



**PCMA**

**WORKING PAPER SERIES**

**POWER, CONFLICT, AND COMMUNITY:  
REPORT ON A RETRIEVAL CONFERENCE**

**MAY, 1995**

By

Diana Kardia

PCMA Working  
Paper #51

CRSO Working  
Paper #554

June 1996

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 Members of the Program

T. Alexander Alienikoff, Professor of Law  
Frances Aparicio, Co-Director, PCMA and Associate Professor of Spanish & American Culture  
Percy Bates, Director, PEO, Professor of Education  
Barry Checkoway, Professor of Social Work  
Mark Chesler, 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  
Charles D. Moody, Executive Director, South African Initiative Office  
David Schoem, Co-Director, PCMA and Assistant Dean for the Freshmen and Sophomore Years and Lecturer in Sociology, College of LS&A  
Amy Schulz, Research Associate, School of Public Health, and Lecturer in School of Social Work  
Sharon Sutton, Associate Professor of Architecture  
Helen Weingarten, Associate Professor, School of Social Work  
Ximena Zuniga, Program Director, Intergroup Relations & Conflict

POWER, CONFLICT, AND COMMUNITY:  
REPORT ON A RETRIEVAL CONFERENCE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

REPORT SUMMARY	1
BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION	2
Retrieval Conferences in PCMA?	2
The Conference Design	3
Conference Report Methodology	6
DEFINING THE KEY TERMS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS	7
Basic Definitions of the Key Terms	7
Power	7
Conflict	8
Community	10
The Relationships Among Power, Conflict, and Community	15
Power and Conflict Within Communities	15
Power and Conflict Between Communities	19
Being in communities that lack power	19
Enter communities with power	22
CONCLUDING COMMENTS	26
APPENDICES	
Appendix A: Conference Agenda	27
Appendix B: List of Retrieval Conference Participants	29
Appendix C: Summary of Theme Semester Events	30

POWER, CONFLICT, AND COMMUNITY:  
REPORT ON A RETRIEVAL CONFERENCE

REPORT SUMMARY

The Program on Conflict Management Alternatives (PCMA) held a retrieval conference on "Power, Conflict, and Community" at the University of Michigan, May 5, 1995. This event was the final event of a theme semester through the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts on the theme of conflict and community. The purpose of the conference was to directly explore the meanings of power and the ways in which power differentials influence, create, and prohibit conflict and community.

The concepts of power, conflict, and community were explored through a small group exercise, a focused discussion on the definitions of and intersections between these concepts, a film viewing and discussion, and small working groups on specific topics related to the main theme. This report provides documentation of these event by summarizing the conference and theme semester activities as a whole. This report also provides an in-depth analysis of the focused discussion in order to present the insights fostered by this activity.

## BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

### RETRIEVAL CONFERENCES IN PCMA

The following are excerpts from PCMA working paper #31:

*Organizing Retrieval Conferences: Action Research Process of Knowledge Development* by Mark A. Chesler and Helen R. Weingarten

A retrieval conference is an attempt to gather or "retrieve" information and knowledge from people considered to be expert in the issues under inquiry. These experts may at times be scientists or researchers, with formal and systematic knowledge to be shared. At other times the relevant experts may be special groups of citizens, activists, practitioners or others embedded in and experiencing directly the phenomena under inquiry. Sometimes they may be both. (p. 5)

The PCMA retrieval conference model utilizes several of the major principles underlying participatory action research (P-A-R) articulated by Israel, Schurman & House (1989):

1. It is a cooperative venture, defining issues of interest to community or agency activists in terms and language that concern them, and not proceeding solely from the academic generation of theoretically interesting problems. Moreover, its schedule and style of activities solicit and respect the contributions of academic theorists/researchers and community practitioners/members, and all contribute their relevant expertise.
2. It is a co-learning venture, in which researchers and practitioners retrieve and articulate practitioners' concrete interventions and "local theory," and in which both also seek to understand the meaning and utility of academic findings. In light of both these inputs, participants seek to apply the new understanding developed out of this dialectic to both parties' work.
3. It is an empowering process in its own right, in which, through co-learning and interactive dialogue in the creation of new knowledge and new working

relationships, all those involved gain increased knowledge and influence over their own lives and work. (p.8)

[Prior to 1995, PCMA had] held three retrieval conferences. The first, in June 1988, focused on *GRASSROOTS COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION AND CONFLICT INTERVENTION*. The second, in November 1988, focused on *CHANGING ORGANIZATIONAL RACISM AND SEXISM*. The third, in June, 1989, focused on *MEANS OF EMPOWERMENT IN INDIVIDUALS, ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMUNITIES*. Each of these events was designed to contribute to our understanding of the relationship between research and theories of conflict and conflict intervention and conflict intervention practices related to social justice objectives that were being utilized in the field. They also were designed to create working linkages between Program faculty and activists working on these issues in organizational and community settings. Each of these events we conducted somewhat differently along a variety of dimensions: sponsor goals; the staff operating each event; the degree of preparation of the participants; the criteria for "experts" participation; the size and role of the audience; the co-learning models utilized to enhance retrieval; the attention to internal group process among participants; and post-event interactions. (p.9)

#### THE CONFERENCE DESIGN

The retrieval conference held in May, 1995, was the culminating event of a year long focus on conflict and community within PCMA. During the Fall term of 1994, PCMA organized a theme semester on conflict and community for the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts at the University of Michigan which took place during the Winter term of 1995 (January-April). The theme semester consisted of the creation of three new courses, a public lecture series, a public film series, and a series of faculty discussions among those faculty teaching courses that were affiliated

with the theme. Through these events and discussions grew an increasing awareness of the importance of power differentials in any consideration of conflict and community. With this awareness in mind, the retrieval conference was designed to directly explore the meanings of power and the ways in which power differentials influence, create, and prohibit conflict and community.

Twenty-seven people participated in this retrieval conference, although not all participants were able to attend the entire days' events; a core group of approximately 20 participants were present for the full day. The conference consisted of four primary events: an introductory small group exercise on power; a fishbowl discussion of power, conflict, and community; viewing and discussion of the film *Inside Out*; and small working groups.

