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Interpersonal Conflict in *the Social Network* Film by David Fincher (2010)

Muhammad Rezky Aditya Nugraha[1], Firdiansyah [2], Norra Erisha[3]
Email: adit66313@gmail.com
[1,2,3] Faculty of Adab and Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Thaha Saifuddin, Jambi, Indonesia

ABSTRACT
This study examines the conditions and factors contributing to interpersonal conflict and the conflict management styles demonstrated by Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin in *The Social Network* (2010). Drawing on Wilmot and Hocker's (2001) theory of interpersonal conflict, the study employs a qualitative descriptive approach. The data consist of selected dialogues relevant to the development and management of interpersonal conflict between the two characters. Data were collected through documentation and analyzed using Miles and Huberman's (1994) framework of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. The analysis identified 12 data instances related to the conditions and factors contributing to interpersonal conflict, categorized as expressed struggle, perceived incompatible goals, perceived scarce resources, and interference. In addition, 11 data instances represented four conflict management styles: avoiding, competition, accommodation, and compromise. The findings illustrate how interpersonal conflict develops through expressed disagreements, incompatible objectives, competition over resources, and interference in the characters' respective goals. They also demonstrate how different responses to conflict shape the deterioration of Mark and Eduardo's friendship and business partnership. Overall, the film portrays interpersonal conflict as a developing process influenced by both the circumstances surrounding the disagreement and the strategies used by the characters to respond to it.

Keywords: conflict styles, conflict triggers, film analysis, interpersonal conflict, t*he social network*

INTRODUCTION
Interpersonal conflict is an inevitable part of human relationships, particularly when individuals have different goals, interests, expectations, and perceptions (Derkach, 2025). In relationships that combine personal connections with professional responsibilities, disagreements may become more complex because decisions concerning resources, authority, and shared goals can affect both the relationship and the interests of the individuals involved (Ergun, 2024). Wilmot and Hocker (2001) conceptualise interpersonal conflict as an expressed struggle between interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others. This perspective emphasises that conflict involves not only differences in interests but also the ways individuals perceive and communicate those differences. Therefore, examining the factors that trigger conflict and the styles individuals use to respond to it is important for understanding how interpersonal disagreements develop and affect relationships.

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Film provides a medium for representing interpersonal relationships and conflicts through dialogue, characterisation, and narrative development (Spahiu, 2025). Cutting (2016) discusses film in terms of narrative events connected through time, space, and cause-and-effect relationships. Through these elements, films can illustrate how disagreements emerge, escalate, and influence relationships. One film that presents these dynamics is *The Social Network* (2010), directed by David Fincher. The film dramatizes the establishment of Facebook and the disputes surrounding its development, particularly the deteriorating relationship between Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin. Their relationship begins with friendship and a shared business venture but becomes increasingly strained by disagreements concerning business priorities, decision-making, and their respective interests. This situation provides a relevant context for examining interpersonal conflict within a relationship involving both personal and professional interdependence.

Two important concepts for examining this conflict are conflict triggers and conflict styles. Conflict triggers refer to the circumstances, actions, or interactions that initiate or intensify disagreements between individuals. These may include incompatible goals, unmet expectations, perceived interference, or unequal involvement in decision-making (Wu, 2025). Conflict styles, meanwhile, refer to the characteristic ways individuals respond to and manage disagreements. Wilmot and Hocker (2001) provide a theoretical perspective for understanding interpersonal conflict and the ways individuals manage competing interests. In this study, conflict triggers and conflict styles are examined as related but distinct analytical dimensions: the former concerns the circumstances that initiate or intensify conflict, whereas the latter concerns how the characters respond to those circumstances (Trifan, 2024). Examining both dimensions can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the conflict between Mark and Eduardo than identifying disagreements alone.

