

15

COALITIONS AND TRUST FORMATION

Objective: To examine the importance of trust in the creation of lasting coalitions for a mixed group.

TIME REQUIRED 30 minutes or less

RISK LEVEL Low

PARTICIPANTS NEEDED Any number of participants, plus one facilitator

PROCEDURE Please take the following steps:

1. Recruit three volunteers representing different cultural groups, broadly defined, for a 5-minute experiment.
2. Seat all three people around a table, with the other participants seated or standing so they can hear what is happening.
3. Lay four quarters (25-cent coins) in front of the three people and tell them that the distribution of the total sum of money will depend on majority rule by the three parties in this experiment.
4. Explain that the amount of money cannot be divided into smaller units such as dimes and nickels. Typically, the three people will divide the money as equally as possible and declare the experience over.
5. At that point, remind them that the experience is to last a full 5 minutes, and sit quietly and wait.
6. Carefully monitor the experience, but do not interfere. Typically, within a minute or two one of the players will suggest a two-way split of the money, and the other person will agree. Then, within another minute, the third person will agree to a 75:25 split rather than lose everything, and that coalition will last, cutting out the first person who suggested a 50:50 split.
7. Discuss the outcome of this experience.

DEBRIEFING

The facilitator may want to explore the logic behind whatever distribution of the four quarters occurred during the 5 minutes and why. Some discussion questions include the following:

1. Why was the first person to suggest a 50:50 split cut out of the lasting coalition?
2. What strategy would you use to end up with the most money?
3. Would the same dynamics occur in all cultures?
4. If the negotiation was not about money, would the outcome be different?
5. What feelings did participants have during the experience?

INSIGHT

Lasting coalitions across different cultures and individuals depend on each party trusting the other party or parties.