The introductory exercise asked participants to count off in order to create small groups of three. Each group was then given a sheet of paper with the word power written on it with the instructions to decide as a group what they might do with their power. After working with this question, each group reported back on their discussion to the entire group and a full group discussion evolved from these reports.

The fishbowl discussion provided an opportunity for all participants to reflect on the various forms, meanings, uses, and perspectives on the key terms for this conference: power, conflict, and community. This discussion consisted of two parts. First, a group of 7 participants spent 45 minutes discussing power, conflict, and community while all other conference participants observed. The questions that guided this inner discussion were:

- 1) Talking from your experience and work, what do power, conflict, and community mean to you?
- 2) What are the connections between power, conflict, and community in your life and work?

This discussion started as a round with each person sharing key thoughts related to these questions. The discussion then opened up to responses from within this small group. At the end of this process, participants who had been observers throughout these reflections and discussions shared their reactions, questions, and observations related to the contributions of the initial seven.

The film, *Inside Out*, had also been shown during the public film series; these showings were part of the public debut of this locally produced filmed theater piece which had been created as an outreach mechanism for incarcerated youth and youths at risk. This film grew out of a U of M class designed by Dr. Buzz Alexander through student involvement in local prisons. The film tells the stories of five inmates, played by themselves, through the setting of a group therapy session. The film is designed to draw connections between early painful experiences with family and social institutions and subsequent criminal acts with an emphasis on the importance of getting help with one's emotions, getting the inside pain out so that it is less likely to have destructive consequences on one's own life and the lives of others. One of the inmates featured in the film, Nathan Jones, facilitated a discussion following this viewing with Penny Ryder who works with prison outreach through the American Friends Service Committee.

Three working groups met after the discussion of the film. One of these groups was spontaneously formed as a means to extend the discussion of *Inside Out*, primarily due to the strong emotional response that many participants had to the film. This small group was not tape recorded and thus served primarily as a space for participants to further their own individual processing of the meaning of the film. The two other groups that met had been organized in advance: "The Classroom and the Community: Coming Together and Apart," and "Working with Families, Communities, and Organizations: Which Level and Why?" Because participant interest was focused on these three groups, two other groups that had



been scheduled ("Engaging with the Enemy" and "Incentives and Disincentives to Engage in and/or Confront Conflict") did not take place.

## CONFERENCE REPORT METHODOLOGY

This report is designed as a summary of the conference as a whole with the addition of a more in-depth analysis and review of the fishbowl discussion. In order to complete this report, I transcribed audiotapes from the fishbowl which I reread numerous times. Using these transcriptions and my own experience as a member of this fishbowl, I used a basic grounded theory approach to identify key themes throughout this discussion. This analysis is then reported in two sections: The first section focuses on basic definitions of the key terms (power, conflict, and community) while the second section describes the various types of interconnections among these concepts that were made through this discussion. Other materials describing the conference as a whole are included in the appendices of this report.

## DEFINING THE KEY TERMS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

The fishbowl discussion began as each of the seven active participants shared their reflections and definitions regarding the key terms. Throughout these initial contributions and the subsequent discussions some focus was placed on defining these terms although significantly more attention was paid to the connections among these concepts. With this in mind, the following begins with a summary of those aspects of the discussion that formed basic definitions of the key terms. This is followed by an analysis of the discussion of relationships among power, conflict, and community in an effort to capture the ways in which these concepts were illuminated by this exercise.

### BASIC DEFINITIONS OF THE KEY TERMS

#### Power

While there was considerable discussion relating to the concept of power, much of the focus was on participant's reactions to power and its uses. Only two participants attempted to assign a specific definition to the word 'power.' One participant reported that, in her work, power was the ability to define reality, identity, or social structures for oneself and for others. Another participant traced the word 'power' to its French roots from which it translates literally to the phrase "to be able." He contrasted the simplicity of this definition with the struggle related to the concept of power apparent in the discussion at hand:

*I've been thinking as we've gone around the circle so far, everybody seems to be extremely ambivalent, for all sorts of good reasons, about power...[but] there ain't nothing ambivalent about that [definition]--that's something we should all have, we should be able.*

The ambivalence identified by this participant was a consequence of the complex forms and uses of power found in the life experiences related by the participants: internal and external power, power which is shared, power which is hierarchically distributed, power which is abused. While these forms and uses relate to the basic definition of power, many connections were made to conflict and community. Because of this, while the definition of power presented here may not be complete, the remainder of participants' grappling with the concept of power is presented below in the analysis of the relationships among these concepts.

### Conflict

In general, conflict, as a term, seemed significantly easier to define than the concept of power. Furthermore, the definitions that emerged were fairly homogeneous across participants. In particular, the basic definition of conflict, for the purposes of this discussion at least, centered on the unresolved intersection of differences--differences in lifestyles, perspective, assumptions, values, identities, etc.

*There is a conflict between my existence and your existence, anyone else's existence, knowing that we're coming up against each other [sounds of hands coming together]--there's not automatic harmony, there's not automatic agreement, there's underlying difference... [This conflict can be particularly difficult when] the conflict is between my existence and someone else's view of my rights, or, more specifically, how someone else sees morality in terms of sexual orientation.*

*When that was written down--religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary for good government and the happiness of mankind (sic) [from the Northwest Charter]-there was a kind of commonality of understanding and assumptions...but this sense of public was really privileged. What we're trying to understand now, without shared assumptions, is how do we understand public and therefore public life and public good where there are no longer a shared set of assumptions. So, what we are after is what's life-giving and gives us vitality of life, how we negotiate where we don't share assumptions.*

This latter comment makes space for the possibility that conflict does not automatically result in negative consequences, although even this assumption was

not shared by all participants. For one participant, any use of the word conflict engendered negative connotations:

*Because the connotation of the word conflict is adversarial relationships, I much prefer the word struggle. The word struggle implies that you're dealing with comrades, that that is who you struggle with. And ultimately I think that is where we are.*

Another participant used the phrase 'annihilating conflict' to differentiate between negative consequences and conflict that results in more positive outcomes.

Specifically, annihilating conflict was framed as conflict within oneself or between people that is resolved only by destroying or annihilating something or someone.