Previous studies have examined interpersonal communication, conflict, and character interactions in film and other communication contexts. Aziz and Hashim (2025), for example, investigated politeness strategies in *The Social Network* using Brown and Levinson's politeness theory. Their qualitative content analysis examined dialogue through positive politeness, negative politeness, bald-on-record, and off-record strategies, highlighting the role of language in interpersonal dynamics and power relations. Similarly, Koc (2026) examined Mark Zuckerberg's impression management strategies in *The Social Network* through the framework developed by Jones and Pittman. The study identified self-promotion, ingratiation, and intimidation as prominent strategies in the character's interactions. These studies demonstrate that the film has been examined from different perspectives on interpersonal communication. However, their principal analytical focus is on politeness and impression management rather than the specific relationship between conflict triggers and conflict styles.

Research in other communication contexts also provides insights into how interpersonal conflict develops. Wang et al. (2022) investigated the emergence of conflict in online conversations by examining user characteristics and conversational dynamics. Their findings indicated that changes in discussion patterns, including increased person-oriented communication, could help explain the emergence of conflict. Although their study focuses on online conversations rather than fictional film narratives, it emphasizes the importance of examining how conflict develops through interactions rather than treating disagreement as an isolated event. Taken together, these studies provide relevant insights into interpersonal communication, interaction patterns, and conflict development. Nevertheless, their different theoretical frameworks and research contexts leave room for a focused examination of the circumstances that trigger conflict and the styles used to respond to it within the relationship between Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin.

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The research gap addressed in this study concerns the analytical connection between conflict triggers and conflict styles in the interactions between the two characters. The studies by Aziz and Hashim (2025) and Koç (2026) examine communication strategies in the same film but employ theoretical frameworks different from the one adopted in the present study. Meanwhile, Wang et al. (2022) investigate conflict emergence in online conversations rather than in a film narrative involving a friendship and business partnership. Accordingly, the present study examines how specific circumstances and interactions trigger or intensify conflict between Mark and Eduardo and how their responses can be interpreted through the selected framework of interpersonal conflict. Rather than treating conflict triggers and conflict styles as unrelated categories, the study considers their relationship within the development of the characters' deteriorating relationship. This focus establishes the study's intended contribution while distinguishing it from the research discussed above.

The Social Network (2010) is selected because it presents a complex interpersonal conflict between Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin, who are portrayed as close friends and business partners involved in the establishment of Facebook. Their disagreements concern the direction of the company, financial priorities, decision-making, and the changing balance of power within their partnership. One illustrative exchange occurs when Eduardo states, "It's time to monetize the thing," and Mark responds, "No," before explaining that Facebook's popularity is a "priceless asset" that he does not want to give up (*The Social Network*, 2010, 00:46:43–00:47:16). This exchange illustrates their differing positions concerning the company's development and provides an example of dialogue that can be examined in relation to interpersonal conflict. By considering the dialogue within its broader narrative context, the study seeks to understand not only the existence of disagreement but also the circumstances that contribute to its development and the ways the characters respond to it.

Based on the discussion above, this study addresses two research questions: (1) What factors trigger interpersonal conflict between Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin in *The Social Network* (2010)? and (2) What conflict styles are demonstrated by Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin in responding to their interpersonal conflicts? Accordingly, this study aims to identify and analyze the conflict triggers represented in their interactions and to examine the conflict styles demonstrated by both characters using Wilmot and Hocker's (2001) framework. The intended novelty of this research lies in its focused examination of the relationship between conflict triggers and conflict styles within the deteriorating friendship and business partnership of the two characters. By analyzing selected dialogue in its narrative context, this study seeks to contribute to a more integrated understanding of how interpersonal conflict emerges and is managed in *The Social Network*.

METHOD

This study employed a qualitative descriptive design to examine interpersonal conflict between Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin in *The Social Network* (2010), directed by David Fincher. A qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study focused on interpreting dialogue, character interactions, and the development of conflict rather than quantifying variables. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is used to explore and understand the meanings that individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. In this study, the qualitative approach was applied to identify the triggers of interpersonal conflict and to analyze the conflict styles demonstrated by the two characters based on Wilmot and Hocker's (2001) interpersonal conflict framework.

