

Third party consultation: a method for the study and resolution of conflict

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Conflict in its many forms is an omnipresent fact of human existence. Since it often includes dysfunctional and destructive components, men have explored numerous methods for its management, including techniques of avoidance, regulation, and resolution. A number of these methods involve the intervention of an outside third party as in mediation, arbitration, and conciliation. Recently several investigators in various fields have been developing similar approaches which appear to exhibit a new type of third party intervention directed toward the study and resolution of conflict. These approaches have been given different labels and evidence variation on a number of dimensions. Nevertheless it is suggested here, that they exhibit a core of common characteristics which warrants grouping them together under the term, *third party consultation*, after Walton (1969).

This general method centers on the facilitative and diagnostic actions of an impartial third party consultant in helping antagonists

understand and constructively deal with the negative aspects of their conflict. In part this involves the injection of social science theory relating to conflict processes. The approach is decidedly noncoercive, nonevaluative, relatively nondirective, and seeks exploration and creative problem-solving with respect to basic relationships, rather than settlement of specific issues through negotiation.

Third party consultation can thus be distinguished from more traditional types of intervention on a number of dimensions, including the degree of coercion applied to the parties, the flexibility of the interaction, and the nature of the objectives. Many of these distinctions are discussed by Burton (1969) in comparing his third party approach of controlled communication with more established methods. It must be emphasized that third party consultation is not simply a complementary adjunct nor a straightforward extension of other forms of third party intervention. On the contrary the method is a step in a new direction in the field of conflict resolution and involves an unprecedented combination of third party strategies and behaviors. Obvious parallels between past methods and the present one should not be taken as a denial of the uniqueness of third party consultation.

This article presents a comparative review and an explication of the general characteristics of third party consultation. Several examples of the method are briefly described, and a

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descriptive model is developed which, in combination with existing literature, might serve as a common conceptual base for further theoretical, practical-empirical, and experimental work, and around which accumulating knowledge might be organized. It is suggested that similarities among the various examples override their differences, and that most of the contributors are saying many of the same things, although their explicitness and terminology varies. Therefore it appears appropriate and opportune to inject some systematization into the field by presenting an initial model, based primarily on the work of Walton (1969), Blake, Shepard, and Mouton (1964), and Burton (1969). In devising a classification of related phenomena, there is bound to be much that is arbitrary and tentative. Hence other ways of arranging an analytic description of third party consultation might serve just as well, and the model must be seen as open to modification given the recent development of the method. To aid in this critical process, some of the assumptions and limitations of the method are examined, and directions for further theoretical and empirical work are suggested.

Some Examples of Third Party Consultation

The main contributors to the method come from many different fields in the social sciences including business administration, political science, and psychology. They focus on a variety of different systems including dyads in organizations, families, labor-management and other subsystems of organizations, communities, and finally the international system. To place some semblance of order on this variety, the instances of third party consultation are herein organized under the headings of interpersonal, intergroup, and international. Some examples of related interventions are given to yield some flavor of what is not included in the present model.

APPLICATIONS IN THE INTERPERSONAL SPHERE

One of the more ambitious and perhaps most explicit and systematic statements of third party consultation has been offered by Walton (1969) in his recent work entitled *Interpersonal Peacemaking: Confrontations and Third Party Consultation*. The author draws on case studies from the business organization sphere wherein he acted as a process consultant with the goal of alleviating predominantly dysfunctional conflicts between executives. The approach partly resembles sensitivity training, but also involves consideration of substantive issues relating to the occupational roles and duties of the participants. Based on a comprehensive model of interpersonal conflict, the method aims for well-managed and productive confrontations between antagonists brought about by third party involvement. The consultant undertakes several strategic functions which are carried out through an extensive repertoire of interrelated tactical choices and interventions. The overall consultation includes preliminary interviewing, structuring the context for the confrontation, intervening in the confrontation, and planning for future dialogue. The general objective is to deescalate the conflict by substituting benevolent cycles for self-maintaining malevolent ones.

