

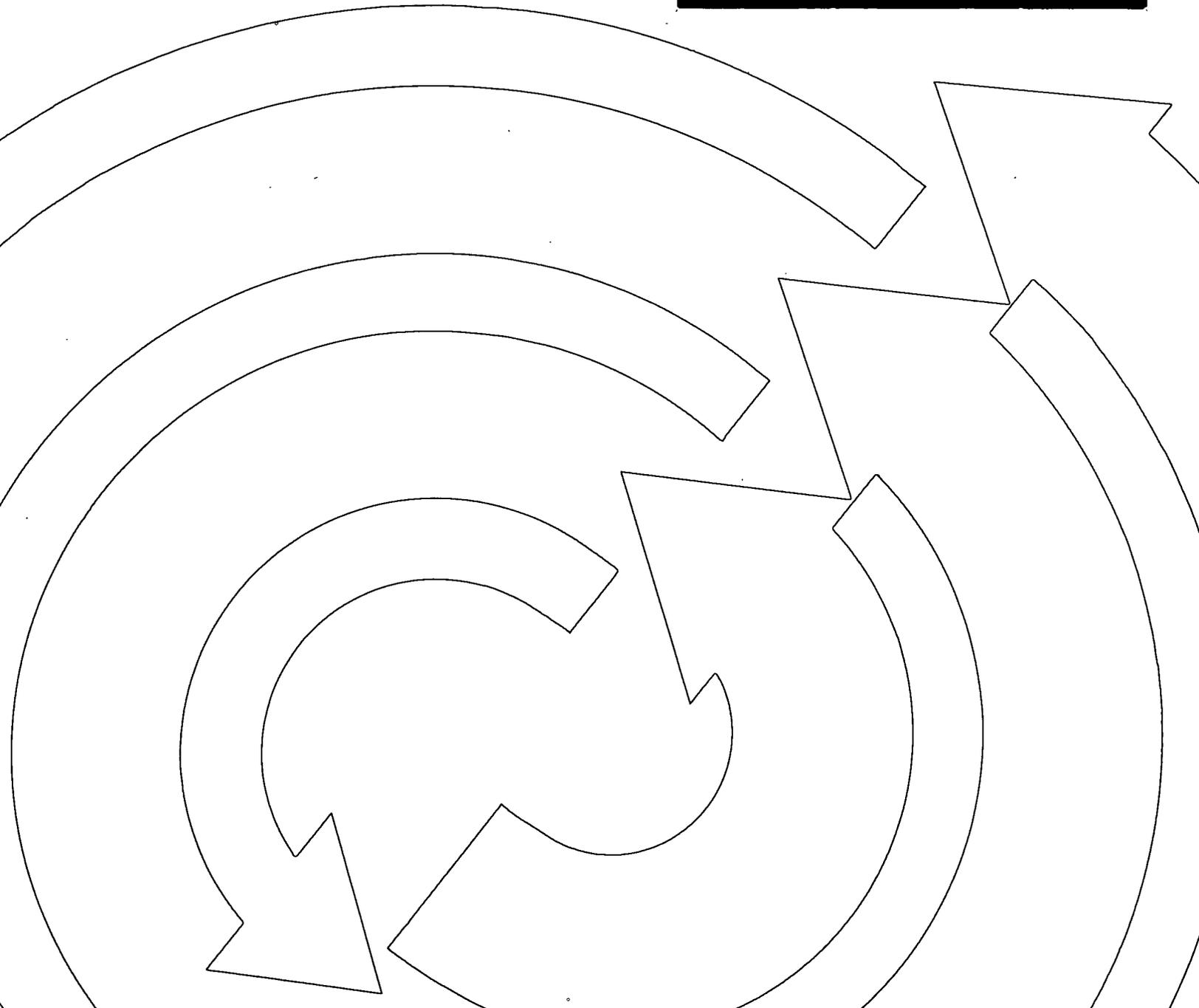
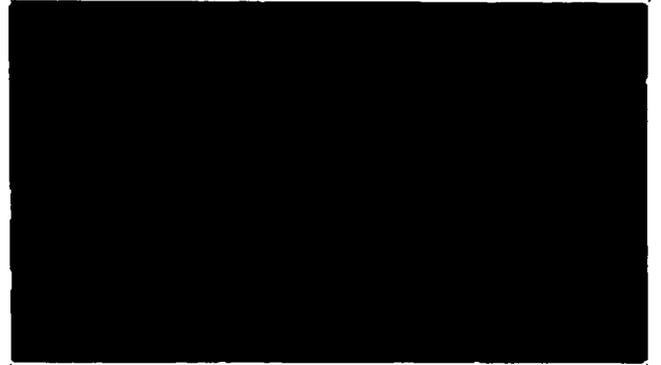


CRSO

Center for Research on  
Social Organization

*The Working Paper Series*

The University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor



INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT  
AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Helen Weingarten

PCMA Working  
Paper #22

CRSO Working  
Paper #422

May 1990

**International Conflict and the Individual or  
"What Drives That Person With Whom I Have to Negotiate and  
Can Understanding His Motivation Really Help?"**

**Helen R. Weingarten  
The University of Michigan  
May 1990**

**This paper made possible in part by funding from The Program  
for International Peace and Security Research  
Through a Carnegie Corporation Grant (#495585)**

In 1918, the American historian Henry Adams wrote:

Modern politics is, at bottom, a struggle not of men but of forces. The men become every year more and more creatures of force, massed about central power houses. The conflict is no longer between the men, but between the motors that drive the men.

For those who hold such views today, the approach to understanding conflict and resolving differences presented in this essay will be of little relevance. However, for persons who have found that individual men and women can influence and shape the outcome of political events, a model of conflict interaction and intervention that takes the motivational and situational dynamics of disputing individuals into account is likely to be of considerable interest.

For change agents, the test of any theoretical model of human behavior inheres not in its power to illuminate general causal laws but in its ability to clarify effective ways of making decisions and taking action with regard to particular actors in specific circumstances. For social scientists concerned with developing "knowledge for practice," the consequent challenge is to develop models that provide useful knowledge for actually carrying out appropriate situational interventions or for guiding selection among a range of possible action alternatives. This may be accomplished through their ordering and organization of experience.

The interpersonal conflict model described in this paper is such an effort. First developed and applied in an organizational context (Leas, 1985), then extended and refined through its application to family disputes (Weingarten & Leas, 1987), although based on previous work, the approach described here is more speculative. While it is hoped that this model can contribute to the actual process of choosing and generating effective and non-violent strategies for conflict management in international disputes, it has not yet been tested in the field. Nonetheless, the experience of those who have used similar models to design their

approach to family, organizational, and community conflicts argues for its introduction to the international community.