The primary data source was the film *The Social Network* (2010), which the researcher accessed through Apple TV. The film's screenplay, obtained from ScriptSlug, was used as a

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supporting reference to verify the accuracy of the dialogue. The data consisted of verbal utterances exchanged between Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin that represented interpersonal conflict. Utterances served as the unit of analysis, particularly when they indicated disagreement, incompatible goals, perceived interference, or responses to conflict. The data were selected purposively according to their relevance to the research questions. No human participants were involved because the study analyzed a film as an audiovisual and textual document.

The data were collected through documentation. Following Sugiyono's (2013) concept of documentation, the researcher repeatedly watched the film to understand its storyline, the relationship between the characters, and the development of the conflict. The researcher then examined the screenplay to identify and verify the relevant dialogue, recorded the selected utterances along with their contextual information and timestamps, and organized them according to their relevance to the research questions. The selected data were subsequently classified deductively into categories of conflict triggers and conflict styles based on the theoretical framework employed in the study.

The data were analyzed descriptively using the three interrelated procedures of qualitative data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994): data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected utterances relevant to the research questions and excluded dialogue that did not contribute to the analysis. In the data display stage, the selected utterances were organized and described in relation to their context, the conflict triggers they represented, and the conflict styles demonstrated by the characters. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the findings in relation to Wilmot and Hocker's (2001) framework. The researcher repeatedly reviewed both the film and the corresponding screenplay to ensure the accuracy of the dialogue and the consistency of the interpretations with the research questions.

The analysis identified 12 data instances related to the conditions and factors contributing to interpersonal conflict and 11 data instances representing conflict styles. To maintain the focus and conciseness of the discussion, two illustrative excerpts were selected for presentation in each analytical category. The selection was based on the relevance of each excerpt to the research questions and its capacity to demonstrate the characteristics of the category being discussed. Therefore, the excerpts presented in this article do not represent the entire dataset; rather, they illustrate the findings derived from the overall analysis.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis yielded 23 data instances across two analytical dimensions: 12 data instances concerning the conditions and factors contributing to interpersonal conflict and 11 data instances concerning conflict styles. To maintain analytical focus, two representative excerpts are presented for each category to highlight the most relevant features of the findings. The discussion is therefore based on the analysis of the identified dataset, while the presented excerpts function as representative evidence for the interpretations offered.

This section presents the analysis of interpersonal conflict between Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin in *The Social Network* (2010), directed by David Fincher. The data consist of verbal utterances and contextual scenes from the film, while the screenplay was used as a supporting reference to verify the dialogue. The data were analyzed using Wilmot and Hocker's (2001) interpersonal conflict framework. The analysis reveals that the conflict between the two characters is not a sudden or isolated event, but rather a progressive and cumulative process rooted in structural inequality, communication breakdown, and competing interests.

Two aspects of the conflict were identified: (1) the conditions that trigger and sustain the

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conflict, and (2) the conflict styles employed by the two characters in managing it.

1. Triggers of Interpersonal Conflict

According to Wilmot and Hocker (2001), conflict is an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others. These four conditions appear consistently across the film.

Expressed Struggle

Expressed struggle occurs when a disagreement moves beyond private feeling and becomes visible to both parties through verbal or nonverbal communication. It is not limited to shouting; persistent questioning, repeated attempts to raise an issue, and withholding cooperation can also express a struggle.

Extract 1 (00:46:43 – 00:47:16)

*Eduardo : "**It's time to monetize the thing."***
Mark : "No."
Eduardo : "We've got 4000 members."
Mark : "We know that it's cool, that is a priceless asset I'm not giving it up"
Eduardo : "When will it be finished?"

