

The Analysis Process

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

In this lesson, we'll discuss conflict analysis as a step in the resolution process that can sometimes be necessary in more complicated conflicts. The specific areas of focus include:

1. Process of Conflict Analysis
2. When to Use Conflict Analysis
3. Factors Included in a Conflict Maps
4. Creating and Sharing a Conflict Map

1. Process of Conflict Analysis

In a typical conflict resolution process, both parties meet with the conflict intervener to share their perspectives, interests, needs, and goals. However, some conflicts are just too complicated to be resolved this way immediately. In these cases, the intervener needs to do a little information gathering first.

This is the purpose of **conflict analysis**, which is a process that an intervener can use to gather information about the conflict, and then create a **model** to represent the information.



STEP BY STEP

1. *Gathering Information*

The first step in the analysis process is for the intervener to look more closely at the conflict in terms of:

- The people involved
- The events that occurred
- The history

This portion of the conflict analysis process is done separately with each participant. If there are more than two parties, the intervener would still meet with each one separately to gather information.

2. *Creating a Model*

The intervener will then create a model, or symbolic representation of all the information that the intervener gathered. The model can include information like:

- Worldview
- Events
- Concepts
- Facts

3. *Sharing the Model as a Conflict Map*

After creating this model, the intervener can share it in a meeting with both parties. The model typically takes the form of a **conflict map**, which is a graphical representation of the information gathered by the intervener. This conflict map is designed to be an easy and effective way for the parties to view the information.



TERMS TO KNOW

Conflict Analysis

A process (and associated product) of looking at a conflict's participants and history, creating an easily consulted model of the conflict.

Model

A symbolic representation of a system, including concepts, worldviews, and events.

Conflict Map

A conflict analysis translated into graphical (chart, table, etc.) form.

2. When to Use Conflict Analysis

Conflict analysis is typically used in conflicts that are very long term, such as international, political, or multi-party conflicts.

↪ **EXAMPLE** An environmental dispute between parties over land use or an organizational conflict within a company are some instances of more intense and complicated conflict in which analysis could be appropriate.

It can also be used in any situation in which the conflict is intense enough that the resolution process would benefit from some analysis upfront.

↪ **EXAMPLE** There's a high-rise building that's going up in a neighborhood, and residents are objecting to this. In this case, there are likely multiple issues involved, and it would be helpful for the intervener to meet with each party separately to gather information before bringing the parties together.

3. Factors Included in a Conflict Map

In situations that require conflict analysis, one of the goals of the process is for the intervener to identify the issues and unacknowledged parties upfront so that there's a better chance of selecting and designing the best process for solving the conflict.

In order to achieve this, there's a variety of information that the intervener will want to collect, depending on the nature of the conflict.

However, there are several specific factors that an intervener will typically consider:

- *History and Context* History involves the origin of the conflict, and the major events relating to the conflict that have taken place during this time. The context is where the conflict is taking place, either geographically, temporally, or hierarchically within an organization.

Determining history and context also includes identifying the parties involved in the conflict. This could be both primary parties, secondary parties, or any third parties that are involved, such as peace-makers that have already come into the conflict in the past.

- *Goals/Interests and Causes/Consequences* You've learned the importance of identifying the parties' goals and underlying interests in a conflict, but it can sometimes be difficult to tell the difference between what was a cause of the conflict, and what was a consequence of it. This is particularly true in conflicts that have been spiraling for some time.
- *Dynamics* This refers to what has happened throughout the conflict. The dynamics of a conflict may include polarization, spiraling (both of which we will discuss in later lessons), escalation, and de-escalation. These are just a few of the common elements that could be very helpful for the intervener to think about when creating the map.

4. Creating and Sharing a Conflict Map

There are a variety of ways that the gathered information can be taken and put into a graphical conflict map, and the way that is best will depend on the nature of the conflict. The intervener might want to put the information in a chart with spaces for each party to fill in.

The chart could be divided into the following sections:

- Parties
- Interests
- Issues
- Impact

Or the intervener might decide to represent the information in another way if this is a conflict in which the issues are interpreted differently by each side.

IN CONTEXT

A new high-rise building is going up in a neighborhood. Party A is the neighborhood's residents, and Party B is the company building the high-rise.

Party A objects to this new building because the neighborhood has always been very quiet, with great views and a park. To map this conflict, you as the intervener draw a circle for Party A, around which you write that party's perceptions, goals, and interests that you learned when meeting with the party during the analysis process.

When you meet with Party B, you also gather information about their perceptions, goals, and interests. Like you did for Party A, you draw a circle around which you fill in this information.

Because the goal is to come to a resolution somewhere in the middle, you might represent that by a circle in the middle where you can later put solution ideas contributed by both parties.

This is just one way that you might represent the information that you've gathered when conducting a conflict resolution process.

Once the conflict map is created, there will be a joint meeting in which the intervener will meet in person with both parties to share this conflict map. By that point, the intervener will have checked in with each party separately regarding the content of the map to ensure that it is an accurate representation of each party's view.



TERM TO KNOW

Joint Meeting

A meeting between parties held in person with a conflict intervener present.



SUMMARY

In this lesson, you learned that **conflict analysis** is **used when** an intervener is trying to resolve an intense, complicated, or multi-party conflict. The process of conflict analysis involves gathering information in separate meetings with each party, creating a model of the conflict in the form of a conflict map, and sharing the **conflict map** in a joint meeting with both parties.

You now understand that some common factors included in a conflict map are the **history and context** of the conflict, the parties' **goals and interests**, the **causes and consequences** of the conflict, and the **dynamics** of the conflict. There are many different ways of **creating a conflict map**, and the structure you use will depend on the complexity of the conflict, as well as the amount of information you're gathering.

Source: Adapted from Sophia tutorial by Marlene Johnson.



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