I will start out by indicating my orientation to conflict. I borrow a phrase from an English political scientist, John Burton who said that conflict is like sex. It is an important and pervasive aspect of life. It should be enjoyed and should occur with a reasonable degree of frequency. And after conflict is over, people should feel better as a result of the conflict.

For the most part social scientists have given conflict a bad reputation by linking it with psychopathology, social disorder and war. The psychological utopias of psychoanalytic theory with its emphasis on the pleasure principle, field theory with its stress on tension-reduction, and dissonance theory with its preoccupation with dissonance-reduction, would appear to be a conflict-free existence. Yet it is apparent that most people seek out conflict in their everyday life, in competitive sports, games, by going to theatres, by watching television, and in the teasing interplay of intimate encounters. Fortunately, no one has to face the prospect of a conflict-free existence. Conflict can neither be eliminated nor even suppressed for long. The social and scientific issue is not how to eliminate or prevent conflict, but rather how to have lively controversy instead of deadly quarrels.

Conflict has many positive functions. It prevents stagnation, it stimulates interest and curiosity. It is the medium through which problems can be aired and solutions arrived at. It is the root of personal and social change. And conflict is often part of the process of testing and assessing oneself. As such it may be highly enjoyable as one experiences the pleasure
of the full and active use of one's capacities. In addition, conflicts demarcate groups from one another and help establish group and personal identities.

I stress the positive functions of conflict and I have by no means provided an exhaustive listing because, as I have indicated, conflict is often cast in the role of villain, as though conflict per se is the cause of our individual and social problems. There are problems which arise from conflict, when conflict takes a pathological course. And in this first part of my presentation, I want to describe a number of typical pathologies of conflict. One such pathology is conflict avoidance. A second typical pathology is premature conflict resolution. A third is excessive involvement in conflict, and a fourth has to do with the kinds of positions one gets committed to in conflict in a narrow way. (position redefinition.)

Conflict avoidance is expressed in the denial of conflict and in the suppression of awareness of the conflict, as well as in the shying away from dealing with the issues in conflict. Occasionally, it is useful to avoid conflict. Sometimes the issues in conflict will disappear with the passage of time or a change of circumstance. For instance, if a co-worker is temporarily irritable because of a medication, perhaps it is best simply to avoid getting entangled with him or her. There are also conflicts that are not likely to be resolved successfully if they are confronted. And often such conflicts are best handled by mutual recognition that they are to be avoided. For example, if a wife detests her husband's best friend, it may be best if both spouses can agree that they will avoid situations in which all three are together, and will avoid attempts to change their spouses' opinions in this matter.
Generally, however, conflict avoidance has harmful consequences. A conflict does not disappear, it festers underneath the surface and has many indirect effects. It can be debilitating as one expends energy to prevent the conflict from surfacing. It can lead to a state of irritability as the tensions associated with the conflict go unresolved. It can also lead to distortions in one's perceptions and behavior as one engages in various tactics and maneuvers to deceive oneself and the other that no conflict exists between them.

Psychoanalysts have provided a description of such tactics and maneuvers in their cataloguing of defense mechanisms. For example, one can use any or all of the following tactics: **Displacement**, in which the conflict is displaced onto other issues. Thus, a husband and wife who avoid confronting their conflicts over the giving and receiving of affection may displace their conflict onto financial matters. Who is being stingy? Who is demanding too much? **Reaction-formation**, in which one expresses attitudes and behaviors which are opposite to those involved in the conflict. Instead of confronting someone with whom one has a conflict, one acts in an overly pleasant ingratiating way as though there were no issues between oneself and the other. And, of course, if we see somebody who is being excessively friendly, we have reason to raise some questions.

Another defense mechanism is **identification with the aggressor**. Here one goes beyond being unduly friendly toward the other and takes on the other's viewpoint. One identifies with the other's position, and denies the validity of one's own interest. We see this happening very frequently with children in relation to parents; children facing very authoritarian parents who are very strict and harsh in their discipline. The children may want to rebel
against their parents but find that that is very threatening and fear-
arousing. To prevent themselves from rebelling they take on the attitudes of
the parents toward themselves and act towards themselves in the same critical,
negative, judgmental way that the parents may be acting toward them. They
are identifying with their aggressive parents as a way of
preventing themselves from engaging in conflict with the parent.