This is one of the earliest open struggles between the two characters. Eduardo states his position directly as the company's CFO, and Mark's one-word refusal confirms that the disagreement is now an open conflict rather than a private tension. The exchange also establishes the communication pattern that runs through the whole story: Eduardo raises legitimate business concerns, and Mark closes them down without discussion.

Extract 2 (01:32:28 – 01:32:40)

*Eduardo : "**I do not want that guy representing himself as part of this company."***
Mark : "You gotta move out here, Wardo, this is where it's all happening." Eduard o : "Did you hear what I just said?"
Mark :" I'm afraid if you don't come out here you're going to get left behind."
Eduardo : "what did you mean get left behind?"

Eduardo objects to Sean Parker's involvement without hinting or hedging. Mark redirects the conversation to Eduardo's relocation to California and adds a vague warning that Eduardo might "get left behind." The struggle is therefore fully expressed on Eduardo's side, while Mark's deflection intensifies it by leaving the concern unacknowledged. The warning also shifts the issue from Sean to a larger question: who belongs in Facebook's future.

Perceived Incompatible Goals

Perceived incompatible goals arise when parties believe their objectives cannot both be achieved. The goals need not be objectively irreconcilable; if they are experienced as mutually exclusive, the resulting conflict is just as real (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001).

Extract 1 (00:47:15 – 00:47:19)

Mark : "We know that it's cool, that is a priceless asset I'm not giving it up."
Eduardo : "When will it be finished?"
*Mark : "**It won't be finished, that's the point. The way fashion's never finished."***

Eduardo wants to generate revenue through advertising, while Mark wants to protect what he regards as a "priceless asset," the coolness of Facebook. For Eduardo, a product that is never finished never produces returns; for Mark, incompleteness is the source of its value. The two men are not just disagreeing about tactics but speaking different languages about what Facebook is and should become.

Extract 2 (01:05:39 – 01:05:48)

Eduardo : "Unless you're the Ballet Theatre of Hartford, the purpose of a business is to

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make a profit."
Mark : ***"This isn't a business yet."***
Eduardo : *"That's tough for me because my job is to… nevermind."*
Mark's four-word reply rejects not only Eduardo's proposal but the whole framework through which Eduardo evaluates the company. Eduardo's self-interruption shows that he recognizes, mid-sentence, that completing his thought is pointless. The incompatibility has reached a point where he silences himself before the conflict can even be fully expressed.

Perceived Scarce Resource

A perceived scarce resource is any positively valued physical, economic, or social consequence that parties believe is limited or unequally distributed (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). In this film, the most important scarce resources are ownership equity and recognition as a co-founder.

Extract 1 (00:28:10 – 00:28:17)
Eduardo : *"We're gonna need a little start up cash to rent the servers and get it online."*
Mark : *"**We'll split it 70-30. 70 for me, 30 for you for putting up the thousand dollars and handling everything on the business end. You're CFO."***
Eduardo : *"I said 'Let's do it.'"*
Mark presents the 70-30 split as a fait accompli rather than a negotiation, securing the dominant share before the company even launches. Equity here carries voting rights and decision-making authority, not only money. Eduardo's immediate agreement normalizes a power imbalance that becomes the root of later disputes over authority and credit.

Extract 2 (01:42:59 – 01:43:05)
Eduardo : *"You issued over 24 million new shares of stock." Mark : "You were told that if new investors came along…"*
Eduardo : ***"How much were your shares diluted? How much were his?!."***
Eduardo : *"Point zero three percent."*
This is the climax of the resource conflict. The issuance of new shares reduces Eduardo's stake from 34.4% to 0.03%, while the stakes of the other principals are protected. Mark frames the dilution as standard business practice, but its selective application shows that equity was used as a tool of exclusion. The figure "point zero three percent" quantifies how little Eduardo's friendship, investment, labor, and identity as a co-founder were ultimately valued.