Another participant very specifically embraced conflict as having inherent possibility for positive outcomes:

*I'm not as productive as I should be in terms of the university environment (although when I step back and look, I've done a lot of things). And what I sometimes say to myself is 'oh, you're just lazy, you're just going to a movie when you should be writing a paper.' And what was the most reassuring thing that I realized the other day is that I'm in conflict, that I have aspects of myself that are really, at this stage in my development, in conflict. When I'm writing a paper, I'm thinking a poem, when I'm thinking a poem I want to be hanging out with a friend, when I'm hanging out with a friend, I think that I should be writing a paper. In fact, some of these activities are not reconcilable in the forms that currently I know what to do with. But somehow realizing that I was in conflict was empowering because it changed my feeling about what I was dealing with...If I realize that all these things are important and that, in fact, I'm not going to be able to eliminate any of them,...no matter what other people tell me I should do, I haven't amputated these different parts of myself...So, part of the issue of conflict is that it tells you that there's more work to be done, that there's an integration that needs to be made, that there's a different level of development that's potentially there.*

These comments speak of the possibility of conflict in which something is created rather than destroyed. Applying this idea to interpersonal and intergroup levels requires that individuals and groups face intersections of opinions, needs, and realities that seem untenable and follow this intersection through to a new whole. A challenge inherent in this approach to conflict is that the outcomes of such conflict cannot be known in advance and those engaged in such conflict must

be willing to change and transform. This understanding of the potential within conflict also brings new understanding of the profusion of destructive or annihilating conflict. As stated by one participant:

*Annihilating conflict is attractive because you know what the outcome is.*

Together, these comments present a definition of conflict that starts with the coming together of difference and ends with either destruction or the creation of something new. Unlike the many possible discussions of such a concept, reflections on conflict among these participants were, for the most part, hopeful, reflecting a desire to load their experience and the possible experiences of others toward the life-giving possibilities that many found embedded in conflict.

### Community

While a significant amount of time was devoted to explorations of power and conflict, explorations of the meanings of community comprised the largest portion of the initial contributions as well as the follow up discussions. While there was much struggle with this concept, there were also many attempts to capture a definition of community in relatively simple terms. In part, these attempts centered on a sense of commonality among people. This was most simply captured by one participant who stated:

*I think of [community] as people who agree to share at least one story.*

This sense of commonality was also reflected in the dictionary definition brought in by one participant:

*I looked up the definition of community in the dictionary and the definition I liked most was the ecological definition. And it said that plants and animals that exist inside the same ecosystem and are dependent upon the same set of rules. And I think that's where we all are--that kind of community.*

The relevance of a shared experience within a common set of governing circumstances and structures was reinforced by a participant who had spent time in prison:

*The only place I've had a sense of community is prison. It has structure and rules and regulations and those things are what created community.*

This focus on shared experience allowed the definition and discussion of community to encompass various forms and levels of community; the form or level shifted as attention was drawn to the various things that might be shared among people. These shifts led participants to speak of the need to think not of community but of communities: our families, our cities, our identity groups, etc.

This discussion also made possible a more global view of community:

*The reality is that we all are interdependent and interconnected and in community with one another but, oftentimes, it doesn't feel like community.*

This last quote raises a key question: what does community feel like? For most participants the meaning of community included more than just shared circumstances. The nature of the relationship among people was a key foundation upon which the concept of community was built through this discussion. In particular, knowing and caring for one another was a central theme as people discussed the ways and places in which they found (or failed to find) community:

*It's very much a sense of a work community--I've really tried to grow that over the years, that people will take care of each other.*

*However much I might hate it...it's a community to me. People ask me how I'm doing when I come in. People know who I am and what I'm doing. They know I graduated and they say "that's good," even though they have no interest in going to school.*

*People here at the university were cold--a lot of students suffer from indifference; students don't interact with each other much. Since I've been in this community, I sometimes think that I should just go back to the other side of the tracks. But I didn't have a sense of community there, either--you just knew you had to go out and survive.*

This sense of knowing and caring for others also framed the basic definition of community offered by some participants:

*Community is grounded in human need and is, at a very fundamental level, about eating and being fed.*

*My definition of community is an acknowledgment of reality. Saying us people here together in this circle are a community is an acknowledgment of every single one of our beings and the acknowledgment that we exist here in the complexity of everything--our needs, our contributions, our identities...We fall short of community by doing this thing where this half of the circle doesn't exist and this does and then we try to create social structures based on that. That's not a social structure embodying community, it's not taking into account reality. It's not acknowledging really who is there and what needs to happen in order to follow through on that acknowledgment. If I really say that, yes, you are here, then everything that comes from acknowledging that is what is to me about building community, a sustainable community.*

However, while similarity with and knowing and caring for others were prominent features in the discussion of community, many people also brought attention to the limitations in these concepts when trying to define community. For example, similarity with others was not experienced by all participants as a reliable reference point for community.

*For me one of the most central defining factors of my life is that I am a black person, an African American, so my assumption, particularly when I was younger, was that my community was black people, all black people. And what I've learned is that that's not true...And sometimes, often, at least for me, those external things that define people which were all important to me at one point in my life are not as important...it's still important, don't get me wrong, but it doesn't automatically make you in a community with someone. And that was a real important lesson for me. Because I just assumed a certain amount of communal feeling and trust.*

As this discussion of community progressed, types of community were identified, much as the conversation had included distinctions among various types of conflict. A key distinction was made between dormant communities and those that are active or activated. A dormant community was explained in the following example provided by one participant:

*I remember there was one time when I didn't have a car in the '70s for a couple of months. I had a number of friends which I never saw...It was just the kind of lifestyle...But these particular couple of months when I didn't have a car, everybody used to come over and call me--"hey, you want to go do your laundry"..."want to go shopping?" Since they knew I couldn't go see them, they made an effort to come over and to facilitate whatever they felt I needed because I didn't have a car. It's nice not to have things because it gives you the opportunity to interact more but that doesn't necessarily mean that I didn't have a community before I didn't have a car. That happened to be a benefit for those circumstances but I was always a member of a community.*

This example was rephrased by another participant to apply it to a more general level:

*What does it mean in the absence of realizing a connection to know that the connection is there?...If I am actively feeling a part of your community, then I know that I can count on you following through on that responsibility even if we're not in the minute doing it. So that you know your family is your family. Because if you needed them or wanted them, then something is there. Although I'm not sure what that something is. Maybe I can take it back to my point of acknowledgment. Even if you're not coming into contact with these people, you acknowledge their existence in the world and you probably would not do something that would be counter to their existence.*

This discussion brought another key theme regarding community to light.