The Levels of Interpersonal Conflict Model (LICM) is a tool to help disputants and third party intervenors recognize the types of conflict situations facing them and use this knowledge to plan their subsequent actions. It identifies critical dimensions of conflict interaction and helps to organize what is often a confusing array of facts into coherent conceptual categories. The LICM developed out of dissatisfaction with academic theories of interpersonal conflict that did not help practitioners to differentially diagnose the wide variety of conflicts they were called upon to manage.

Third parties involved in dispute resolution commonly need to demonstrate that their interventions result in "better" resolutions than those that principals would be likely to implement on their own. This is not always easy. Techniques and strategies that are effective in helping Group A resolve a dispute over money do not work with Group C -- even though the presenting problem is the same. Behaviors that may signal to an American businessman that a final settlement has been reached may be interpreted by his Chinese counterpart as evidence that the building of trust and a working relationship has just begun.

Those who would choose to aid in the resolution of conflict need models of human behavior that will help them design interventions able to fit a world considerably more complex than an iterated prisoners dilemma game. Practitioners are beginning to abandon the assumption that people render decisions rationally in favor of the proposition that people select means and goals primarily on the basis of their values, emotions, and social bonds. So, too, the assumption that people choose to maximize one utility (usually identified as personal pleasure or interest) has been replaced by the proposition that people have multiple objectives which include, but are not limited to, needs to solve

problems, to maintain self-esteem, to win, to control others, to stabilize power, to enact revenge and so forth.

It is not that rationality is denied. Indeed, a working definition of "rationality" as an efficient choice of means to advance one's goals is presupposed. Rather, the LICM is designed to clarify the factors that influence the exercise of rationality in conflict interaction and to identify motives, goals, emotions, and cognitions that play a critical role in shaping conflict behavior.

### **The Model**

The LICM delineates individual differences in motivation and world view that systematically influence the way contested issues are approached. It is not a theory of behavior. It does not posit a dominant motivational construct as the determinant of behavior in diverse interpersonal conflict situations. Rather five different levels of interpersonal conflict are identified within the model: (1) Problems, (2) Disagreements, (3) Contests, (4) Fights, and (5) War. As Table 1 summarizes, each level is distinguished from the others by the presence of characteristic (a) motives, goals or intentions, (b-c) expectations, assumptions, and beliefs (about the self, the other, and the situational context), (d) emotional climates, and (e) behavioral styles.

Questions the model can be used to clarify include: What dynamic does a given instance of interpersonal conflict reflect? What personality and structural factors determine leverage points for change? What approach to a given conflict is likely to result in its satisfactory resolution? Is a particular strategy of conflict resolution that worked in one case likely to work in another? If not, why not, and what alternative should be tried?

Within the model, the presence of conflict per se is not viewed as a sign that a relationship or organization or nation is in trouble. Rather, the presence of conflict may signal a social system's level of vitality. It is the way that people

handle the conflicts that inevitably arise between them that indicates whether their relationships (and the social systems of which they are a part) will be strengthened or weakened as a result.

In order for conflict management strategies to be effective, the LICM assumes that principals and third parties must take into account situationally specific dynamics. While some of the intervention strategies that work with marital partners in conflict (see Weingarten & Leas, 1987) have been found to be equally effective with business associates or neighbors, it is anticipated that additional strategies will need to be developed for use in conflict situations in which language and culture differ, where formal hierarchies exist, or in which coalitions have formed.

Theoretically, the LICM allows that any individual may interact with others at escalated levels of conflict (e.g. Contests, Fights or War). In practice, however, some individuals never appear to engage in the more escalated levels of conflict interaction, even when they fail to resolve their disputes peacefully and the situational pressures to escalate are intense. In contrast, other individuals continue to function at escalated levels even when some differences have been resolved. In addition, the LICM recognizes that an individual's expressed level of conflict may reflect organizational or situational role constraints rather than more stable character traits or preferences. Thus, while the level of conflict in a system usually reflects the motivational dynamic of the most powerful individuals or coalitions, shifting a conflict to a different level is made considerably easier if even one key actor is inclined to move. Viewed from within the LICM, it is how individuals approach given issues that defines the conflict dynamics needing redress, rather than the substance or magnitude of those issues.

**Table 1**  
**Levels of Conflict Model**

<b>Level</b>	<b>Major Objective, Motive or Aim</b>	<b>Key Assumption</b>	<b>Principal's View of Third Party</b>	<b>Emotional Climate</b>	<b>Negotiation Style</b>
<b>I. Problems to solve</b>	<b>Solve the problem</b>	<b>We can work it out</b>	<b>Advisor/facilitator</b>	<b>Hope</b>	<b>Open, direct, clear and non-distorted communication; common interests recognized.</b>
<b>II. Disagreements</b>	<b>Self-protection</b>	<b>Compromise is necessary</b>	<b>Enabler/mediator</b>	<b>Uncertainty</b>	<b>Cautious sharing; vague and general language; calculation beginning.</b>
<b>III. Contest</b>	<b>Winning</b>	<b>Not enough resources to go around</b>	<b>Arbiter/judge</b>	<b>Frustration and resentment</b>	<b>Strategic manipulation; distorted communication; personal attacks begin; no one wants to be the first to change.</b>
<b>IV. Fight</b>	<b>Hurting the other</b>	<b>Winning is impossible</b>	<b>Partisan ally</b>	<b>Antagonism and alienation</b>	<b>Verbal/non-verbal incongruity; blame; perceptual distortions evident; refusal to take responsibility.</b>
<b>V. War</b>	<b>Eliminating the other</b>	<b>Other people are less human than self</b>	<b>Rescuer or intruder</b>	<b>Hopelessness and revenge</b>	<b>Emotional volatility; no clear understanding of issues; self-righteous; compulsive; inability to disengage.</b>

## **Level I: Problems**

Individuals or groups engaging at this level of conflict interaction are motivated by a desire to solve identifiable problems. Department heads in a Fortune 500 company at odds because one wants resources allocated to research and development and the other wants to increase the budget for sales and promotion are as likely to be in Level I conflict as are co-op members trying to decide whether to use plywood or pine boards for the shelves in their newly purchased produce market. A husband and wife arguing over where to spend their summer vacation may approach one another from the same conflict level as United States' and Soviet negotiators arguing over where to make strategic cuts in arms.