Interference

Interference occurs when one party perceives that the other is actively blocking or undermining their goals or actions. It is the experience of being blocked, not merely disagreed with, that turns tension into genuine interpersonal conflict (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001).

Extract 1 (01:36:06 – 01:36:20)
Mark : *"You froze our account?"*
Eduardo : *"I did"*
Mark : *" You froze the account"*
Eduardo : *"I had to get your attention, Mark."*
Mark : *"Do you realize that your actions could have permanently destroyed everything I've been working on?"*
Eduardo : ***"We've been working on."***
Freezing the company account is the most direct act of interference in the film. Yet it is less a destructive act than a desperate one: after being ignored and excluded, it is Eduardo's last available tool of influence. His quiet correction, "We've been working on," asserts that the company belongs to both of them. Interference operates in both directions here. Eduardo blocks

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Mark's access to funds, but Mark has for months blocked Eduardo's access to information, decisions, and authority, in a slower and less visible way.

Extract 2 (01:43:41 – 01:43:47)

*Eduardo : **"You set me up."***

Mark : "You're gonna blame me because you were the business head of the company and you made a bad business deal with your own company?!"

In the final confrontation, interference has become the complete institutional removal of Eduardo from the company he co-founded. His accusation that he was set up is accurate rather than exaggerated. Sean's contemptuous remark about Eduardo "parading around in ridiculous suits" shows that the interference is not only strategic but also personal, aimed at diminishing Eduardo's sense of himself.

2. Conflict Styles in the Management of Interpersonal Conflict

Wilmot and Hocker (2001) define conflict styles as patterned responses, or clusters of behavior, that people use in conflict. Four styles were found in the conflict between Mark and Eduardo: avoiding, competition, accommodation, and compromise.

Avoiding

Avoiding is the denial or sidestepping of conflict instead of engaging with it directly. The avoider is often fully aware of the tension but chooses not to confront it, which usually leaves the underlying issue unresolved (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). This style is used mainly by Mark.

Extract 1 (00:48:28 – 00:48:44)

*Mark : **"I didn't think it was a big deal."***

Eduardo : "If there's something wrong, if there's ever anything wrong, you can tell me. I'm the guy that wants to help. This is our thing."

Mark : "No."

Mark withheld the Winklevoss cease-and-desist letter from Eduardo and, once confronted, dismisses the legal threat as insignificant. Eduardo responds with an offer of openness and partnership, and Mark's single-word answer shuts that space down. The conflict is not resolved, only refused, so the tension remains and grows beneath the surface.

Extract 2 (01:32:28 – 01:32:40)

Eduardo : "I do not want that guy representing himself as part of this company" Mark

*: **"You gotta move out here, Wardo, this is where it's all happening"** Eduardo*

: "Did you hear what I just said?"

In the same scene discussed under expressed struggle, Mark answers Eduardo's objection to Sean by talking about California and "where it's all happening." Avoidance here is not neutral. By refusing to address the concern, Mark effectively resolves it in Sean's favour, so every act of avoidance also decides the conflict's outcome in his favour.

Competition

Competition is a style in which one party pursues their own goals at the other's expense, prioritizing winning over the relationship. It is characterized by assertiveness, blame-shifting, and attacks on the other party's credibility (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001).

Extract 1 (01:36:20 – 01:36:26)

*Mark : "**That was the act of a child, not a businessman. And it certainly the act of a friend."***

Eduardo : "Maybe you were frustrated" Mark : "Yeah!"

Mark attacks Eduardo's professional competence and his character as a friend in a single sentence. He does not ask why Eduardo froze the account and does not acknowledge the months

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of exclusion that preceded it. The aim is not to resolve the conflict but to win it by invalidating Eduardo's standing.

Extract 2 (01:43:45 – 01:44:34)

Eduardo : "You set me up?"
Mark : "You made a bad business deal with your own company?!."
Sean : "You think we were gonna let you parade around in your ridiculous suits pretending you were running this company?"
Eduardo : "I'm not comin' back for my 30 percent, I'm comin' back for everything."