Rationalization is, of course, a chief mechanism of avoidance. One
develops all kinds of seemingly good rationales and reasons why the conflict
is not to be confronted. "It is not a good time to approach the other." "I am
too tired." "The situation is not right." The rationales are really pseudo-
rationales. One is, in fact, motivated by the desire to avoid the anxiety
associated with the fantasy of conflict.

A second typical form of pathology is premature conflict resolution.
Sometimes the tension associated with conflict leads to premature resolution,
so that the conflicting parties come to an agreement before they have
adequately explored the issues involved in their conflict. The typical result
is that the agreement will not last long. It will break down as soon as the
realities reveal its superficial nature. This happens very often; for example,
in divorce negotiations where a couple may find that the process is so
stressful emotionally, that they want to get out of it. Consequently, they
may jump into an agreement about custodial rights, visitation, alimony etc.,
which does not take into account either of their realities. As a typical
consequence, that kind of agreement usually breaks down and the couple ends up
in the divorce court again trying to work out a new agreement.

A third kind of pathology is excessive involvement in conflict.
Paradoxically, the tension associated with conflict sometimes leads people to
be excessively involved in and preoccupied with conflict; in a sense, to become conflict-prone. Some people seem to master their conflict anxiety by seeking out conflict. Their constant involvement in conflict serves to reassure them that they are not afraid of conflict. The kind of macho attitude that we sometimes find in people or even nations that go around with a chip on their shoulder often reflects some kind of basic anxiety about their fears associated with conflict.

There are many typical fears and irrational anxieties associated with conflict and I would say that, in my clinical work, I have found that these irrational anxieties usually are connected with unconscious or semiconscious fantasies that the conflict will get out of control. And as this occurs, one will become helpless in relation to the fantasized violence from the other, or unable to control one's own aggressive and evil impulses and will destroy the other. There is often an alternation between the fantasies: a sense of our own omnipotence with the other's helplessness or of their omnipotence with our helplessness, either of which may stir a good deal of anxiety.

A fourth typical pathology that results from the anxieties associated with conflict is rigidification. People start to have a kind of tunnel vision with regard to the issues in conflict. They see only a limited range of possibilities for resolving the conflict; their vision is quite restricted. They lose their creative potential for conceiving a range of options which might make the conflict a constructive experience in which both sides might profit. That rigidification and tunnel vision is often associated with excessive anxiety.

There are other forms of conflict pathology which are particularly relevant to conflicts which become self-perpetuating vicious cycles; these conflicts
escalate. That is, there is some evidence that parties are involved in a pathological conflict when the conflict gets detached from its originating causes. The causes may even have been forgotten or may no longer be relevant after the conflict starts escalating. The conflict becomes more powerful than any of its initiating causes.

There are a number of typical social-psychological processes that are associated with the development of self-perpetuating vicious cycles in conflict. One of these is autistic hostility. In the course of many conflicts, we may develop some negative feelings towards the other person with whom we are in conflict. As a consequence of those negative feelings towards the other, we may break off communication with the other. Breaking off communication, we no longer have contact with the other, we no longer have the opportunity to experience the other, no longer have the opportunity to learn, for example, that we may have some misunderstandings. We may not have perceived the other correctly. We are maintaining our view of the other autistically, through our own internal psychological processes rather than through our actual experience with the other.

Let me provide a personal example. I have autistic hostility towards coffee. I do not know why. I have a strong aversion against coffee. This has been the case for as long as I can remember. And it was not worth the money in analysis to try to find out why. So, I never investigated it. But my autistic hostility is such that I never have contact with coffee. I avoid coffee, I never drink it. I never have the opportunity to experience that coffee might be different from my view of it. So my hostility towards coffee is maintained without any contact with coffee. And that is a process which is very typical in self-perpetuating conflicts. We break off communication with
the other in a way which leaves us with no opportunity to change our negative attitudes.

