11.2: The Theory of Conflict

Conflict: to struggle, clash, be incompatible. (Oxford Dictionary, n.d.)

For centuries, people accepted adversarial disputes and harsh conflict as a by-product of human nature. This acceptance caused people to analyze only how conflict could be resolved, that is, how they could make it go away. In the past decade or two, many people have started to also ask, "Why is conflict resolved in that way?" and, "Might there be a better way?"

If we are to make progress toward better conflict resolution, it is imperative that we understand why conflicts arise and how people traditionally have reacted to conflict situations. When we are able to analyze more clearly the causes of disputes, we will be able to determine better what processes need to be implemented to produce a more positive outcome to the conflict.