In the final confrontation, competition operates on both sides. Mark shifts the blame for the dilution to Eduardo, and Sean's word "pretending" invalidates Eduardo's role entirely. Eduardo's declaration then marks his own decisive shift to the competitive style: rather than capitulating, he escalates, and the contest moves from dialogue to the courts.

Accommodation

Accommodation is a style in which one party sets aside their own concerns to maintain harmony or satisfy the other. It can be healthy when the issue is minor, but when used habitually in serious conflicts it creates a pattern in which one party gives while the other takes (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). This style is used mainly by Eduardo.

Extract 1 (00:28:10 – 00:28:17)

Mark : "We'll split it 70-30. 70 for me, 30 for you for putting up the thousand dollars and handling everything on the business end. You're CFO."
Eduardo ***: "I said 'Let's do it'"***

Eduardo's "Let's do it" in response to the 70-30 split is the foundational moment of accommodation. He does not question the fairness of the split or make a counteroffer, prioritizing the friendship and the opportunity over his own interests. This is understandable in the moment, but it creates a precedent that makes later inequality possible.

Extract 2 (01:17:26 – 01:17:40)

Mark : "What's this?"
Eduardo : "I opened a new account and put $18,000 in it. Will that get you through the summer?"
Mark : "Welcome to Facebook."

Despite his doubts about the California move and Sean's influence, Eduardo gives Mark $18,000 without conditions and without raising his concerns. Mark receives the money without gratitude and turns to greet the interns. The scene captures the core dynamic: Eduardo consistently accommodates, and Mark consistently takes that accommodation for granted.

Compromise

Compromise is a style in which both parties make partial concessions to reach a temporary resolution. It works best between parties of relatively equal power and good faith; without these conditions it tends to be superficial (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001).

Datum 1 (01:37:30 – 01:37:35)

Eduardo : "I'm sorry I was angry and maybe it was childish." Mark : ***"I need my CFO."***
Eduardo : "I'm on my way." Mark : "we did it"

Both characters make concessions: Eduardo admits his action was "maybe childish," and Mark stops condemning him and re-extends his role. For a moment, shared ownership and mutual respect are restored. However, the compromise is hollow because none of the structural

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problems (Sean's influence, Eduardo's exclusion, his diminishing authority) is addressed. It is immediately followed by the re-incorporation meeting in which Eduardo unknowingly signs away his ownership.

Extract 2 (01:15:17 – 01:15:23)
Dustin :"150,004"
Mark : "150,000 members, Wardo" Eduardo : " ***Congratulations, dude"***
A second, briefer instance occurs when Dustin announces that Facebook has reached 150,000 members and both men pause their argument, with Eduardo sincerely congratulating Mark. This compromise is emotional and instinctive rather than negotiated, and shows that the friendship is not yet entirely consumed by conflict. Such moments become rarer as the story progresses.

Discussion

The findings suggest that the conflict between Mark and Eduardo develops through the interaction of competing business priorities, disputes over ownership and participation, and communication patterns that leave important concerns unresolved. The disagreement over monetization illustrates perceived incompatible goals, whereas the ownership dispute highlights the significance of equity and decision-making authority as contested resources. The account-freezing episode provides more direct evidence of perceived interference, as both characters explicitly perceive and discuss the other's actions as obstacles to their respective goals.

The analysis also indicates that the characters' conflict responses vary across different stages of the conflict. In the selected excerpts, Mark sometimes avoids addressing Eduardo's concerns directly and, at other times, responds competitively by dismissing Eduardo's position and prioritizing his own goals. Eduardo initially accepts the proposed ownership arrangement, subsequently attempts to communicate his concerns, and eventually responds more confrontationally during the final dispute. These responses should therefore be interpreted as context-specific patterns of behavior rather than fixed personality traits.