Another social-psychological mechanism involved in perpetuating conflict is the self-fulfilling prophecy. A self-fulfilling prophecy begins when we have a negative attitude towards another party as a result of some experience we think we have had, or some misunderstandings we have had. We think the other will have a negative attitude towards us and so we engage in behaviour which is negative towards the other. We think the other is going to be negative to us, and so we act in a cold, indifferent way towards the other. The other party experiences our coldness, our indifference and reacts to us in a cold and indifferent way, thereby fulfilling our expectations. We are engaged in a process whereby the behavior that we initiate towards the other confirms our original expectations, because it elicits from the other a behavior that we originally thought the other was going to engage in.

Let me illustrate again with a personal example. I now not only have an autistic hostility towards coffee, but I have a self-fulfilling prophecy towards coffee. The one time in recent memory that I can remember getting myself to the point where I would try to break through my autistic hostility and imbibe some coffee, I approached coffee with very negative expectations. My expectations could not affect the coffee, but it could affect the way I perceived the coffee. So, when I tried to drink it, I gagged and immediately spat it out. My expectations were shaping my perceptions of the coffee in such a way that my perceptions led to a confirmation of my expectations. So, sometimes a self-fulfilling prophecy goes beyond leading to behaviour that elicits reactions from the other that confirm our expectations. It may even warp perceptions.
There is an important point here. In almost any extended, protracted conflict between two parties, both sides are always right. The other is hostile, the other has negative feelings: "he doesn't like me; he is treating me badly." And both sides would be right in their perceptions because they have set up a vicious, mutually confirming expectation. Each is treating the other badly because it feels that the other deserves to be treated badly, because the other treats it badly, etc.

A third kind of process that leads to the self-perpetuation of conflict is commitment processes. In the course of conflict, people tend to get invested in the conflict. They get invested in particular positions that they have taken. They get invested in certain beliefs about the other that they have developed. And it is difficult to give these up. It is sometimes a matter of pride not to give up these investments. A party may feel it is yielding, or it is losing self-esteem.

In personal relations, the investments are very heavily psychological. We can see in inter-group or international relations how commitments and investments can lead to the perpetuation of conflict. In Soviet and American relations, for instance, there is no question that the Soviet military-industrial complex plays a very strong role in determining government policies. There is no doubt that generals in the Soviet Union, as in the United States, prefer large defense budgets rather than small defense budgets. They prefer to have more troops rather than fewer troops. They prefer to have more money committed to research and development for new weapons rather than less. In the United States, the same kind of process goes on and we see it in its everyday form. If the Pentagon wants to close down a military base in a local congressman's district, that congressman will start
to protest, even though he may be for peace and a limited, reasonable defense budget. The unions and businesses in that local district will also start to protest, because of the kinds of commitments and investments that are very difficult to change.

It is my experience, as a therapist, that one of the important problems in the course of psychotherapy that everyone faces, is the giving up of the commitment to what one has become used to, to what one is familiar with, even though one has learned that it does not work. Patients may learn that the defenses, the interpersonal tactics and strategies that they employ typically produce failure and depression. They know what the effects of those defenses are; they are familiar with them. They are uncertain about what the effects of other tactics would be. And it is one of the difficult problems to help them over the hurdle of giving up the familiar, though painful, to face the unfamiliar which may be quite rewarding. So, another kind of process which leads to the perpetuation of conflicts is the commitments one makes to the positions, the attitudes, the beliefs, the resources, the skills, the techniques, the defenses that one has invested in a conflict process.

Thus far I have discussed some aspects of the pathology of conflict. I want now to turn my attention to the question my theoretical and empirical work on conflict has focused on for many years. The question is, what determines whether a conflict will take a constructive or destructive course? Its answer involves several steps. One is, that a constructive process of conflict resolution can be identified with a cooperative social process; it has the same social-psychological characteristics as a cooperative process. A destructive process of conflict resolution, on the other hand, typically has the social and
psychological characteristics of a competitive process. And the second part of its answer is that successful cooperation tends to breed the conditions for further cooperation, while competition tends to breed the conditions for further competition.