At Level I, real differences exist and relational tensions stem from the fact that people perceive their goals, needs, action plans, and/or values to be in conflict. Communication problems may also exist, but they are not to be confused with the differences in interest that generate Level I conflict. Occasionally, it is believed that problems will disappear if clear communication can be fostered -- indeed many Track III diplomatic efforts seem grounded on such a hope. Yet, while improvements in communication can make it easier to discover joint interests, solve problems and negotiate differences, it should be kept in mind that individuals who learn to communicate more clearly are also in a better position to discover interpersonal differences that former communication barriers masked.

Although individuals in Level I conflict may feel somewhat uncomfortable with one another, the overall emotional climate of Level I is hopeful. Principals in Level I conflict not only are willing to work together to overcome their differences; they want to do so and are seeking to discover how. While problem solving strategy preferences vary, in general, individuals at Level I tend to express a sense of individual responsibility for solving the problems they face and would

rather "do it themselves" if circumstances permit than defer to representatives or mediators to do it for them. Consequently, when third parties are called in at this level, it becomes important that they not overstep a consultative role.

Unlike individuals embroiled in higher level conflicts, individuals at Level I are able to focus on substantive issues and differentiate between the problem and the people involved in it. Level I individuals do not get involved in the personalities of those with whom they differ. Rather, with minimal encouragement and support, Level I disputants are likely to share information openly, in language that is relatively specific, oriented to the here and now, clear of blame, and free of innuendo.

An assumption of interdependence and a respect for difference undergirds the interpersonal approach of principals at Level I conflict. While there may be some resistance to self disclosure among Level I disputants, because of their dominant belief that "we are in this together," they will not withhold critical information to save face or to "protect" selfish interests. Consequently, the sticky problems that do emerge at Level I tend not to derive from personality or ideology but rather from skill deficits in problem solving or cross-cultural communication.

The expectation that one negotiating strategy or method of rational problem solving is appropriate for all disputes (c.f. Fisher and Ury, 1983) regardless of the substantive issues or cultural context may undermine understanding or agreement even when there is evident goodwill and willingness to cooperate. Following a program to develop a mutual definition of the problem, gather data, search for alternative solutions, and choose a solution by consensus, while facilitative of successful negotiation in some circumstances, may be obstructive in others, if, for example the differences between disputants lie in fundamental motives, values, or needs.

A recent Track III diplomatic meeting of prominent Israeli and Palestinian political activists that I attended was almost derailed by the program developer's experience that previous Middle East delegations always approached one another and the issues competitively. As a consequence of his assumption that participants would approach dialogue with one another as a Level III "Contest," he stressed the importance of having third party mediators present ("Focus on process issues;" "When feelings get hot, interrupt the dialogue between the principals to reduce tension") who, if asked by the principals for their own views, would present themselves as "neutral" ("Avoid taking sides or being a judge;" "Don't express opinions about the issues").

Although these strategies had worked in previous dialogue situations, the individuals coming to this meeting, were prepared to utilize a Level I conflict approach. That is, they were strongly motivated to cooperate, they wanted to understand one another, and they felt little pressure to reach a quick agreement. Furthermore, as most of the delegates believed that the United States was a partisan player in Middle Eastern affairs, they were both suspicious and critical of the supposed "neutral stance" adopted by the American mediators and devoted considerable time trying to engage them in substantive discussion. Fortunately, the organizers of this meeting were not only willing to consider participant criticisms, they were able to make on-site, program design adaptations.

Too frequently, individuals who approach conflicts as "problems to be solved" lack the conceptual, behavioral, or dispositional skills required for success in their endeavors. Even if individuals are motivated to problem solve, they may be unable to decide upon appropriate strategies. The psycholinguist George Miller has said: "Compared with television or telephone systems, human beings are more like bottlenecks than channels for the efficient flow of information" (Earl, 1988).

Further, even if we can assume skill in decision making, the information needed to determine or reach satisfactory outcomes may be unavailable.

It is important that the knowledge of skilled conflict managers not be lost, and that the work of academic social scientists be informed by their experience. Research on practice has demonstrated that if fundamental value or sovereignty issues are at stake, setting up negotiations prior to working to promote greater understanding between the parties is more likely to escalate the level of interpersonal conflict than resolve it (Weingarten, 1986). Similarly, in the absence of personal trust, the goal of cooperation is more likely to be achieved if the initial problem solving strategy is to listen to the other's point of view rather than to try to persuade him or her of one's own or even to reach a collaborative agreement.

## **Level II: Disagreements**

Individuals at Level II conflict believe that somebody is likely to get hurt, and they do what they can to avoid taking that role upon themselves. Here, the principals' motivation is significantly changed from a Level I focus on substantive problem solving to a Level II concern with establishing a safe and trustworthy relationship. Although substantive differences are as likely to exist at Level II as at Level I, at Level II the relationship between disputants is perceived as ambiguous and risky. Consequently, concerns with self-protection and saving face must be addressed in their own right if any progress is to be made in resolving specific substantive issues in contention.

Because trust is a critical dynamic of Level II conflict, principals at this level are likely to avoid confronting one another directly about their concerns and disagreements, although they may express occasional barbed comments when tensions mount. The earliest warning sign of systemic dysfunction is not the existence of conflict but lack of skill in dealing with it. This often brings on a lessening hope that it can be resolved satisfactorily.

This is a stage in which coalition building and utilization becomes important. At Level II, people start looking for help, and their most common strategy is to enlist friends to discuss problems, vent frustrations, and provide advice. Those drawn into the role of advice giver must realize that people in "Disagreement" don't feel safe sharing everything. Consequently they frequently mention only those things that are favorable to their particular position. Also, attempts to manipulate others to do what a disputant wants without revealing much about himself also distorts the quality of information shared at this level. Consequently, systems in which there is considerable Level II conflict frequently suffer from information deficits and confusions.

The tendency to withhold information which might be seen as unfavorable to one side and favorable for the other's is often justified by the belief that in any open confrontation someone will have to settle for less than they are getting at present. The assumption that compromise is likely to be a lose/lose proposition, reduces each principals' willingness to collaborate in problem solving.

Unlike Level I conflict in which principals would rather undertake their own problem solving efforts, at Level II disputants actively seek out third party assistance. A cautionary note should be sounded in this regard, however. Experience in family and organizational disputes has shown that professionals brought into Level II conflict can easily escalate interpersonal mistrust if their presence limits the opportunities principals have to establish or demonstrate their trustworthiness to one another in face to face encounters.

Although principals at Level II conflict feel tense and vulnerable, they are more uncertain with one another than antagonistic. At this level, decisions to call in third parties to negotiate agreements need to be carefully considered. Future cooperation may be seriously undermined if disputants miss an opportunity to work together at a critical juncture early in the process. Often at Level II, a crisis

event triggers the realization that unless something is done soon, the conflict may escalate and the relationship among disputants deteriorate further. Although, the disputants may feel ambivalent about the compromises they perceive would be required to resolve their differences, in Level II conflict they recognize their interdependence and want to maintain a working relationship. Nonetheless, as the climate of uncertainty characterizing Level II conflict promotes defensiveness, it inhibits the establishment of the open communication required for optimal problem solving -- at least in traditional bargaining situations.