Also in the interpersonal sphere the usefulness of a third party approach in marital counseling has been shown by Satir (1967) in *Conjoint Family Therapy*. During a series of therapy sessions attended by the entire family, the therapist attempts to improve both the accuracy and openness of communication. Other functions include reducing threat, stimulating hope, and inducing a here-and-now process orientation in the family's thinking.

APPLICATIONS IN THE INTERGROUP SPHERE

In the organizational arena some of the most promising third party consultations have been

carried out by Blake, Mouton, and their associates as reported in *Managing Intergroup Conflict in Industry* (Blake, Shepard, and Mouton, 1964). The general goal of these behavioral science interventions is to change a hostile win-lose orientation to a collaborative problem-solving one. To accomplish this end in various intergroup relationships such as union-management, headquarters-field, and merger situations, Blake, Shepard, and Mouton (1964) have implemented a variety of intergroup training laboratories wherein the participants focus upon the nature of the conflict between them with third party intervention and regulation. Besides providing relevant behavioral science theory and integrating it into the participants' actual lab experience, Blake and his associates have devised a variety of procedures to enable the parties to examine their images of themselves and each other and to diagnose and improve their relationship. The improvement of communication and the establishment of more positive attitudes are seen as necessary bases for effective joint effort.

A similar but less extensive program has been reported by Muench (1960, 1963), who has outlined how a clinical psychologist may treat labor-management conflicts through reference to one particular case history. By meeting with individuals and groups in a variety of settings within the organization, Muench (1960) was able to diagnose the main problems as ineffective communication, mutual distrust, and differing perceptions of the same issues. The consultant was then able to undertake actions and make recommendations. A four-year follow-up has indicated the recommendations were successful. Muench (1963) regards the nondirective, impartial, catalytic role of the third party as highly important in reaching the objectives.

In the area of community conflict some of the earlier intergroup relations workshops such as reported by Levinson (1954) have commonalities with third party consultation. In this paradigm, a small number of social scientists

meet with a group of well-motivated individuals over several weeks and provide a program of lectures, discussions, and extracurricular activities. There is however no intergroup interaction as such, focusing on the actual conflicts, although participants do come from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Levinson (1954) sees the main functions as: (1) providing knowledge and skills regarding intergroup relations, (2) inducing emotional-ideological change by clarifying participants' thinking regarding relevant concepts and processes and by furthering the growth of democratic thinking and self-insight, and (3) providing an intense supportive living experience through the social support of the diversified participants. Assessment of three such workshops by Levinson and Shermerhorn (1951) and Levinson (1954) showed statistically significant changes in various predispositions related to intergroup relations as measured by a battery of personality-attitude scales of the authoritarianism-ethnocentrism variety. While one can only speculate on what effect such procedures might eventually have on actual intergroup relations, the change in individual attitudes at least stimulates optimism.

Also in the community arena a growing number of social scientists are becoming directly involved in attempts to improve communication and induce problem-solving among various groups and factions. MacLennan (1970) reports on the activities of a Community Mental Health Center and a Mental Health Association whose objective was to reduce community conflict in a suburban county. Much of the work centered around integration of white and black schools, and a variety of committees, workshops, and individual consultations were instituted in an attempt to facilitate this process. However polarization occurred and the subcommittee created to help resolve the community conflict over the issue of integration moved to a position supporting the integrationist side.

Another example of the involvement of be-

havioral scientists in community affairs is given in Bell *et al.* (1969) which describes a series of human relations training laboratories involving police officers and community members of a large southwestern U.S. city. The objectives of developing greater respect and harmony and of promoting a cooperative relationship by having small mixed groups first examine the existing stereotypes and then develop a problem-solving attitude conducive to conflict resolution. The specific procedures were similar to those used by Blake *et al.* (1964). Although a number of problems were encountered, the results of post-discussion evaluation, attitude questionnaires, and follow-up community observations indicate that some positive changes occurred.