Let me elaborate. In a conflict situation that has not yet already taken a strongly determined course, the typical effects of a cooperative process will move conflict resolution into a constructive mode. The typical effects of a competitive process will move conflict resolution into a destructive course. Years ago, when I was studying at MIT, at the Research Center for Group Dynamics, my doctoral dissertation was fortunately concerned with the effects of cooperative and competitive processes. I started out with an interest in characterizing the nature of cooperative and competitive processes, an interest in what were the typical effects of such processes. And I developed a theory about the effects of such processes, which turned out to be a theory of conflict resolution. The major idea of this theory is that the typical effects of a cooperative process will induce cooperation and will induce constructive processes of conflict resolution, etc.

Some of you might say that this sounds so self-evident -- that when we are cooperative this will engender cooperation; and when we are competitive, this will engender competitiveness. Is there nothing more to it than this? Those of us who would ask that might have a mistaken notion of science. The purpose of science is to come up with simple ideas which proliferate into a lot of detailed implications. The idea I have just expressed is simple, but if we think about it in a detailed way, it has a wide range of implications. For instance, let us look at the typical effects of cooperation and compare these with competition, in terms of what happens in communication. As a result of
good cooperation, communication tends to be relatively full, relatively open. People are attentive to one another; they are waiting to respond to the other, to make helpful suggestions, etc. They have no desire to mislead, misrepresent or falsely communicate to the other. On the other hand, the typical effect of a competitive process on communication is that it tends to interfere with communication. In some sense, there is no real reason to communicate because we think the other is not going to believe us. The other knows that our interests and ours interests are opposed, so why should we tell the truth. And the result typically in competitive interaction is that communication drops; there is less frequency.

Another typical effect is that people do try to mislead one another. They do not tell the truth; they misinform. And knowing that the other is trying to mislead them, people try to get their information not through the other's direct communications but through indirect ways, e.g., through espionage techniques. So, if we want to induce a constructive process of conflict resolution, we need to have a communication process that is more like the kind of communication that takes place in a cooperative context. Such a context is where people feel free to talk openly and fully, where they are attentive and responsive to one another, and where they have no particular interest in misleading the other. If we want to produce a destructive conflict, on the other hand, we can also do that. Suppose we were in military intelligence and we wanted to instigate a destructive process within an adversary group, then we would want to disrupt and confound their communications. We would want to make their communications very noisy, so that people would start to misunderstand one another. And once they started to misinterpret one another, they would start to develop negative attitudes as a consequence of the poor communication, etc.
Another typical difference between cooperative and competitive processes in terms of effects is the way we try to influence people. In the cooperative process, we are interested in persuading the other; in having the other person see the position that we are advocating and to see it in a way that is acceptable to him or her. In a competitive process, on the other hand, we feel that such persuasion is unlikely to occur. Hence, we have to rely on the techniques of intimidation, coercion, threat, and stronger power to intimidate and coerce the other into a position we want. If we introduce into a conflict, weapons or tactics of coercion and intimidation, this will tend to move that process towards a competitive and destructive course of interaction. If we use tactics of persuasion which are aimed at convincing the other, these will generally move the other towards a cooperative process of interaction.

Another typical difference in the two kinds of processes is that in a cooperative process, we have a positive interest in the power of the other. The stronger the other who is cooperating with us, the more resources it has, and the more intelligent and effective it is, then the better off we are. We are, therefore, interested in enhancing the power of the other. By comparison, in a competitive process, we are interested in increasing the differences between ourselves and the other's powers so that we become better able to intimidate the other. If we can induce a situation where people are oriented towards enhancing one another's power, then we will have a constructive process of conflict resolution. If we induce the opposite situation where people are oriented towards increasing the power differences, then we will have a destructive process of conflict resolution.
A typical result of cooperation is that one tends to see the other person as being similar to oneself with regard to basic values and orientations. A typical result of a competitive process, on the other hand, is that one sees the other as being different from and opposed to oneself. The differences between oneself and the other are accentuated in a competitive process rather than reduced. If we want to increase the destructiveness of a conflict, then we have to increase the size of a conflict; we have to make the issues in conflict seem large and terribly important, of vital significance to the parties. But if we want to increase the likelihood of a constructive conflict resolution, then we have to help the parties reduce the definition of what is at stake so that it is not world-shaking, so that it involves relatively specific, small issues that are here and now; issues that do not necessarily determine precedence for history.