An example of a conflict resolution strategy that takes Level II face-saving concerns and barriers to open communication into account is provided by Leonard Woodcock's account of his experiences negotiating with the Chinese during 1977 and 1978 as President Carter's representative, and later Ambassador, to Beijing (Personal Communication, 1989). Appointed with the mandate to "normalize" relations with the Beijing government, the American position was that in return for such normalization, China needed to guarantee it would not use force against Taiwan. While it was politically unfeasible in the United States to normalize relations without either that guarantee or an agreement that the United States could continue to sell defensive arms to Taiwan, the United States had effectively accepted the proposition that there was only one China (with Taiwan being a part of China) in the Shanghai Communique of February 28, 1972. Demanding that China not use force against a part of itself was seen by Woodcock to be both an infringement of China's sovereignty and an initial bargaining position that the Chinese could not accept.

As Woodcock described his dilemma, he needed to communicate that the United States needed to reserve the right to sell defensive arms to the Taiwanese authorities in a way that would not undermine the forthcoming formal meetings about normalization of relations between the two countries. Needing to establish

himself as trustworthy in the eyes of his Chinese counterparts and sensitive to their concerns with "face," this, in his own words, is how he proceeded:

In late 1977 and early 1978, a few, but not many, American tourist groups were coming to Beijing. Many wanted briefings from the Liaison Office and these were given in our Public Dining Room (which was then our only Conference Room). Inevitably the Taiwan question came up and that was always left for me to reply. My answer was given, not as an Ambassador, but as an American citizen deeply concerned about the need to normalize relations between China and the United States. I said that in my opinion, the President should recognize Beijing as the one government obviously representing China. I then went on that no American President could do this without being in a position to assure the American people that the well-being of the people on Taiwan was reasonably protected. This required reserving the right to sell to the authorities on Taiwan, if need be, defensive arms.

Adjacent to this dining room, separated only by a swinging door, was a big kitchen in which the Chinese house staff was usually located, one or two of whom readily understood English. I had always assumed the staff reported to their own government and, of course, I wanted them to convey my position.

In order to make sure my position got back to the Chinese leadership, I sought meetings with three foreign Ambassadors in Beijing who I knew were very close to the Chinese. To them I conveyed that President Carter had decided to normalize relations in his first term and my position as to how it could be done while finessing the use of force question. When, out of these efforts, I got no answering echo from the Chinese, I felt confident in assuring my President that this could be done, if other matters could be handled satisfactorily. . . . The arms sales question was made a confrontational issue on September 19, 1978, but, by that time, both sides knew that a way to a solution was open given a resolution of other items for which there were precedents.

### **Level III: Contest**

As hope diminishes that problems can be solved and face saved, power motives are aroused and "winning" becomes the focal dynamic of interpersonal conflict. In response to perceived differences of goals, needs, or preferences, Level III disputants lose sight of their potential common interests, and this loss impairs their ability to recognize or appreciate their interdependence. The rhetoric of Level III conflict frequently stresses the right of persons (or nations) to act independently. Level III is the domain of the "self-determining" actor who seeks

personal gain in an intrinsically competitive (e.g. resource deficient) universe. This is the level of conflict in which disputants identify "freedom" and "independence" as their most cherished values and then wonder why the victories they achieve at each other's expense seem hollow.

At Level III conflict, issues have piled up and are hard to disentangle. The emotional climate is one of frustration and resentment. Anger erupts easily -- often over issues the disputants themselves view as trivial -- and dissipates slowly. Principals in "Contest" no longer find it easy to talk to one another informally. They point out inaccuracies in the other's position more to score points than to advance understanding, facilitate agreement, or solve problems. Perceptual distortions abound and are reflected in communication styles; emotional appeals are common; each party assumes it knows the other's "real" intentions. At Level III there is reluctance to take the first step towards change because the individual fears that such a move will be perceived by the other as a prelude to capitulation.

While control and power issues play a profound part in the psychology of Level III contestants, they recognize that it will be impossible to achieve these ends if their relationship to one another is entirely severed. At Levels IV and V, antagonists are often satisfied by getting rid of the other. But at Level III, contestants recognize the game can't continue without the other, and thus the relationship cannot be broken. Principals in Level III conflict frequently describe themselves as trapped. Their way of approaching their differences feels unsatisfactory. Yet the solutions they repeatedly try to implement, e.g. changing or controlling the other, do not seem to work.

Fisher and Ury (1983) point out the dangers of rigidly adhering to intervention strategies which emphasize contest and ignore the common interests of people in conflict. They argue that victories achieved by the other's defeat will turn out to be self-defeating in the long run. Yet, rather than suggesting a

fundamental transformation of the motive to win that adequately deals with the issues of power and resource scarcity, they propose a better mousetrap.

According to their 1983 work, Fisher and Ury offer that if disputants follow their negotiation methods, it is possible to achieve long-term resolutions to conflict in which everybody wins and no one loses. Unfortunately, even if one grants the desirability of their claims, psychologists have long recognized that many people (surely as well-represented in politics as in the family or the market) seem to have very little interest in the long run gains to be had from cooperation and considerable interest in maintaining or increasing their personal power in the here and now.

Given some disputants' reluctance to abandon their quest for power, it seems that Fisher and Ury's model of conflict resolution may be less applicable to Level III Contest as understood within the LICM and better described as identifying "pseudo-contests." "Pseudo-contests" are a Level I strategy of problem solving that mimick the Level III Contest. "Pseudo-contests" occur when individuals compete with others not because of entrenched desires to win or because of resource scarcity but because acting competitively is the way they have been socialized to behave when confronted by perceived obstacles to need satisfaction or goal achievement.

Competition is likely to be unavoidable when activities are structured so that the success of one person requires that others fail. In contrast, "pseudo-contests" do not require competition. Rather, the competition that occurs in such situations is not inherent in the structure of the activity but stems from participants' perception that one's win necessitates another's loss. Fisher and Ury clarify that many conflicts can be resolved without requiring that anyone lose. But in claiming that everyone can be a conflict "winner," they fail to discriminate the diversity of intentions or objective conditions that underlie conflict behavior.

And this failure appears to derive from their acceptance and promotion of a competitive game metaphor as a cross-situationally applicable conflict analogue.