The common thread running through both dormant and active communities was the act of being responsive to and responsible for others in one's community.

*If I am in a community with you, I have a certain responsibility to you, you have a certain responsibility to me, we have a responsibility to each other.*

*I don't want to just depend on feeling...I don't want to just depend on my own feeling. I know that some of the people I love the most I get pissed off at the most and we all know that families are lethal because people want to kill the people that they care about. So, it can't just be a matter of feeling. There has to be some kind of commitment, and I like the word sacramental...some greater force that, regardless of the feeling, you're in this together.*

These comments extend the definition of community beyond emotional ties to include a moral component to this understanding of community--a moral commitment that may exist even in the absence of emotional ties.



In summary, when viewed as a whole, there were three themes embedded within this discussion of community. First, communities were defined by the experience of sharing common stories, rules, and/or circumstances. Second, communities were defined by the exchange of care and nurturance among people. Finally, communities were defined in this conversation as a set of mutually responsible relationships among people that develop either by choice or as a function of shared circumstances. While this summary brings important clarity to the concept of community, there is much about this discussion that signals the need for further discussion. In particular, this discussion did not reach consensus or integration of these ideas leaving the following questions unanswered: Do these different themes speak to different types or embodiments of community or do each of these themes apply in some way to any entity called a community? Where (and what) are the boundaries to any community? How are these boundaries created, maintained, changed? What is the responsibility or commitment that lies within community and who defines it? These questions frame an agenda for future work on this topic. Some insight into these questions can also be found in the intersection of power, conflict, and community discussed in the next section.

## THE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG POWER, CONFLICT, AND COMMUNITY

How do power and conflict operate within communities? What roles do power and conflict play between communities? Although the discussion did not intentionally address these questions in a linear fashion, in retrospect it is possible to see that these two questions framed the bulk of the discussion of the relationships between power, conflict and community. While neither of these questions was fully answered, the discussion that wove through these questions provided important insights and direction.

### Power and Conflict Within Communities

A significant amount of the discussion about power was presented by participants in this discussion with the assumption of a community as context (although these communities were not always explicitly identified or defined). In particular, many participants focused their comments on the distribution of power within a community, particularly external power--the power we hold with, for, or over others. External power was explored along a spectrum ranging from shared power to misuse or abuse of power.

The sharing or relinquishing of power was framed by some participants as an important, even idealized, use of power in a community setting.

*Power, like money, should be a fertilizer--the more you spread it, the better use you give to it. The more you keep it, retain it, the less you help other people or your communities. I don't believe in hierarchical structures--a pyramid with people at the top calling the shots or making decisions for people in the middle or at the bottom. It's not effective--people at the bottom hold the pyramid and should have more direct participation in the decision making process. I like to stay away from "the higher you are the better, the bigger you are, the better."*

*Power [over] feels very separate from the kind of power I share with friends where we all start off with an equal amount of power and...we make a commitment together to give each person's story equal space or time or acknowledgment.*

For one participant, this sharing of power framed a basic definition of community:

*Because I am an individual in the community, there is a flow and exchange of power. And that makes me a member of the community, of any community, the fact that I have the disposition of sharing and taking power.*

However, equality in the distribution of power was not the only form of external power that was valued in this discussion. While hierarchical relationships were framed above as something to be avoided, others put forth positive versions of hierarchy based on appropriate use of power within a community.

*We live in a society that when there is no power people feel that you're disorganized. You have to have the power in order to function because that is what we bring from the beginning. So, when we don't have that, people feel really lost and it creates a lot of anxiety among people. Imagine you come to school and you say "All my students, the 27 people here, we all share power." They'd say "Out of this school." They need to know who is in charge of the program, who is going to be responsible for what is going on.*

*In the last year, I have realized that sometimes a very ambiguous work situation serves the interests of the people who have been there for a long time and that to have a hierarchy and sharply defined roles sometimes makes a lot of the staff that are just coming on much more comfortable. So, these are the sorts of edges that all of us always come up against in our own lives.*

*One more thing I want to throw in...is the biblical story of the people in the garden. We sometimes think of that story as a kind of paradise where you just hang around and the fruit falls off the tree and it's all provided with no work. But, in fact, the couple was placed there with a job to do and the job was to care for the garden. There was, in fact, work and what the work was about was basically agricultural and tending the garden. And then the garden provided the sustenance for life and the food. So, power I think of in terms of dominion and there is a kind of proper ordering.*

These comments speak to a theme that was recurrent in the discussion of power: that appropriate use of power cannot be automatically guaranteed by channeling power into a specific form. Rather, the varied experiences of participants suggested that there were varied distributions of power could be considered good or useful.

Specific distributions of power were also framed as being helpful in dealing with conflict within a community setting. A structured distribution of roles was identified as one mechanism that can make conflict easier, or at least more clear-cut:

*I'm a trial lawyer by trade and so in a structured environment I'm very good at conflict. But, in an unstructured environment I hate it. Which is so strange. I haven't figured that out but I do recognize that I don't like to have conflict with people unless it is my job. In a courtroom, I'll argue with you all day and then say 'wasn't that wonderful, no problem.' But one on one, I just absolutely hate it and I'll try to avoid it at all costs.*

*Conflict occurs [in this work environment] frequently, and it's sometimes a lot more direct than I found to be at school, much clearer, sometimes less complex--I want you to do this and you don't want to do that but I'm your shift supervisor so do it.*

However, this latter participant goes on to note that this hierarchical distribution of power, while more clear, can predispose the outcome of the conflict:

*There are complexities behind that because...some people have more ability to see [that they get their way] because they have more institutional backing--i.e. my supervisor is more on their side than on my side.*

While this last comment focused on the impact on oneself of the power held by others, most of the contributions to this discussion of power within communities were reflections on the experience of holding power over others. In particular, more than one participant focused on the potential for conflict caused as a result of holding power over others.

