incompatible with aggression. Second, the norms of most groups proscribe or strictly control aggression within the group so that cohesion can be maintained, and group goals achieved.

Minimize cues for aggression

Some cues activate aggressive thoughts and feelings, making overt acts of aggression more likely, whereas other cues can decrease aggression.

CASE STUDY: “We are the world”: Exposure to prosocial music decreases aggression
[see ch13-CS-04.doc]

Weblink: Fighting bullying with babies

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/11/08/fighting-bullying-with-babies/?hp>

Interpret, and interpret again

Factors that make it difficult for people to think carefully, such as alcohol use, high emotion, or limited time to think, generally increase aggressive behavior.

Promote empathy with others

Aggression is easiest when victims are distanced and dehumanized. To avoid this, people should intentionally think about the fact that victims are still human beings, because similarity is a barrier to aggression. Empathy is incompatible with aggression.

School-based programs aimed at reducing aggression are generally effective, and the effects endure over time.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Israelis and Palestinians: Working together to end the conflict
[see ch13-RA-02.doc]

Weblink: Global Peace Index

www.visionofhumanity.org/#/page/indexes/global-peace-index

RESOLVING CONFLICT THROUGH NEGOTIATION

(SP pp. 516–520)

Conflict resolution also involves the parties in trying to find mutually acceptable solutions, which requires understanding and trust.

Types of solutions

An *imposed solution* is a solution dictated by one party. This technique is rarely successful in ending conflict. *Distributive solutions* involve mutual compromise or concessions that carve up a fixed-size pie. *Integrative solutions* are the best solutions because one side's gain is not necessarily the other's loss. These are often termed *win–win solutions* because both sides can benefit simultaneously. One strategy that can lead to integrative solutions is log-rolling, in which each party gives up on issues that it considers less important but that the other group views as crucial.

Achieving solutions: The negotiation process

Negotiation is reciprocal communication designed to reach agreement in situations in which some interests are shared and some are in opposition. When parties are under time pressure, they are less likely to reach integrative solutions. *Reactive devaluation*, an obstacle to integrative solutions, is the process in which, when one side proposes a solution, the other side automatically views it less favorably, reasoning that “if it’s good for them, it must be bad for us.”

CASE STUDY: The negotiation process [see ch13-CS-05.doc]

Building trust

By focusing on specific issues, negotiation can reverse the decline of trust that occurs during the conflict. This reversal happens in two ways. First, when one party successfully negotiates an issue with the opponent, liking and trust for the other party increase, making later issues easier to settle. Second, when issues are specific, the parties in conflict have a better chance of accurately perceiving each other’s positions.

Negotiating across cultural lines

Whether individuals come from individually oriented or collectivist cultures can make a big difference to the motives they bring to interactions. When conflict takes place within a group, fair treatment, politeness, and respect for all may increase the chances of agreement.

Mediation and arbitration: Bringing in third parties

Third-party intervention may offer better hope for a solution than direct communication. *Mediators* help the opponents focus their discussion on the issues and reach a voluntary agreement. In *arbitration* the third party has the power to hand down a decision after hearing the disputants present their arguments and information.

Third-party intervention has several advantages. First, mediators or arbitrators can arrange details so they don't become sources of conflict. Second, skillful intervention can improve intergroup relationships. Third, because outsiders bring fresh ideas, they may be able to offer more creative integrative solutions. Finally, a skilled third party can leave room for graceful retreat.

INTERGROUP COOPERATION: CHANGING SOCIAL IDENTITY

(SP pp. 520–524)

Conflict resolution can also be facilitated by cooperating toward shared goals that can be attained only if groups work together. Under the proper conditions, cooperative intergroup interaction reduces conflict.

Superordinate goals

Superordinate goals are shared goals that can be attained only if groups work cooperatively as a team.

Weblink: How working toward a superordinate goal united a town after disaster

<http://news.yahoo.com/twister-heals-ala-town-fractured-over-immigration-131958548.html>

Why does intergroup cooperation work?

Intergroup cooperation only works when the right conditions exist to resolve conflicts.

These conditions are:

- Cooperation should be for a valued common goal, which eliminates competition for material and social resources.
- Cooperation should provide repeated opportunities to disconfirm out-group stereotypes.
- Cooperation should produce successful results (if not, hostility may increase because the groups start to blame each other).

- Cooperation should take place between equals, at least for the task at hand.
- Cooperation should be supported and promoted by social norms.

Intergroup cooperation resolves conflicts because it makes the out-group a source of rewards rather than punishments. Cooperation works at multiple levels: increasing the importance of a new in-group, and decreasing the importance of group-membership in general. Intergroup cooperation for superordinate goals holds the promise of true conflict resolution, rather than conflict management. Conflict resolution turns groups' basic strivings for mastery and connectedness toward positive ends.

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: How conflicts can be resolved [see ch13-RA-03.doc]

So what does this mean?

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Poor communication and in-group interaction can make conflicts worse. As conflict escalates, the in-group sees the out-group as evil and itself as unrealistically positive.

Approaches to reduce aggression and conflict involve minimizing or removing aggressive cues; altering perceptions; encouraging cooperation; encouraging careful interpretation and identification with others; trying to find mutually acceptable solutions; or working together toward a shared goal.

Negotiation is reciprocal communication designed to reach agreement in situations in which some interests are shared and some are in opposition.

Superordinate goals are shared goals that can be attained only if groups work cooperatively as a team.