

Tribes and Explorers – Instructor Reference Notes Handout

First impressions and limited understandings of the other party may form a ‘pitchfork effect’ – a bias in social perception that causes one to generalize the other party as being negative on the basis of one single, negative trait. Such perceptions can lead to the experience of emotions towards parties – emotions such as animosity, skepticism and even antagonism. Participants who assumed the role of island tribe members may have formed the impression that the expedition crew members are invaders (the term ‘invaders’ was meant to provoke this reaction), and that they are here to forcibly wrest control of the island from them. Likewise, the crew members may have thought of the island tribe members as little more than savages, without any inkling of civilized thinking or reasoning. These perceptions lead to attributions that the other group is self-serving, and certainly this activity is intended to create such a perception. The key in this activity then, lies in overcoming these negative perceptions and the emotions arising from these perceptions. Overcoming these perceptions and emotions would then allow both the island tribe members and explorers to consider a mutually-beneficial outcome from collaborating.

From this activity, participants are also introduced to the challenges and barriers to successful negotiation outcomes. Sometimes the key to a win-win negotiation outcome rests not on ‘splitting the pie’ – which would have resulted in less than optimal outcomes. This usually occurs when the negotiating parties involved go into the negotiation thinking win-lose, and end up compromising, instead of collaborating. This is commonly the outcome when the explorers and island tribe members start pushing for their own wants without considering the wants of the party. While the scenario was intended to do this, the optimal solution would have been to realize that both parties could have ‘expanded the pie’. To do so, both the explorers and the island tribe members could have engaged in a mutually-beneficial relationship which may include (but is not limited to):

- Tribe members learning how to cultivate livestock from the explorers, and not need to hunt wildlife for food.
- The crew scientist learns the medicinal value of new plants from the medicine man of the tribes.
- The crew engineer shares ship-building knowledge with the tribe’s builder, helping the tribe improve its fishing techniques.
- The alchemist and jeweler work together in crafting refined jewelry/ornaments that make for better offerings, and consist of purer, refined metallic elements in the ornaments.

It is not uncommon for negotiations to fall apart – the parties may end up considering violence as a viable option as the days progress without any mutually-acceptable progress being made. This can also be a reflection of how such social perceptions creates a stark distinction between in-groups and out-groups, and how inter-group behaviour may also result from negative perceptions held towards members of the out-group. This is one reason why organizations have ‘silos’ – isolated departments, teams or divisions that function mostly independently, and are hesitant to interact with, or cooperate with other teams. Such silos as area created and persist because of inter-group emotion – emotions we feel towards our own group members which differ strongly and in stark comparison with emotions we feel towards those outside of our group.