*I [have had] the experience of not realizing my external power. I have power in situations I don't recognize--what that has led to is conflict. Where I'm exercising power and I don't even realize it, I don't even mean to, really, but people perceive it that way and, actually, in reality, I am. But because I don't realize it, I don't recognize that there's some power between me and another person, that leads to conflict that I don't have a clue where it comes from. This is a recurring theme in my life, with my staff but not only there--with my children for instance. I have a 4 and a 6 year old and I forget that I have power over them. And so when I'm talking to them, I may not mean to influence power but I am and they are intimidated and that leads to conflict but I don't really recognize where it is coming from. And so that's been an important lesson for me.*

*I have a personal conflict with power--how much I have, how much do I deserve, how much can I afford to give. Because once you give it, you cannot control it. You can facilitate the conditions but they run with it--otherwise you're not being honest with yourself or your community.*

*I feel that as a human being, if I had a lot of power, I would abuse it. I have to have someone next to me holding me down. Just from being human, being weak, I would abuse it.*

Through this introspection, participants cast some light upon one of the key questions left unanswered in the previous section. Specifically, at least one dimension of the responsibility that exists between people within communities is the responsibility of 'good use' of one's own power--where good use is at least partially defined as acknowledging one's power, acknowledging and accounting for one's weaknesses with respect to that power, and honestly relinquishing power to others. When such responsibility is not fulfilled, the potential for conflict, particularly destructive or abusive conflict, rises.

By looking within communities, participants in this discussion were able to highlight some key aspects of power and to shed a little more light on conflict as well. Examples were given of many forms of power within communities that held use and merit. While no consensus was reached regarding the 'right' way to have power, this discussion suggests that the specific distributions of power (e.g. egalitarian, hierarchical) may be less important than the consciousness with which such power is held. Whether egalitarian or hierarchically distributed (or something in between), power was considered most problematic when those individuals holding power abdicated responsibilities associated with this power, including the responsibility to acknowledge oneself as holding power. This abdication was cited as at least one key source of conflict within communities.

## Power and Conflict Between Communities

As the discussion within the fishbowl progressed and eventually came to include contributions from those observing the inner discussion, an increasing amount of the contributions made by participants focused on issues related to power and conflict between communities. These contributions fell into two divisions: the experience of being in communities that lack power and the experience of entering communities (that are not one's own) with power.

Being in communities that lack power. As noted previously, a considerable amount of the discussion as a whole involved reflections on the meaning of community. Because of this focus, community was the most well-defined of the three concepts addressed in this discussion. However, this definition did not remain stable; rather, discussions of power and community between communities broadened the definition of what it means to be in community in the first place. Most significantly, participants reflected on the ways in which power imbalances between communities served as a powerful mechanism for defining the bounds of communities as well as the nature of the relationships between people within those communities.

*I was sitting here thinking about how sometimes you find yourself in a community by virtue of the fact that you lack power. What I mean is this: I find a lot of people like me, relatively young, black people, who really don't want to be, in my opinion, from what I can observe, don't want to be a part of this big community of Black people in America. Because, in fact, as a collective group Black people lack power relative to other groups. And so, just the other day a friend of mine and I were driving through Detroit and we were talking about how depressing it is to just drive through the city and see all the boarded up buildings and the vacant things and there are no businesses except for wig shops, and beauty salons and nail salons, etc. and people hang out in the street and it's just depressing. And how we wish sometimes, and even me, and I consider myself to be a black activist forever, but there are times I want to not be in that community, I just want to go a be a person someplace. Just go live a life the way that I observe other people. But, in fact, my experience has taught me that I can't just go and do that. At least not here in this country at this time--I couldn't do it if I wanted to. Now, what I find some of my peers doing is, in fact, striving to do that. They move away, go a live totally apart,*

*separate lives, and maybe they feel as if they've done it although I don't think that's really possible. And that's such as peculiar feeling and it's a difficult place to be in--when you find yourself in a community that you sometimes just don't want to be in--you don't want to be a part of this community and you wish they would leave you alone. But you don't have any alternative.*

*As a Jew, I can say that even if I was disidentified with my Judaism if I was living in Germany...or, who knows, maybe just living in the US when I hear all this hate stuff, or what you go through being lesbian...even if you have a broader identity, other people are going to identify you in that kind of way and you are part of that community whether you want to be part of that community or not. And that has some weight where you may not even devote yourself to stuff but if you're caught in some shared fate you better not rail against it.*

These quotes give an edge to the implications of shared circumstances that may not be fully captured by the suggestion that community is defined by the act of sharing a common story. While the discussion of community without attention to power tended to imply a sense of choice and intentionality in the creation of communities, this implication was clearly not applicable to all experiences of community. The participants quoted above and others worked toward unraveling the meanings associated with sharing a story of oppression, of being identified, because of one's group membership(s), as a target of personal and structural attacks, disenfranchisements, and annihilation. In particular, these quotes speak to the inextricable binding of individual to identity that comes with oppression, the external prescription of community boundaries which may, in itself, be a hallmark of power. This discussion of choice and intentionality led one participant to work toward distinguishing between oppressive and non-oppressive communities:

*When you both talked, I wondered what it would be like if you couldn't play, if you had cast on top of you what you're supposed to do, the community you're supposed to be part of. So, you can't jump out of that community, because of the color of your skin or your country of origin, and play. And how central the notion of play is to what constitutes a non-oppressive community.*

This discussion also led participants to struggle with the question of whether this power to define others--or the associated experience of having one's identity

and community be defined by others--is absolute. One participant in particular was able to trace the ways in which she had traveled from an existence defined from outside to a new sense of her own identity and a new experience of community.

*I think we also have to think of community as being strategic...As a Puerto Rican, when I used to live in Puerto Rico I was extremely colonized, I had no sense of community. I took for granted who I was but, at the same time, because I was colonized, I wanted to be something that I was not. And it was in the act of displacement, in coming to the US, that I really became Puerto Rican in the sense that I became aware of who I was, I became aware of who I was not, I became aware of my own colonization. But also I had the freedom to create my own community and to struggle...I think that in that struggle of becoming decolonized I think I created a larger community than just being Puerto Rican or just being from the Island or just belonging to a particular social class. So that I think in that sense that I think of communities more as processes and, like you said, struggle...there are adversarial forces that are really very much beyond our reach and when you're looking at issues of imperialism or colonization, the struggle is not real easy. It takes more than just one person or group to deal with that--they are historical processes and they take forever.*

This participant focuses on the specific forms of colonization she experienced as a Puerto Rican but the experience of colonization is a useful frame for interpreting the previous two contributions as well. Given this frame, three things stand out from this passage. First, the act of displacement, or being able to see herself within a different context, was crucial for this participant to the process of reclaiming the power to define herself. Second, the redefinition that she experienced came in the form of an expanded sense of her identity rather than a denial of or distancing from herself as Puerto Rican. Finally, she talks in this passage about the need to see communities as strategic and suggests the need for strategic alliances between people and groups in order to effectively engage in the struggle of confronting and dismantling oppression.