A final example of intervention in the intergroup sphere, with strong international connections, is provided by Lakin (1969) in *Arab & Jew in Israel: A Case Study in a Human Relations Approach to Conflict*. The consultants used sensitivity training methods in two mixed groups of Jews and Arabs living in Israel to try to improve intergroup communication and reduce intergroup suspicion. The program of consultation included exercises for empathy and communication skill development, ethnically mixed team projects for developing proposals, and dialogue groups emphasizing group process and communication. In addition the application evidenced perhaps the most comprehensive set of assessment techniques seen in the literature. These included pretraining questionnaires, tallies of key behaviors and topics, observations during most activities, sociometric ratings, projective tests, and posttraining interviews centering on participants' evaluations. While there was participant resistance, both consultants and participants were mildly positive about the outcomes. In a later work Lakin (1972) reviews some examples and discusses the general applicability of training techniques for the amelioration of intergroup conflict, and while pointing out numerous problems does suggest further work is desirable. Although the training approach puts

more emphasis on individual and interpersonal processes, it does yield valuable insights for the development of a more general model of conflict resolution.

APPLICATIONS IN THE INTERNATIONAL SPHERE

One of the most promising programs which may be subsumed under third party consultation is that of controlled communication as described by Burton (1969) in *Conflict and Communication: The Use of Controlled Communication in International Relations*. Under the auspices of the Centre for the Analysis of Conflict, University College, London, Burton and other political and social scientists have met in small private discussions with appointed representatives of parties engaged in international conflict. The consultants attempt to create a nonthreatening, problem-solving atmosphere in which the participants may examine their perceptions regarding the relationship and may jointly explore means of analyzing and resolving the conflict as well as developing wider common interests. The meetings are controlled by the third party consultants in a fairly nondirective fashion and the emphasis is on establishing effective communication, which Burton (1969) sees as the key to conflict resolution. Another important function of the consultants is to draw on their specialized knowledge regarding conflict processes and apply it in the context of the ongoing discussions. This eventually enables the participants to stand back and look at the relationship without emotional bias or rigid commitment, and thus to see the other party's point of view. However only the representatives themselves can accurately describe and ultimately resolve their differences by selectively drawing on the material provided by the third party. The carry-over of outcomes to the actual relationships between nations is problematic and deserving of follow-up research. Burton (1969) maintains that the technique of controlled communication is congruent with general

trends in the study of world politics as well as in the practical control of conflict, and contrasts the method with more traditional ones both with respect to practice and to philosophical bases. Related assumptions regarding the subjective nature of conflict are spelled out and further explicated in Burton (1968). On the whole Burton's (1969) work is a persuasive argument for the efficacy and desirability of third party consultation as a means of studying and resolving conflict.

A more limited but nevertheless courageous foray by social scientists into the international arena is described in a collective work edited by Doob (1970) entitled *Resolving Conflict in Africa: The Fermeda Workshop*, in an initial report by Doob, Foltz, and Stevens (1969), and in an article by Walton (1970). This workshop was an attempt to apply sensitivity training, supplemented by other exercises, as a means of producing innovative solutions to border disputes involving Ethiopia, Somalia, and Kenya. The total group of three American organizers, four trainers, and eighteen African academics were divided into two matched T-groups and moved from sensitivity training to discussion of substantive issues. Although the evaluations given by various individuals in Doob (1970) vary a great deal, there did appear to be enhancement of communication and some favorable attitude change, and within each T-group there was agreement regarding a solution. However the total group could not reach a consensus, and the two-week meeting ended on a note of frustration and failure. While this program appears more focused than some of the other examples it is still similar enough to be included in the development of the model.

SOME EXAMPLES OF RELATED INTERVENTION METHODS

While not a direct example of third party consultation, the program of research outlined by Sherif (1966) in his report *In Common Predicament: Social Psychology of Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation* does have important

implications. Through a well controlled program of manipulation, Sherif and Sherif (1953), and Sherif *et al.* (1961) have realistically created boys-camp groups, brought about hostile relationships between them by means of highly competitive interactions, and then transformed such relationships to positive cooperative ones by means of behind-the-scenes imposition of superordinate goals, i.e., compelling objectives not attainable by either group alone. Thus through this intervention, Sherif (1966) has emphasized a highly important, if not essential, ingredient of mutual positive motivation—namely, superordinate goals which can be made continuously salient by a third party. In fact Sherif (1966) suggests that such goals are already awaiting accentuation in every group relationship. For example at the international level there is the common predicament of impending nuclear annihilation.