Clearly, friendly attitudes which are more typical of cooperative processes are more likely to lead to a constructive process, and hostile attitudes are more likely to lead to a destructive process. I could go on listing a lot of the specifics, but what I want to do is put forward the general idea that the typical effects of a cooperative process tend to induce cooperation, while the typical effects of a competitive process tend to induce competition.

I have done research on many of these issues, most of which has been conducted in the laboratory. But some of my students are more adventurous than I. They go out in the field and do investigations of conflict resolution in marriage or studies of the divorcing process or of other field situations. Here I will discuss briefly two types of laboratory studies we have done to give you some picture of the sort of experimental research that can be carried out in this area.
Figure 1 is a simple representation of a classic situation which has been identified in the social science literature as the Prisoners' Dilemma Game. It was a label that a mathematical game theorist, Tucker, gave to the situation. In Tucker's illustration, there are two prisoners and a district attorney. The district attorney sets up a situation in which the two prisoners, who had been joint partners in crime, would "squeal" on one another. I will illustrate it not that way, but in other ways.

The Prisoner's Dilemma does not have to be a two-person game, nor a two-choice game. But in its simplest form, it is a two-person and a two-choice game. It is a situation in which what happens to people is determined not only by what one party does but also by what the other party does. Technically, it is a situation of interdependent behavior, interdependent choice, interdependent decision, where the outcomes that come to one party are the result not only of what the one party does but also of what the other party does.

In the game illustrated in Figure 1, the two players each have a choice between pressing a button labeled C and pressing a button labeled D. The situation is such that if one player presses the button D when the other player presses the button C, the player who presses D wins; in this example, $2.00. If both players press D, then they both lose, but only $1.00 rather than $2.00. If they both press C, then they both win. Now, if we look at the matrix of this game, it is clear that in some sense it would be rational to choose D. The player would then win the most that he could, $2.00 rather than $1.00. Alternatively, he could lose the least that he could, $1.00 rather than $2.00. But if both players press D, they both end up in the DD cell; they both lose, which does not appear to be too rational. On the other hand,
if they both press C, they would both win, which does appear rational. But
there is a basic problem here. And that is, we can only press C if we trust
the other player, if we feel that the other player will be trustworthy, and
also press C. And he can only press C if he is willing to be trustworthy in
relation to the other's trust. The problem here, therefore, is that truly
rational behavior in this situation requires mutual trust. Without the
condition of mutual trust, there is no basis for truly rational behavior.

The Prisoners' Dilemma poses a dilemma not only for prisoners, but also
for theories of society which, like Adam Smith's, Ronald Reagan's, and others,
are based on a purely individualistic notion of rationality. Such a notion
says that if everybody simply pursues his or her own rational, immediate
gains; then through the "invisible hand" of the market the social order will
produce not only individual gain but social gain as well. There are many
situations like the Prisoners' Dilemma which challenge that basic
assumption. For instance, in the context of an arms race, C means to
cooperate and disarm, while D means to arm. Now each side, in a sense, would
be better off if it were armed and the other side was disarmed. But each side
would be worse off if it were armed and paying the cost of heavy armaments,
than if both had arrived at a mutual arms control agreement and reduced their
arms. But they cannot do this unless there is some confidence on the part of
each that if it engages in a process of limiting its weapons production,
limiting its research, etc., it will not be taken advantage of, it will not be
exploited by the other side.

The basis of mutual trust does not necessarily have to be in the
character of the other. Most trust in advanced, complex societies is not
based upon trust in the character of the other. We do not know most people
whom we are trusting. We do not know the character of the mailman who might throw our valuable letters into a wastepaper basket. We do not know the character of the driver who is on the same road, who might be crazy and might hit us. We have to engage in so many routine actions throughout our day, based not upon trust in the character of the other, but trust in social arrangements and structures which make other persons predictably trustworthy. And how to create such social arrangements is another lecture which I will not go into now.

I have done a good deal of research with the Prisoners' Dilemma which supports in general the basic theory of conflict resolution that I mentioned earlier. That is, if we can increase any of the factors that tend to elicit cooperation, then we get greater readiness to engage in mutual trust. If we increase any of the factors that enhance competitiveness, then we get a greater tendency to choose D, with the consequent loss to both parties.

