**Conflict and Power**

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COM-3700

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November 9, 2021

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Globally, public issues are an increasing source of conflict between community members and law enforcement. Conflicts have been rising as both parties cannot agree on how a particular situation should be handled. The disagreements are because both parties have differing perspectives, and neither of them is willing to give up their perspective and resonate with their counterpart. However, it should be noted that a good relationship between community members and law enforcement is essential.

**Factors Contributing to Conflict between Law Enforcements and the Public**

Usually, the goal is for law enforcement and community members to work collaboratively. Conflicts do arise along the way, and one group may tend to suppress the other's concerns. It is usually challenging to identify where the conflicts root from, but Dukes (2018) identified three possible factors contributing to such conflicts. The first condition is competing for scarce resources—for example, estate roads. The community may feel that the police are not entitled to use the roads as they did not participate in construction. Secondly, the two groups may conflict by being assigned conflicting goals or "unrealistic" deadlines. The law enforcers may impose curfews to curb neighborhoods' crime rates, and the businessmen may protest, claiming it is too early. Thus, there will be a misunderstanding that can cause harm if not resolved. Then to add in conflicting resources such as funding and manpower may increase the hostilities between the two parties. Lastly, failure to issue directions or offer incomplete directions contributes to conflict between law enforcement and citizens. When the factors do occur, it is advisable to return to the drawing board and make necessary amendments. Clear identification of priorities, drawing clear, authoritative lines, and assigning duties to guide the groups towards collaboration.

**Perception of Power as a Source of Conflict**

Conflicts arise between law enforcement groups and community members because both parties think they have different perceptions of power. Simpson's (2017) study shows that participation is the major issue between law enforcers and society. Community members think that they should be part of decision-making and planning, while law enforcement is ambivalent about community members taking part in decision-making and planning. Community members feel that they can participate in high-level decisions, but the law enforcers are not willing to share their decision-making power with the people (Simpson, 2017). Thus, the conflict arises when the law enforcement is reluctant about involving the community in decision-making and planning. At the same time, the community members claim that law enforcement is inefficient in performing their duties and responsibilities. Also, society thinks that law enforcers violate governance rules such as transparency, power-sharing, openness, and justice because they prefer to make decisions by themselves, which leads to conflict.

**The Relational Theory of Power**

According to Qin (2018), the relational theory of power says power lies in interpersonal relations between two parties, not on an individual's quality. Therefore, in this case, claiming that the police have power over communities is similar to the reliance that communities have on the police, and vice versa. Additionally, the posit says that power is flexible, as it moves as each party becomes reliant on the resources that the opposite party may give.

However, the relationship between the community members and police can be described as tense. The community members no longer trust law enforcement because they are mostly not involved in community decision-making, which builds a barrier of mistrust. On the other hand, law enforcement expects the community members to follow what is decided (by them) without a consensus between the two parties. Thus, even if the law enforcement intentions are genuine, the community members still do not trust them under the pretext of poor governance. An example is a relationship between African Americans and the police. African Americans do not trust law enforcement one bit. Thus, this hinders the parties from resolving their conflicts as they are rigid about their perceptions. Therefore, if law enforces embraced good governance with community members and lets them participate in community-related matters, conflict resolution would be simpler as both parties are content and subjectivity is absent.

**Conflict Response Strategies**

To resolve conflicts, parties must practice active listening to give their counterpart a listening ear and apply creativity in conflict settlement. Active listening involves one party understanding what their counterpart says and helping the speaker explain themselves more clearly. For instance, in conflict resolving between the community and law enforcers or vice versa, the audience needs to involve the speaker, listen to their grievances, and address them accordingly. Both parties need to acknowledge each others' sensitivity of feelings and emotions then reflect on what they are saying before giving their feedback. According to Durrah et al. (2018), creativity in conflict resolution between community members and law enforcement is not planned for. The two parties need to approach the conflict with open-mindedness, and the exercise might yield unexpected solutions that favor both parties.

**Active Listening**

Active listening is an interest-based form of conflict resolution requiring warring parties to reflect on themselves and their skills (Sallee, 2018). If an audience is attentive, it helps the speaker feel respected, less pressured by emotions, and composed in their thoughts. The audience, on the other hand, gets to hear the speaker's grievances. With such harmony, a consensus can easily be reached. Also, say that the community members are presenting their grievances to the law enforcement. The latter have to incorporate non-verbal skills of active listening like maintaining eye contact, stopping all other activities just to listen, being flexible in body language, and having silent moments. That way, the community members will see local authorities that truly care for them and become flexible for conflict resolution.

Conclusively, this blog covered conditions that contribute to conflict between law enforcement and the public, discussed different perceptions regarding both parties, and utilized the relational theory of power to analyze perceptions. The final parts of the paper discuss conflict resolution strategies and offer an in-depth discussion on negotiation as one of the strategies.

References

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