This dimension of the discussion added new meaning to the definition of community through a recognition of the impact of oppression on oppressed communities. Most notably, this discussion speaks to the ways in which the shared story of oppression can remove choice, intentionality, and play from the experience



of being in community. These passages discussed here are also suggestive of the ways in which individuals from oppressed groups in this society can reclaim the power to define themselves and their community by expanding one's contexts, self-definitions, and alliances with others. While this final point was not developed in this discussion, these passages also suggest that the experience of sharing the story of oppression may give rise to its own particular set of responsibilities between members of such a community. This sense of responsibility within oppressed communities, including the responsibility toward activism, is another important aspect of this topic in need of further discussion.

Entering communities with power. While responsibility within oppressed communities was a topic only touched on briefly, the responsibilities associated with entering communities from a position of power received a considerable amount of attention. At this point of the discussion, the meaning or appropriateness of accepting hierarchical structures and forms again became relevant.

*One thing I often think of is the challenge of actually going into a community of your own people, or other people, to try to do any kind of work...Because it's really impossible not to believe that when you go to those communities that you don't have power. Just the power to decide you want to work there is power and how you want to structure that is power...I think what we need to do to deal with power and conflicts within our communities is acknowledge that we have power, what kind of power we have. Knowledge is power, we come in there with more knowledge than many people from the community about what their community's all about and how we're going to apply that. So, acknowledging we have power...it's difficult...we have to be very careful in how power is applied and not misuse it. But if we say no, no, we want to create a structure where there is no power, I think that's an illusion of the mind that can be very dangerous.*

From this perspective, it was very useful to have heard from other participants specific experiences with hierarchical distributions of power that were considered useful and appropriate. Such experiences could serve as potential models for the acknowledgment of power suggested in this passage.

However, such models were not enough to address all the issues embedded in the contribution made by this participant. This topic of entering communities that are not one's own with power, even acknowledged power, was met with strong reactions within the group discussion. In particular, a heated discussion erupted around two examples. This conflict began as one participant reported a hypothetical warning she had heard at a recent talk given by Helen Caldicott: if Coca-Cola were to convince all people in China to buy refrigerators in order to be able to drink cold Cokes, the ozone layer would be completely destroyed. This controversy also progressed to include a discussion of the foresting practices of the Nepalese where the country is turning to desert as a result of clear-cutting in order to feed the herds of livestock.

Speaking to the tensions between community insiders and outsiders that was implied in the earlier passage, participants wrestled with the notion of who should be regulating whom in circumstances when sustainability, health, or other aspects of the human or world condition are threatened. Given awareness of and experiences with colonization of many sorts, many participants were angered by the thought of U.S. citizens regulating the behavior of other countries, particularly given the behavior of the U.S. itself.

*It's very problematic what you're saying, having outside people come in and tell indigenous cultures that they are not valuing natural resources. This country uses much more resources than any other country...we have drunk Coke forever and now the Chinese can't do it because we're going to lose the ozone layer?*

*Really, this is the worst polluting country in the world. So, why don't we say "let's stop it, let's stop commuting an hour and a half to get to your job because that's ridiculous and crazy." So, let's do that but it really needs to start at home if you want to use your power in some way, I think, because those things are a minimum compared to what happens in these huge countries.*

These quotes and others speak to the need for integrity (as an individual, as an organization, as a country) as an important basis for right relation with others and appropriate use of power. Realizing and owning one's own power and impact on

others is one important aspect of such integrity. In addition to this honesty, the act of focusing on one's own work, one's own mistakes, one's own transgressions is essential; exerting power over others without doing one's own work was unilaterally seen in this discussion as problematic, even when external circumstances seem to necessitate such actions.

*[Jesus] was someone who, first of all, ate with everybody--outcasts, sinners, tax collectors, prostitutes, everybody--and criticized those who were in power misusing power. When he criticized, he was actually criticizing his own political and religious leaders who were almost in an impossible situation, living under an army of oppression. So, they were those who colluded in a way to survive. But those were the ones that he was most critical of. So, inappropriate exercise of power was what he was most outraged by and most aggressively provoked and angered about.*

In part, the responses above raise the question of whether it is appropriate to enter other communities at all. While no one in this discussion suggested this is a final conclusion, this tension was helpful in bringing about a level of clarity about the purposes behind taking on such a role. Two such purposes were articulated. First, outsiders can bring skills, knowledge, and resources to communities.

*Power could be knowledge, it could be money, it could be water piped into a community. A housing development planner who comes in to address a specific need...The challenging thing is to be able to empower the community and facilitate conditions where the community will be able, as a whole, to address that need. Because power is not just given to you, handed to you, "here you're in charge." People have to struggle to acquire that and build on that and use those experiences as part of a process to address things.*

The process of empowering referred to in this quote is reminiscent of the dictionary definition of power presented earlier: "to be able." The suggestion made by this participant is that a right use of power when entering a community that is not your own is to work toward that community becoming able to address their own needs.

The second type of resource that outsiders can bring to a community is perspective and a new sense of context. Much like the ways in which displacement was helpful to one participant's struggles with colonization, seeing one's experience through the eyes of outsiders can bring new insights, awareness, and decisions.

*Sometimes insiders, in their immediate desires to fulfill and satisfy needs that they think are important, but may not be, may do incredibly destructive things. And need somebody standing outside to say "Do you know what you're doing?"*

While most of this discussion focused on the experience of those with power interacting with those who lack some sort of power, and the subsequent impact on those without power, one participant did bring attention to one way in which this intersection between those with power and those without may impact the power holders. Specifically, the experience of seeing the world through the experience or perspective of someone outside one's community may bring new insights, awareness, and decisions to those with power as well.