Another game that I have used in a good deal of research is a simple bargaining game. In this bargaining game I create two trucking firms, Acme and Bolt. Each firm gets paid for carrying a load of merchandise from a starting point to a finishing point. They get paid a constant sum, $1.00 minus a variable cost for each trip. The cost is a function of how long it takes in time to make the trip. The longer it takes in seconds the more it costs them. And if it takes too long, they lose money on the trip. They have two routes to their finishing point. One is a long, alternate route that each firm has. And if they take their alternate routes, they would take so much time that they would lose money on the trip. The other route is a short main route, in the middle of which is a section which is only one lane wide. As expressed in Figure 2, Acme is going up one way and Bolt is coming up another
way. And the problem they face here, with regard to the one-lane section, is who is going to go through first and who is going to back up.

I have done a lot of experiments with this game, but I will discuss only two -- one set of experiments that relates to arms control and the other that relates to issue control. In the "arms control" experiments, we introduced weapons, i.e., gates which one player could use to prevent the other from going to its destination on the main route. And in one experiment, in one condition both players had these weapons, another condition only Acme had the weapon, and a third neither player had a weapon. The results are rather strong in demonstrating that when both players have weapons, they do badly. They do badly on the first trial and they do badly over the series of twenty trials that we run. And they do not seem to learn very much. Where one player has a weapon, they start out doing badly, though not as badly as in the situation where both have weapons. And about half way through, they learn to deal with the situation. Where neither player has a weapon, they start out not doing as well as they can, but they quickly learn how to coordinate and get up to a maximum.

Let us look in more detail at the results with a one-weapon situation. Of course, both players have weapons in a sense. The player without recourse to a gate can simply sit on the main path and prevent the other from going through. He can block, he can obstinate, he can obstruct. It may cost him a lot to do it. And what happens in the one-gate situation is that the person who has the weapon can withdraw usage of the weapon without appearing to be intimidating, because in a sense the other seems to be in a weaker position. And after a while he does withdraw use. But the results indicate that the person who has the weapon does better than the person who does not have the weapon.
But if we compare the one-weapon situation to the two-weapon situation, the players in a two-weapon situation do worse than a player without a weapon facing somebody who possesses one. And similarly the player with a weapon, facing somebody who does not have one, does worse than the player who does not have a weapon. Let us put it this way: if there is only one weapon available, then each party would be better off if it had the weapon. But each may be better off if neither had the weapon because, having the weapon, players tend to use threats and intimidating tactics which the other may resist. It may cost the other to resist but it costs the threatener as a consequence of this resistance and prevents perhaps an easier, cooperative resolution. So, arms control is important.

"Issue control" is also important. We can increase or decrease the size of the issue at stake, for instance, in an experiment like the simple bargaining one. And if we increase the size of the differences in outcome between the parties, controlling for everything else, then we tend to make the conflict much more difficult to resolve. In such a situation, the players tend to use weapons more frequently, they come to deadlocks more frequently, and they end up with worse outcomes than when the size of the differences between them is smaller. To use an example from international relations, during the Cuban missile crisis many, many years ago, there was a time when it seemed that Khrushchev and Kennedy were defining the conflict as one between the Free World and Communism. That kind of conflict is essentially not negotiable. Presumably, Kennedy would not negotiate away the Free World nor would Khrushchev negotiate away the communist one. When, at the suggestion of several people, they started re-defining the conflict as the location of seventy-two weapons systems, the size of the conflict shrunk. Where seventy-
two weapons are located, is a much easier conflict to handle than the differences between communism and the free world.

In personal relations, we see this happening all the time. Sometimes a husband and wife want to watch different programs on television at a given time but they only have one TV set. At first it may be a conflict about which program they are going to watch. It may then escalate into, "I never get my way; you are always selfish!" And it may then escalate into, "you are selfish and your family is selfish," etc. As it starts to develop in that way and grows in size, it is obviously much more difficult to resolve than when the conflict is simply defined in terms of, "what program do we watch now?"

It is very typical in parent and child relations for parents to define conflicts with children in ways which expand the scope of the issue enormously; for instance, by saying, "you are a bad child", in response to specific behavior. Specific behavior which is expressed at a given time and place, is much easier to withdraw from than one's whole personality.