Political science and anthropology provide ample evidence that the degree to which different cultures depend on competition to organize and structure their political, economic, educational or recreational systems varies broadly. As one commentator puts it:

At one end of the spectrum are societies that function without any competition at all. At the other end is the United States. . . Not only do we get carried away with competitive activities. . . but we turn almost everything else into a contest. Our collective creativity seems to be tied up in devising new ways to produce winners and losers (Kohn, 1986).

If we accept that cultures differ in their reliance on competition as an organizing principle, it becomes critical to consider whether a scholarly literature rife with game analogies to describe the dynamics of interpersonal conflict plays a role beyond mere prediction in relation to competition. Social psychologists have carried out innumerable studies that demonstrate that if you treat a person prepared to cooperate as a competitor, he is likely to reciprocate in kind. Given this is the case, scholars must consider the political role "science" plays when it encourages readers to take an iterated prisoner's dilemma game seriously as a conflict analogue and use theory based on this reductionist metaphor to plan their actions.

Even if more refined and comprehensive models of reality are available (Axelrod, 1984; Etzioni, 1988), it is frequently the case that they do not easily translate into situationally specific strategies of action. For example, while it would be hard to quarrel with Axelrod's conclusion that in order to promote cooperation we should: "1. Enlarge the shadow of the future; 2. Change the payoffs; 3. Teach people to care about each other; 4. Teach reciprocity; and 5. Improve recognition abilities" (1984, pp.126-139), we are given few guidelines or even examples of how this can be accomplished in the real world.

In his The Evolution of Cooperation, Axelrod writes that to change a situation in which cooperation is not stable to one in which it is "[it] is only necessary to make the long-term incentive for mutual cooperation greater than the short-term incentive for defection" (1984, p.134). Yet, when we consider such real life situations as the Palestinian/Israeli conflict, for example, this proposal clearly seems easier said than done.

Getting individuals in "pseudo-contest" (e.g. with Level I motives -- the desire to solve substantive problems -- and a competitive style of interacting) to adopt cooperative methods of negotiating is a relatively straightforward educational task. Similarly, if people are motivated to compete because they believe not doing so will threaten their survival in a resource scarce world, demonstrating that their assumption of scarcity is false often results in collaborative problem solving. Difficulties resolving Level III conflicts in collaborative ways will persist, however, when the goal of winning is personally or culturally entrenched or the scarcity of resources is real.

Disputants in "Contest" generally seek out third parties to bolster their own positions or when impasse occurs. In the latter circumstance, a common strategy is to call in outsiders to serve as arbitrators, judges, or peace keepers. Third party intervention can effectively reduce manifest expressions of Level III conflict. But when substituting external pressures to comply for personal commitments to change, further outbreaks of conflict may merely be postponed. As long as disputants understand their own interests to be independent and exclusive of those with whom they compete, they are likely to abandon competition only for as long as they are compelled to do so (Kelman, 1958).

#### **Level IV: Fights**

Principals in "Fight" are noteworthy for their persistence in conflict behavior when chances of goal attainment are slim or non-existent. Believing it impossible to change their circumstances or to get important needs met with circumstances as they are combatants at Level IV conflict act as if making their opponents hurt is more critical than either winning or solving their problems.

Level IV conflict is often a critical turning point for individuals. As hope for winning within the context of the circumstances dies, the emotional climate becomes one of alienation and antagonism. Outsiders are enlisted, not to help "save" the relationship between principals as in Levels I or II or to legitimize hierarchy as in Level III, but as allies to challenge the status quo. In such a system, images of the other become fixed and stereotyped. Even when there is evidence to the contrary, each side believes the other cannot or will not change. Indeed when attempts by the other to modify their position are made, motives are questioned and charges of hypocrisy or manipulation leveled.

Within organizations characterized by Level IV conflict, factions begin to emerge because individuals believe independent actions will expose them to too much risk. Consequently, the approval and support of a known group of allies becomes critical. In Level IV conflict, individuals know who is part of their group and who is not. If a person wants to become part of a faction, he or she may well have to do something to prove loyalty. Indeed, individuals may not feel like good members unless they can do something which demonstrates their willingness to "stand up and be counted."

The behavior of guerilla fighters often appears to reflect Level IV conflict dynamics. Thomas Friedman, in describing the response of the Palestinians in 1982 after the Israeli army cut through their lines in less than a week and

reached Beirut, writes of his interview with George Habash, the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (1989, pp.150-151):

This pediatrician-turned-guerilla had been fighting the Israelis since 1948, when he was twenty-one. . . .To him the fact that the battle in south Lebanon had been lost seemed totally insignificant. The most important thing was that there had been a battle at all. . . ."I thank God," he shouted, oblivious to the irony of the great Arab Marxist invoking the Almighty. "I thank God," he continued, bringing his fist down onto the table, "that I lived to see the day that a Palestinian army fought an Israeli army. Now I can die. I don't need to see any more." Waving his arm around at his young acolytes, he added, "I feel sorry if anything happens to these young men, but now I can die, for we really fought them."

Implicit in this anecdote is another feature of Level IV conflict. As part of the faction dynamic of Level IV, strong, often charismatic leaders will emerge who are comfortable with the leadership role and the exercise of power. Leaders at Level IV conflict are generally available to their followers and willing to expend considerable personal energy and initiative working on group goals. They inspire loyalty not only because they oversee that followers function effectively but also because they appear willing to make personal sacrifices themselves.

Given the strong within-group interdependence of Level IV actors (e.g. "It's us against them"), it becomes difficult for individual members of a faction to argue with the leadership, and the quality of information available in such a system suffers. Furthermore, when individuals find themselves at odds with a leadership decision that necessitates comment, they will not do so where they can be observed by the members of the opposition. At Level IV, the "public" expression of in-group differences are likely to occur only when individuals are challenging the leadership hierarchy itself -- as appears to have been the case when Mr. Zhao Ziyang broke party ranks to speak with student demonstrators prior to the Tiananmen Square massacre in June, 1989.

As part of the dynamic of Level IV, within-group cohesiveness and solidarity becomes more important than reconciling diverse constituencies or interest groups. At Level IV, antagonists are tied to a strong commitment to their "position" and resist suggestion that the priorities of their faction might be less important than the priorities of the larger organization or the reduction of tension within the system as a whole. In Level IV conflict, individuals measure their success primarily by whether they have subordinated opposing groups; only secondarily are they concerned with whether they have achieved their ends or those of the larger system as a whole. As a result, if a subgroups' actions harm other factions, group members may express some sorrow or remorse that people had to be hurt, but will readily rationalize their behavior in terms of "the truth" being more important than any pain and suffering resulting from their actions. At Level IV conflict, priorities and values have changed profoundly from those of Levels I, II, or III. Individuals have become more fixed on ideology and their own personal (or subgroup) agenda. Commonly, they lose sight of the importance of community, diversity, and relationship.