The evidence for accommodation and compromise is less conclusive. Eduardo's initial agreement to the ownership division and his financial support for Facebook do not, by themselves, demonstrate that he accommodated Mark's interests at the expense of his own. Similarly, apologies and moments of positive interaction do not necessarily constitute compromise in the absence of evidence of reciprocal concessions on the disputed issues. Accordingly, these categories warrant more cautious interpretation or require additional supporting evidence.

Overall, the film illustrates how disagreements concerning business priorities and ownership can become intertwined with friendship, trust, and perceived exclusion. The conflict escalates as the characters' concerns remain unresolved and their responses become increasingly confrontational. This analysis demonstrates the value of examining both the circumstances associated with conflict and the ways in which the characters respond to it. It also underscores the importance of distinguishing theoretical categories on the basis of the evidence available in each interaction.

CONCLUSION

This study draws two main conclusions regarding the representation of interpersonal conflict between Mark Zuckerberg and Eduardo Saverin in *The Social Network* (2010), based on Wilmot and Hocker's (2001) framework.

First, the analysis identified four conflict elements: expressed struggle, perceived

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incompatible goals, perceived scarce resources, and interference. Perceived incompatible goals accounted for the largest number of data instances (4), followed by expressed struggle and perceived scarce resources (3 each), and interference (2). Although perceived incompatible goals appeared most frequently, this difference in frequency does not establish that they were the primary cause of the conflict. Rather, the findings indicate that disagreements over the direction and development of Facebook were prominent in the analyzed scenes. The conflict elements also overlapped in particular episodes. For example, the 70–30 equity arrangement can be interpreted in relation to the allocation of limited resources as well as the characters' differing expectations regarding their respective positions in the company.

Second, the analysis identified four conflict styles: competition, avoidance, accommodation, and compromise. Competition was the most frequently identified style (4 data instances), followed by avoidance (3), accommodation (2), and compromise (2). These findings suggest that the characters responded to conflict in different ways and that their responses did not consistently resolve the underlying disagreements. Although accommodation and compromise appeared in the analysis, their presence did not necessarily result in a lasting resolution. Instead, the conflict continued as disagreements over business decisions, ownership, and the direction of the company remained unresolved.

These findings should be interpreted within the scope of the study. Because *The Social Network* is a dramatized film based on real people and events, the analysis concerns the film's representation of interpersonal conflict rather than providing direct evidence of the actual relationship between Zuckerberg and Saverin. The study is also limited to one film, two central characters, and Wilmot and Hocker's (2001) theoretical framework. In addition, the data were interpreted qualitatively by a single researcher without independent intercoder checking. The numerical counts are descriptive indicators of the identified data instances and should not be interpreted as statistical measurements or as evidence of causal relationships. Despite these limitations, the study illustrates how conflicting goals, resource allocation, interference, and different conflict styles are represented in the deterioration of a personal relationship and business partnership.

Suggestions

Future researchers could extend this study by examining interpersonal conflict in other films and in narratives from different social, cultural, and institutional contexts. Such comparisons could help identify similarities and differences in how conflict conditions and conflict styles are represented. Researchers could also apply complementary theoretical frameworks, such as the dual-concern model or power-based approaches, to examine dimensions that may not be fully explained by Wilmot and Hocker's (2001) framework. Further research could investigate conflict outcomes, conflict transformation, and the role of third parties, including Sean Parker, in the escalation or management of interpersonal conflict. The use of multiple coders and an explicit comparison of interpretations could also strengthen analytical transparency. In addition, future studies could examine cinematic elements, including acting, cinematography, and editing, to explore how visual and narrative techniques shape the audience's understanding of conflict.

For educators and readers, *The Social Network* may serve as a discussion case for examining how power imbalances, communication problems, and unresolved disagreements can strain personal and professional relationships. However, because the film presents a dramatized account, it should be used as an illustrative learning resource rather than as definitive evidence of the real individuals' behavior or relationship.

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