And it is not an uncommon conflict for a woman in a department store to have a problem about purchasing a dress. The problem may concern the dress, not as an economic issue, but as a symbol of "self as a woman." If it becomes that -- the definition of self -- which is involved in making the decision, then there may be a great deal of difficulty in dealing with the issue. But if the situation is narrowed down to a specific choice, about a specific dress, it is much easier to manage. And part of the process of managing conflict, is not only helping people to get threats and intimidation out of the conflict process, but also helping them to define conflicts in a way, in terms of the issues involved, which make them more negotiable and more manageable.
Let me end by summarizing the implications of the theoretical and empirical work that my students and I have done in the area of conflict. In brief, if one wants to create the conditions for a destructive process of conflict resolution, one would introduce into the conflict the typical characteristics and effects of a competitive process: poor communication; coercive tactics; suspicion; the perception of basic differences in values; an orientation to increasing the power differences; challenge the legitimacy of the parties; and so forth. On the other hand, if one wants to create the conditions for a constructive process of conflict resolution, one would introduce into the conflict the typical effects of a cooperative process: good communication; the perception of similarity in beliefs and values; full acceptance of one another's legitimacy; problem-centered negotiations; mutual trust and confidence; information-sharing; and so forth.

However, bargaining and conflict resolution do not always take a constructive course. When the conflict takes a destructive course, third-parties can play a role in regulating, aborting, or undoing a malignant process of conflict resolution. The question is what framework can guide a third person who seeks to intervene therapeutically if negotiations are deadlocked or unproductive because of misunderstandings, faulty communications, the development of hostile attitudes, or the inability to discover a mutually satisfying solution. I suggest that such a framework is implicit in the idea that I have described earlier. The third party seeks to produce a constructive conflict resolution process by creating the conditions which characterize an effective cooperative problem-solving process: these conditions are the typical effects of a successful cooperative process.
Bibliographical Notes

For more detailed presentation of the theoretical ideas and research presented in this lecture the reader should consult the following books:


Figure 1  Prisoner's Dilemma

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willing to bear in relation to the conflict; the number of norms of
moral conduct from which behavior toward the other side is exempted;
and the intensity of negative attitudes toward the other side.

The processes involved in the intensification of conflict may be
said, as Coleman (1957; p. 14) has expressed it, "to create a 'Gresham's
Law of Conflict: the harmful and dangerous elements drive out
those which would keep the conflict within bounds." Paralleling the
expansion of the scope of conflict, there is an increasing reliance upon
a strategy of power and upon the tactics of threat, coercion, and de-
ception. Correspondingly, there is a shift away from a strategy of per-
suasion and from the tactics of conciliation, minimization of differ-
ces, and enhancement of mutual understanding and goodwill. Within
each of the conflicting parties, there is increasing pressure for
uniformity of opinion and a tendency for leadership and control to be
taken over by those elements that are militantly organized for waging
conflict through combat and taken away from those that are more con-
ciliatory.

The tendency to escalate conflict results from the conjunction of
three interrelated processes: (1) competitive processes involved in the
attempt to win the conflict; (2) processes of misperception and biased
perception; and (3) processes of commitment arising out of pressures
for cognitive and social consistency. These processes give rise to a
mutually reinforcing cycle of relations that generate actions and reac-
tions that intensify conflict.

Other factors, of course, may serve to limit and encapsulate conflict
so that a spiraling intensification does not develop. Here, we refer to
such factors as: the number and strength of the existing cooperative
bonds, cross-cutting identifications, common allegiances and mem-
berships among the conflicting parties; the existence of values, institu-
tions, procedures, and groups that are organized to help limit and reg-
ulate conflict; and the salience and significance of the costs of
intensifying conflict. If these conflict-limiting factors are weak, it may
be difficult to prevent a competitive conflict from expanding in scope.
Even if they are strong, misjudgment and the pressures arising out of
tendencies to be rigidly self-consistent may make it difficult to keep a
competitive conflict encapsulated.

Competitive effects. In chapter 2, I characterized the essential dis-
tinctions between a cooperative and competitive process and de-
scribed their social psychological features in some detail. Here, I shall