The key to Level IV behavior rests in the fact that the conflict is structured in such a way that antagonists come to envision themselves as guardians of fundamentally exclusive principles. To outsiders it may seem as if the principals are merely incompatible. To the person experiencing Level IV intent, it appears that the course of action he or she is taking is necessary "to preserve identity," "to insure democracy," "to combat anarchy," and so forth. In other words, this is not a problem to be solved or even a contest to be won, Level IV actors see themselves as fighting oppression, perversion, or some other serious moral and ideological threat.

It may further clarify Level IV conflict dynamics if, keeping in mind that a characteristic feature of escalating conflict is that the strategies of response

become increasingly entrenched, we consider the evolution of the events culminating at Tiananmen Square in June 1989. According to the report of a Stanford historian living in Beijing for the year prior to and shortly beyond the "Massacre" (Benedict, 1989), the initial demonstrations following Hu Yaobang's death on April 15 could be seen as a Level I strategy focused on criticism and reform of Deng Xiaopeng's regime, not its overthrow, and confined to a relatively small group of activist students:

. . .during the early weeks of the movement, most non-students continued to insist that they were simply not interested in politics. They seemed more amused than anything else by the earnest young students. On Tuesday, April 25, I was on a bus which passed some students from Beijing Normal University, carrying their school banner and talking to people on the street. A young worker on the bus cracked: "The Red Guards have arrived!", a remark that was met with laughter by others on the bus (p.16).

For the first week of the protests, Benedict's observations support newspaper reports that the Chinese authorities did not respond to student demonstrations with any show of force. On the morning of Hu Yaobang's funeral, April 22, however:

. . .those of us who came late to the square were blocked from seeing much of anything by the thousand of police who stood shoulder to shoulder all around the perimeter of the square (p.15).

According to Benedict, a further turning point in the evolution of the protest movement can be dated from April 26 when the People's Daily carried an editorial that charged that the student movement was a "planned conspiracy" calling for "grave political struggle" against the students. As a result of it becoming clear from that editorial that the government might well use force against the students, the "laogaixing" (common people) joined the April 27th march, swelling the ranks of demonstrators to over 150,000.

With the expansion of the ranks of demonstrators to include the laogaixing, the character of the protest shifted. By May 15, she writes:

Common people, the janitor in our building, the careteria workers, people I talked to on the street, all supported the students. Many did so because they believed that the students were the best hope of solving the twin problems of inflation and corruption: they were not particularly concerned with the broader issues of democracy and press freedom...This outpouring of support had a darker side...The student movement had become, almost overnight, one governed by emotion and passion. Now the demonstrators were out for blood, and they would not settle simply for a real "dialogue," they wanted nothing less than the collective resignation of the leadership. Where in the world, let alone the Communist world, would a government voluntarily leave power under such circumstances? (pp.29-30).

According to the LICM, it is a hallmark of Level IV conflict that antagonists seek the assistance of third parties only as allies. To a person fighting for survival or principles, you are either with him or against him -- there is no other option. To be neutral is perceived as adding power to the other side. Only if an outsider is on one's own side, can he or she be tolerated. Given this dynamic, the role of the media as a shaper of conflict becomes critical. Although we don't generally think of the media as a third party, in many instances it performs such a function -- and in Tiananmen Square the media appears to have played a central role in escalating a Level I protest into a Level IV fight.

Given the dynamics of Level IV conflict, it is expected that third parties, as uninvited observers and critics, will raise the stress experienced by Level IV principals. In general, as stress within a social system rises, the individual's ability to approach problems creatively and flexibly within that system declines (Janis and Mann, 1977). As "saving face" is a particularly important aspect of Chinese culture, a public loss of face is likely to be a particularly potent stressor within the Chinese cultural context.

Perhaps if the foreign press had not been so insistent in promoting the student cause; perhaps if the protestors' disruption of Gorbachev's visit had not been so public a loss of face; perhaps if the students could have "improved their recognition abilities" and shifted their strategy when confronted with mounting

opposition, cooperation between the antagonists could have been promoted and the violence avoided. Considering the third party presence provided by the world media to the events in China, use of the LICM would have predicted that the problem solving ability of Level IV principals would be disrupted and the conflict thereby escalated.

To the extent that outsiders became involved in the outcome of events in China, the LICM assumes face-saving and competitive motives were aroused to the degree that the principals became both too stressed to problem solve and too invested to quit. Just as the involvement of third parties at Level II can escalate the conflict by diverting the trust-building process between principals, the involvement of non-allied third parties at Level IV is likely to do the same unless their dealings with the principals occur out of the public eye. In working with Level IV combatants, change agents must learn that it is easier to block destructive exchanges by highlighting the costs of current competition rather than the benefits of future cooperation. This is often best done in private session. Similarly, helping Level IV disputants recognize how their current methods interfere with each achieving important personal values often motivates a willingness to change whereas a focus on the harm they are doing to the other does not. Such strategies take into account that the incentives for action operative at Level IV are vested in individual interests rather than in relationship.

Despite the fact that principals at Level IV have lost sight of interdependence, would-be intervenors must ask whether the world media having served to escalate the conflict by its mere presence shares at least some responsibility for the June 6 massacre. Deng justified the Tiananmen Square massacre as a rational response to an irresponsible factional effort to bring down the system of government he was committed to support. The United States' backing of the Nicaraguan Contras demonstrates that in this country we are not

always against internal factions using force against compatriots. Considering this, on what basis then can either Deng's view of "the facts" or his choice of response be challenged? These questions are raised not because there are readily apparent answers but rather to highlight that understanding the contribution of values as an inextricable part of conflict and its resolution becomes increasingly critical as the stakes of conflict mismanagement become increasingly profound.

### **Level V: War**

At Level V, conflict has become intractable. Differences of interest are not only viewed as mutually exclusive, the claims of one party are perceived by the other as a threat to ontological security. Enemies at "War" experience high levels of anxiety which they believe can only be assuaged by the other's defeat. At war, combatants have no compunctions against the use of compulsion and force -- they are relentless in trying to accomplish their aims; vengeful and vindictive when frustrated.

At Level V, objectivity has been lost to subjectivity. Information is skewed and irrationality is rampant. There is no longer any clear understanding of the issues -- personality has become the issue. Level V behavior is part of a simple and heroic drama that the combatant has fixed in his head which may or may not be related to what is actually going on in the world. In "War," principals see themselves as utterly responsible for the survival of their cause. They view themselves as the sole protectors of important principles, facing detractors, invaders and destroyers who must be stopped at all costs.