*As I talk with people, that's part of what shifts--as people are more able to engage with people that are different than themselves, they are more willing to share that power, or acknowledge that they don't have the power to define that person in isolation of that other person or group.*

This quote, in combination with many previous quotes, reinforces the idea that the act of displacement, the transformation of the context in which one sees oneself and others, may be a key act in the disruption of power imbalances. Furthermore, the process of displacement, or extending beyond one's known or familiar world, may be an essential component of creative, rather than destructive, conflict. This interpretation is reinforced by this final contribution to the discussion made by one participant:

*I'll end with a biblical story from early on in Genesis where Abraham is visited in the desert by the 3 strangers and he shows hospitality to these strangers. At that point in the Judeo-Christian tradition, hospitality becomes a sacramental obligation. I think that's a good metaphor to adopt--that with a certain disparate post-modern situation with a number of disparate communities, if everybody were to hold the sacramental obligation of being hospitable, creating a space where we could all come together and talk, then we'd be in much better shape.*

## CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The purpose of this conference was to explore the meanings of conflict and community with an understanding of how power differentials impact these concepts. The fishbowl conversation went a considerable ways in accomplishing this purpose by addressing the intricacies and complexities of power, conflict, and community in our experience and by raising further questions on this topic. In particular, this discussion reinforced the idea that power imbalances in society have significant meaning for the definition and experience of community. This discussion also identified the act of displacement as being important to the restructuring of power within and between communities. It is hoped that the discussion as reported in this document will serve as a catalyst for ongoing attention to these issues.

APPENDIX A  
CONFERENCE AGENDA

**Power, Conflict, and Community**

A Retrieval Conference  
sponsored by the Program on Conflict Management Alternatives

with support from  
The College of Literature, Science, and the Arts  
The Hewlett Foundation  
The Vice Provost for Academic and Multicultural Affairs

May 5, 1995

8:30 - 9:00 Coffee and mingling

9:00 - 9:10 Welcome and Overview

9:10 - 10:00 Power Exercise  
*facilitated by Amy Schulz and Libby Douvan*

10:00 - 10:15 Break

10:15 - 11:00 Fishbowl Discussion  
Key Questions:  
Talking from your experience and work,  
what do power, conflict, and community  
mean to you?  
What are the connections between power,  
conflict, and community in your life and work?  
*moderated by Frances Aparicio and David Schoem*  
*participants: Melissa Danforth*  
*Julio Guerrero*  
*Diana Kardia*  
*Virginia Peacock*  
*Karl Pohrt*  
*Pamela Turner*  
*Helen Weingarten*

- 11:00 - 11:45 Fishbowl Discussion opened to all participants
- 11:45 - 12:00 Closure on morning sessions  
*moderated by Libby Douvan and Edith Lewis*
- 12:00 - 12:30 Lunch (provided on site)
- 12:30 - 2:00 Film: Inside Out  
A filmed theater piece created by 5 inmates (Willie J. Birmingham, Nathan Jones, Richard McLauchlin, Ron Moye, and Romando Valeroso) in conjunction with UM faculty (Buzz Alexander) and students (Julie Nessen and Maria Stewart) designed as an outreach to incarcerated youth and youths at risk.
- 2:00 - 2:15 Break
- 2:15 - 3:00 Discussion of film  
*Moderated by Nathan Jones and Penny Ryder*
- 3:00 - 4:00 Working Groups:  
*introduced by Amy Schulz*
- "Engaging with the Enemy"  
*facilitated by Edith Lewis*
- "Incentives and Disincentives to engage in and/or confront conflict"  
*facilitated by Libby Douvan*
- "The Classroom and the Community: Coming together and apart"  
*facilitated by Frances Aparicio*
- "Working with Families, Communities, and Organizations: Which Level and Why?"  
*facilitated by David Schoem*
- 4:00 - 4:45 Report Back from Working Groups  
Closure on afternoon and day  
*moderated by Helen Weingarten*
- 4:45 - 5:00 Evaluations

## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF RETRIEVAL CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS

Frances Aparicio	Faculty, University of Michigan Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Melissa Danforth	Undergraduate Student, University of Michigan Participant in Working Across Differences minicourse
Elizabeth Douvan	Faculty, University of Michigan Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Jason Elias	Graduate Student, University of Michigan Teaching Assistant for Conflict and Community course
Helen Fox	Faculty, University of Michigan
Julio Guerrero	Graduate Student, University of Michigan
Patricia Gurin	Faculty, University of Michigan
Jeff Howard	Staff, University of Michigan
Barbara Israel	Faculty, University of Michigan Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Monica Johnson	Staff, University of Michigan Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Nathan Jones	Undergraduate Student, University of Michigan Actor and Co-Director, <i>Inside Out</i>
Christina Jose Kampfner	Faculty, University of Michigan
Diana Kardia	Graduate Student, University of Michigan Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Edith Lewis	Faculty, University of Michigan Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Virginia Peacock	Episcopal Priest, Director of Canterbury House
Karl Pohrt	Owner, Shaman Drum Bookstore
Beth Reed	Faculty, University of Michigan
Penny Ryder	Prison Outreach, American Friends Service Committee
George Sanchez	Faculty, University of Michigan
David Schoem	Assistant Dean, University of Michigan Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Amy Schulz	Staff, University of Michigan Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Todd Sevig	Staff, University of Michigan
Pamela Turner	Director, Michigan Neighborhood Partnership
Christi Weakley	Undergraduate Student, University of Michigan Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Helen Weingarten	Faculty, University of Michigan Program on Conflict Management Alternatives
Francis Zorn	Faculty, University of Michigan
Ximena Zúñiga	Staff, University of Michigan Program on Conflict Management Alternatives



APPENDIX C  
SUMMARY OF THEME SEMESTER EVENTS  
WINTER, 1995

Curricular Events

Thirty-three existing courses within LS&A and two additional graduate level courses (School of Education and School of Social Work) specifically addressed issues that were relevant to the theme of "Conflict and Community." These courses represented a diverse array of academic departments and programs including Psychology, Sociology, History, English, American Culture, African and Afro-American Studies, Biology, Linguistics, Romance Languages, Women's Studies, Anthropology, and Geology. These courses were advertised as part of the theme semester activities and faculty seminars were sponsored to provide these faculty opportunities to discuss pedagogical issues relating to the theme (faculty discussions are described further below).