The emotional climate of enemies at "War" is characterized by volatility, rage, and hopelessness. Combatants feel hopeless about their ability to achieve security or satisfaction while the enemy still exists. Because of this loss of confidence in their individual ability to achieve important ends, they seek out and are susceptible to external directives and guidance. In addition, because they

believe there is no place untainted by the other, the costs of withdrawal are seen as greater than the costs of engaging in a battle to the death. Consequently, at Level V, there is often focus on tales of martyrdom -- Masada for the Israelis, the promise of Paradise for Islamic fundamentalists who die fighting in Allah's jihad (Wright, 1985).

At both Levels IV and V, group members may perceive themselves to be part of an eternal cause, fighting outsiders for unambiguous principles. However, unlike leaders at Level IV who consider themselves and their followers to be "comrades in arms," Level V leaders generally are career oriented professionals who have undergone training that encourages them to consider their followers to be resources or chess pieces rather than unique and irreplaceable individuals. Level V leaders are drawn from specialized elites; they are generals from academies rather than enlisted men or draftees who rise from the ranks.

If we consider modern and global warfare, a critical distinguishing feature is the diversity of intentionality that characterizes its principal participants. Modern warfare and "War" as defined by the LICM are not synonymous. If a soldier is invested in Level V intentionality as defined by the LICM, he cannot choose to stop fighting because to do so would be immoral and irresponsible. Mercenaries or generals, in contrast, may view their participation in warfare more as a Level I problem solving exercise than as a result of uncompromisable principles. Consequently, interventions for dealing with the realities of war must necessarily be inclusive of all the levels of conflict so far considered rather than being attentive solely to the fifth category within the model designated as "War."

Within the LICM, the distinction made between Level IV and Level V conflict inheres in fundamental issues of intentionality and value rather than of behavior or attitude. At both levels there are principals who believe that to quit is to be more than disloyal; to rein in one's zeal is to be a traitor to the cause. At

both levels, those who are really committed, will sacrifice all. Only at "War" however, will participants treat not only their antagonists as less than human, but their compatriots as well.

Ends are all important at Level V and any means are seen to justify them. A characteristic of Level V conflict is that one doesn't have to do much thinking about the ethics of means. Though the losses may be great (and though important principles, like the dignity of individuals or freedom, may have to be compromised), the ends are so important that one need only worry about "temporary" breaches (e.g. such as sending troops on missions known to be suicidal) after the principles one is fighting for have been restored.

A key assumption of individuals in Level V conflict is that other people are less human than oneself. This is the realm of "I/it" relationships dominating and eliminating the "I/Thou" (Buber, 1970). Theoretically, "War" as defined by the LICM can exist without the use of physical force or armaments. In practice, however, it appears as if once human beings are reified and seen as manipulatable objects, rationalizing violent use of them and against them to achieve one's ends becomes inevitable.

When enemies not only objectify and do violence against each other but also against their allied subordinates, the prognosis for human survival is bleak. Even when powerful third parties levy pressures or incentives compelling the principals to restore a semblance of "peace," periods of non-violence under such conditions are rarely stable. To manage battering couples, separating the partners and maintaining the partition between them long enough so that agreements of nonaggression can be put into operation and enforced has been shown to be a more effective first step than are programs which initially attempt to work with the principals conjointly.

However, experience with intimate enemies suggests that agreements of non-aggression will only be sustained over the long run if the individual's sense of identity becomes invested in the practice of non-violence and cooperation rather than these being compelled by pressure from outside. An implication for action that derives from this insight is that persons concerned with creating the conditions for peace must attend as much to the building of character as to the dismantling of bombs.

## **SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION**

The Levels of Interpersonal Conflict Model was designed to clarify the multiple and divergent conflict dynamics that are usually lumped together when questions such as "Why do men fight?" are put on the table. The title of this paper asks how important it is to know the intentionality of a negotiator. Throughout, numerous situations are described that demonstrate not only how different motivational dynamics lead to different behaviors under similar stimulus conditions of conflict but also how seemingly similar conflict behaviors that derive from different intentional bases will be responsive to different incentives and pressures for change.

From such a model, it is hoped that practical knowledge can be derived so that conflict need not escalate to "Contests," "Fights," or "War." There is a great deal of biological, historical, and psychological evidence documenting and justifying the propensity of human beings to engage in violent conflict with one another. Far less attention is given to understanding the circumstances which lead human beings to sustain situations of cooperation and peace in the face of scarce resources and pressures to compete.

Comparisons of human beings to self-serving prisoners or to termites, baboons, and buck deer are useful when they allow us to recognize that doing

violence against one's own is an easily evoked human potential. The shortcomings of such comparisons are evident, however, in their failure to explain the behavior of an Oscar Arias or a Mother Teresa. In their failure to take into account these prototypically human actors, these comparisons promote the illusion that biology in the absence of culture is the determining influence in human affairs.

Understanding that human behavior is influenced not solely by "objective conditions" but also by what situations "mean" requires models of interpersonal conflict that account for the fact that human beings interpret reality as they respond to it. Knowing that a person pursues sexual gratification or happiness tells us very little about him or her that is individually predictive; for that, we need to know the principle under which these goals are operative. There are people who are happy only in meeting the needs of others and people who feel pleasure or arousal only in the face of another's total subjugation and humiliation.

Models of human behavior that fail to take these divergencies into account are, at best, merely reductionistic and of interest to a limited audience. When interpersonal differences are misconceived, mishandled, and escalated because the models available to interpret and influence them conceive of conflict only as a Level III and above process, such models can be downright dangerous.

The LICM recognizes that it is not the seriousness of the issue that determines the level of interpersonal conflict, but the motivation and behavior of the principals. In surfacing difference, conflict presents each of us with the opportunity to advance human development through the discovery of integrative and non-violent problem solutions. Only if we model ourselves after the best of humanity, the creators and caretakers among us rather than the exploiters and killers, may we yet avoid what Hobbes predicted for humanity -- a future that is "mean, nasty, brutish and short."