Three new courses were created by faculty members associated with PCMA to directly address the theme. The core course, "Conflict and Community," was offered through American Culture and was co-taught Frances Aparicio (Romance Languages and Latino Studies), Elizabeth Douvan (Psychology and Women's Studies), and Helen Weingarten (Social Work). The course description for this centerpiece course read as follows:

Conflict occurs at many levels from the interpersonal to the international. Likewise, communities are defined as geographically bound, politically organized, and within and across lines of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexual orientation. This course will consider the various approaches to conflict, violence, ethnic and cultural differences, and social justice issues that promote the viability of local, national, and global community. Consideration will be given to individuals, families, and groups within communities and the

challenges faced at each of these levels. Through lectures, discussions, and group projects, students will learn about the complexity of both conflict and community using theoretical and analytical approaches to specific case study examples. Topic areas to be covered include: constructive outcomes of conflict, community as a process, alternative communities, environmental conflicts, multicultural coalitions, the mass media, an historical overview of community, psychological aspects of conflict, generational issues, and the impact of technology on community.

With a total enrollment of about 70, two discussions sections were taught by a GSTA while a third section, led by Frances Aparicio, was designed to address the more specialized interests of graduate students. This graduate section also served as an interdisciplinary workshop in which students from Urban Planning and Architecture, Social Work, Sociology, Spanish, Political Science, and American Culture developed research projects in their own areas of expertise. The large lectures for this course were open to the public and showcased community conflict practitioners, outside speakers, and faculty from across campus (see below for specific topics for public lectures).

In addition to this core course, two new mini-courses were created. The Women's Studies Program and the School of Social Work sponsored a 9 week minicourse titled "Women Creating Community" taught by Edith Lewis (School of Social Work), Amy Schulz (School of Public Health), and Ximena Zúñiga (Program on Intergroup Relations and Conflict). The following course description was listed for this minicourse:

This course will focus on the development of multi-group alliances or communities of women: the potential for such groups to develop; the possibilities for effecting political, social, and economic change; the potential to transform relations of power and patterns of oppression; and the challenges that face the development and maintenance of such groups. We will address race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, class, and national origin as they influence the life experience of women and the relationships among women in the United States. In particular, the course will focus on women's thinking about, and experience of, difference, conflict and community, as these are shaped by identities,

social constructions of difference, and historical location. Case studies, writings on multi-party coalitions, narratives and personal testimonies, critical and theoretical readings, student presentations, guest speakers, films, intergroup dialogues, individual and class assignments and class discussions will explore identities, diversity, power and privilege, and the process of politicization and political organization which impact the development of alliances among women. Throughout the course, discussion will center around women's action to build bridges and to create coalitions across difference in order to address issues of social, political, and economic justice.

The second minicourse ran 7 weeks and was sponsored by American Culture. "Building Bridges Through Intergroup Dialogues" was taught by Ximena Zúñiga and Todd Sevig through the Program on Intergroup Relations and Conflict. The description for this course read as follows:

In a multicultural society, discussion about issues of conflict, commonalities, and differences is needed to facilitate understanding and build bridges between social groups. In this seven-week intergroup dialogue, students will participate in a semi-structured face-to-face meeting with students from at least two difference social identity groups through discussion of relevant reading material and exploration of their own and the other group's experiences in various social and institutional contexts. Participants will examine narratives and historical and sociological materials which address each group's experience within a US context, and learn about pertinent issues facing the participating groups on campus and in society. The goal is to create a setting in which students engage in open and constructive dialogue, learning, and exploration. A second goal is to actively identify possible resolutions of intergroup conflict.

Further institutional support has since been granted to this second minicourse which is now being offered as a regular course through Psychology, Sociology, and American Culture.

#### Public Lectures

Thirteen free lectures addressing various aspects of Conflict and Community were offered to the public. Lecture topics included challenges to community, face to face conflict, communities across borders, communities of resistance, conflict for

social change, the relationship of mass media to conflict and community, state violence, violence against women, and multicultural coalitions. Speakers included Jen Rubin, Amy Jordan and Tonya Duke from the Michigan Anti-Poverty Coalition, Charles Strozier from the City University of New York, Joyce Dixon, MSW, and Charlene Johnson and Ismael Ahmed from the Detroit Neighborhood Partnership. These lectures also showcased many University of Michigan faculty and graduate students currently conducting scholarship on conflict and community: Sharon Sutton (School of Art and Architecture), Edith Lewis (School of Social Work and Women's Studies), Patricia Gurin (Psychology and Women's Studies), George Sanchez (American Culture), Betty Bell (Native American Studies), Gail Nomura (Asian American Studies), Abigail Stewart (Women's Studies and Psychology), Mark Chesler (Sociology), Jimmy Reeves (Communication), Julio Guerrero (Communication), Christina Jose Kampfner (Women's Studies), and Larry Coppard (School of Social Work).

#### Public Film Series

Eight films relating to the theme of Conflict and Community were presented under the direction of Margarita de la Vega Hurtado. These films focused primarily on the impact of class, race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation on the experiences of conflict and community in the U.S. Seven of these eight films were major motion pictures or nationally available documentaries: *Brother's Keeper*, *American Dream*, *Roger and Me*, *Incident at Oglala*, *Tongues Untied*, *Color Adjustment*, and *Mi Vida Loca*. The final film presentation marked the debut of *Inside Out*, a film produced at the University of Michigan. This film was directed by Buzz Alexander (English), U of M students Maria Stewart and Julie Nessen, and Willie J. Birmingham, Nathan Jones, Richard McLauchlin, Ron Moye, and Romando Valeroso who are featured in this film on the lives of incarcerated men. All films were free and open to the public.

### Faculty Discussions

Faculty associated with the theme semester came together on three occasions. These discussions focused on the different disciplinary perspectives on conflict and community and on pedagogical issues related to teaching on this theme. Discussion questions included: What do we mean by 'Conflict and Community?' What is the relationship between social groups/social identities and this theme? In what ways are students particularly challenged by this theme? In what ways are we challenged as teachers? These forums were also used by faculty as a network for garnering interest and support for related activities.