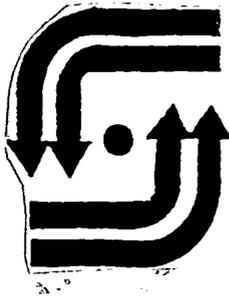
## References

- Axelrod, Robert. The Evolution of Cooperation. 1984. Basic Books, Inc., New York.
- Benedict, Carol. Beijing Journal. 1989 (Unpublished manuscript). Stanford University.
- Buber, Martin. I and Thou. 1970 (1937). Scribner, New York.
- Earl, Peter E. (Ed.). Psychological Economics. 1988. Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston.
- Etzioni, Amitai. The Moral Dimension. 1988. The Free Press, New York.
- Fisher, R. and Ury, W. 1983. Getting to Yes. Penguin Books, New York.
- Friedman, Thomas. From Beirut to Jerusalem. 1989. Farrar, Straus, Giroux, New York.
- Janis, Irving L. and Mann, Leon. Decision Making: A Psychological Analysis of Conflict, Choice, and Commitment. 1977. The Free Press, New York.
- Kelman, H.C. Compliance, identification and internalization. 1958. Journal of Conflict Resolution. 2:51-60.
- Kohn, Alfie. No Contest. 1986. Houghton Mifflin, Boston.
- Leas, S. Moving Your Church Through Conflict. 1985. Alban Institute, Washington D.C.
- Weingarten, Helen. Strategic planning for divorce mediation. 1986. Social Work. 31(3):194-200.
- Weingarten, H. and Leas, S. Levels of marital conflict model. July, 1987. American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 57(3) pp.407-417.
- Wright, Robin. Sacred Rage. 1985. Linden Press/Simon and Shuster, New York.

CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON SOCIAL ORGANIZATION  
WORKING PAPER SERIES

CRSO Working Papers report current research and reflection by affiliates of the Center. Working papers which are still in print are available for a fee of \$2.00. The Center will photocopy out-of-print working papers at cost (five cents per page). To request working papers, or for further information about the Center, write us at 4501 LS&A Building, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48109, or call (313) 764-7487.

- 407 "Max Weber Meets Feminism: A Reconsideration of Charisma," by Cheryl Hyde, September 1989, 24 pages. Also CSST Working Paper #36.
- 408 "Understanding Strikes in Revolutionary Russia," by William G. Rosenberg, September 1989, 42 pages. Also CSST Working Paper #37.
- 409 "Child Labor Laws: A Historical Case of Public Policy Implementation," by Marjorie McCall-Sarbaugh and Mayer N. Zald, October 1989, 52 pages. Also CSST Working Paper #38.
- 410 "Service Usage and Need: Reports from Patients and Significant Others Dealing with Leukemia and Lymphoma," by Timothy Lawther, Mark Chesler, and Barbara Chesney, October 1989, 41 pages.
- 411 "Putting German (and Britain) Liberalism into Context: Liberalism, Europe, and the Bourgeoisie, 1840-1914," by Geoffrey Eley, November 1989, 39 pages. Also CSST Working Paper #39.
- 412 "Racism in Higher Education I: An Organizational Analysis," by Mark A. Chesler and James Crowfoot, November 1989, 66 pages. Also PCMA Working Paper #21.
- 413 "Discretion in a Behavioral Perspective: The Case of a Public Housing Eviction Board," by Richard Lempert, December 1989, 54 pages.
- 414 "Bringing Unions Back In (Or, Why We Need a New Old Labor History)," by Howard Kimmel, February 1990, 13 pages. Also CSST Working Paper #40.
- 415 "In Flight From Politics: Social History and Its Discontents," by David Mayfield and Susan Thorne, March 1990, 29 pages. Also CSST Working Paper #41.
- 416 "Elite Social Movements and the State: A Case Study of the Committee on the Present Danger," by John Boies and Nelson A. Pichardo, March 1990, 35 pages.
- 417 "Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century," by Geoffrey Eley, April 1990, 35 pages. Also CSST Working Paper #42.
- 418 "Reviewing the Socialist Tradition," by Geoffrey Eley, April 1990, 30 pages. Also CSST Working Paper #43.
- 419 "The Constitution of Critical Intellectuals: Polish Physicians, Peace Activists and Democratic Civil Society," by Michael D. Kennedy, April 1990, 38 pages.
- 420 "Giving and Receiving Social Support: A Special Challenge for Leukemia and Lymphoma Patients and their Families," by Barbara K. Chesney, Mark A. Chesler, and Mary Lou Abrigo, April 1990, 45 pages.
- 421 "Rethinking Labor History: Toward a Post-Materialist Rhetoric," by William H. Sewell, Jr., May 1990, 21 pages. Also CSST Working Paper #44.



# PCMA

## WORKING PAPER SERIES

**INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT AND THE INDIVIDUAL; OR,  
WHAT DRIVES THAT PERSON WITH WHOM I HAVE TO  
NEGOTIATE, AND CAN UNDERSTANDING HIS MOTIVATION  
REALLY HELP?**

By Helen R. Weingarten

PCMA Working  
Paper #22

CRSO Working  
Paper #422

May 1990

The Program on Conflict Management Alternatives  
at the University of Michigan

## THE PROGRAM ON CONFLICT MANAGEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The Program on Conflict Management Alternatives was established in January, 1986 by a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, and additional funds from the University of Michigan. These basic grants were renewed in July, 1988 and again in July, 1991. The Program supports an agenda of research, application, and theory development. PCMA also establishes links among other university research and teaching efforts relevant to conflict management alternatives, and maintains liaison and collaboration with similar efforts in other Universities and Practitioner agencies. The Program staffers own work focuses explicitly on the relationship between social justice and social conflict, specifically: (a) the use of innovative settlement procedures and roles for disputants and third parties; (b) the institutionalization of innovative mechanisms and the adoption of organizational and community structures that permanently alter the way conflicts are managed; and (c) the fundamental differences and inequalities between parties that often create conflict and threaten its stable resolution.

We examine these issues primarily in United States' settings, in conflicts arising within and between families, organizations and communities, and between different racial, gender, and economic constituencies. These specific efforts are supported by a variety of research and action grants/contracts with governmental agencies, foundations, and private and public organizations/agencies.

The Program in Conflict Management Alternatives is housed within the Center for Research on Social Organization, College of Literature, Science and the Arts, Room 4016 LS&A Building, Telephone: (313) 763-0472.

### Core Faculty of the Program

T. Alexander Alienikoff, Professor of Law  
Frances Aparicio, Associate Professor of Spanish & American Culture  
Percy Bates, Director, PEO, Professor of Education  
Barry Checkoway, Professor of Social Work  
Mark Chesler, Co-Director, PCMA and Professor of Sociology  
James Crowfoot, Professor of Natural Resources and Urban Regional Planning  
Elizabeth Douvan, Professor of Psychology  
Barbara Israel, Associate Professor, School of Public Health  
Edith Lewis, Co-Director, PCMA and Associate Professor, School of Social Work  
David Schoem, Assistant Dean for the Freshmen and Sophomore Years and Lecturer  
in Sociology, College of LS&A  
Sharon Sutton, Associate Professor of Architecture  
Helen Weingarten, Associate Professor, School of Social Work