Since third party consultation and the more traditional third party mediation have similarities as well as differences, it is not surprising that some of the functions and tactics of labor mediators parallel those of third party consultants. Douglas (1962) in her work *Industrial Peacemaking* has given a realistic and perhaps revealing report on the behavior of mediators through actual observation and complete sound-recording of mediation cases. In it we find the mediator pacing the negotiations through various phases by actions both specific and general, and inducing the desire to settle by a variety of means such as balancing table power, adjusting the degree of tension, and intensifying fears regarding the possibility of strike action. The emphasized objective is however a specific compromise settlement rather than a collaborative exploration and creative solution with respect to negative aspects of the basic relationship between the parties.

A related statement of third party activities at the international level has been provided by Young (1967) in *The Intermediaries: Third Parties in International Crises*. This broader

treatment encompasses more established methods of third party diplomacy, with the emphasis on mediatory activities, as well as more direct interventions of a peacekeeping variety. The main objectives are terminating crises and aiding parties to strike a bargain, rather than consultation in a face-to-face problem-solving confrontation. Nevertheless some of the functions and tactics of third parties are stated in an abstract and general form and therefore parallel those of third party consultation. In addition a number of the role requirements, resources, and capabilities of potential third parties outlined by Young (1967) transcend any particular method and are thus congruent with the consultation model.

The Analysis of Options technique which has been applied to a community conflict (Bain, Howard, and Saaty, 1971) as well as an international conflict (Howard, 1971) has some similarities with third party consultation. The social scientists attempt to analyze the conflict by relying on the knowledge and insights of participants or informed experts who are involved in the situation. Issues are clarified and acceptable solutions are explored by considering each party's preferences for possible outcomes. In this way creative solutions may obtain which are very different than those which result from negotiations between the parties themselves. However the method does not involve the direct participation of antagonists and consultants in problem-centered discussions, and is more directed toward settlement of specific issues than is third party consultation. In addition the consultant's identity is not as critical a factor, and beyond diagnosing the conflict, there is little overlap in strategic functions and tactics of the third party.

A Model of Third Party Consultation

In order to exhibit more systematically the essential elements of third party consultation, a model is presented below which divides the method into its major components. The main

descriptive categories and specific characteristics are outlined schematically in Figure 1. In the figure, the categories have been arranged sequentially from left to right depending on whether they are most important preliminary to, concurrent with, or consequent to the joint discussions within a consultation program. Situation, identity, role, functions, and objectives are seen as more fixed than tactics, procedures, supportive activities, and program. Tactics and procedures are seen as so varied and flexible that specific listings are not included, and the supportive activities listed are regarded as illustrative and optional depending on the particular program.

The third party consultation *situation* refers to the basic arrangements or essential conditions of the method. The *third party role* is defined as the abstracted pattern of behavior and related normative expectations, while the *third party identity* is regarded as the constellation of relevant attributes, including both characteristics and capabilities. Similarly the *participant role* and *participant identity* refer to parallel attributes of the antagonistic parties or their representatives. Third party consultation has certain *objectives* which are the ultimate, general goals or end-states toward which the method is directed. To reach these objectives, the consultant carries out a number of *functions* which are relatively broad strategies designed to establish certain related conditions favorable to the attainment of the objectives. The functions are expressed through specific behavioral interventions in the ongoing dialogue which can be referred to as third party *tactics*. Alternately the tactics may be complemented by and initiated within a series of controlled *procedures* wherein the participants are asked to carry out specified tasks or exercises to further expedite the functions and to attain the objectives. The actual consultation discussions must be complemented by some additional *supportive activities* such as inviting and interviewing participants and assessing any changes which occur. All of these aspects must

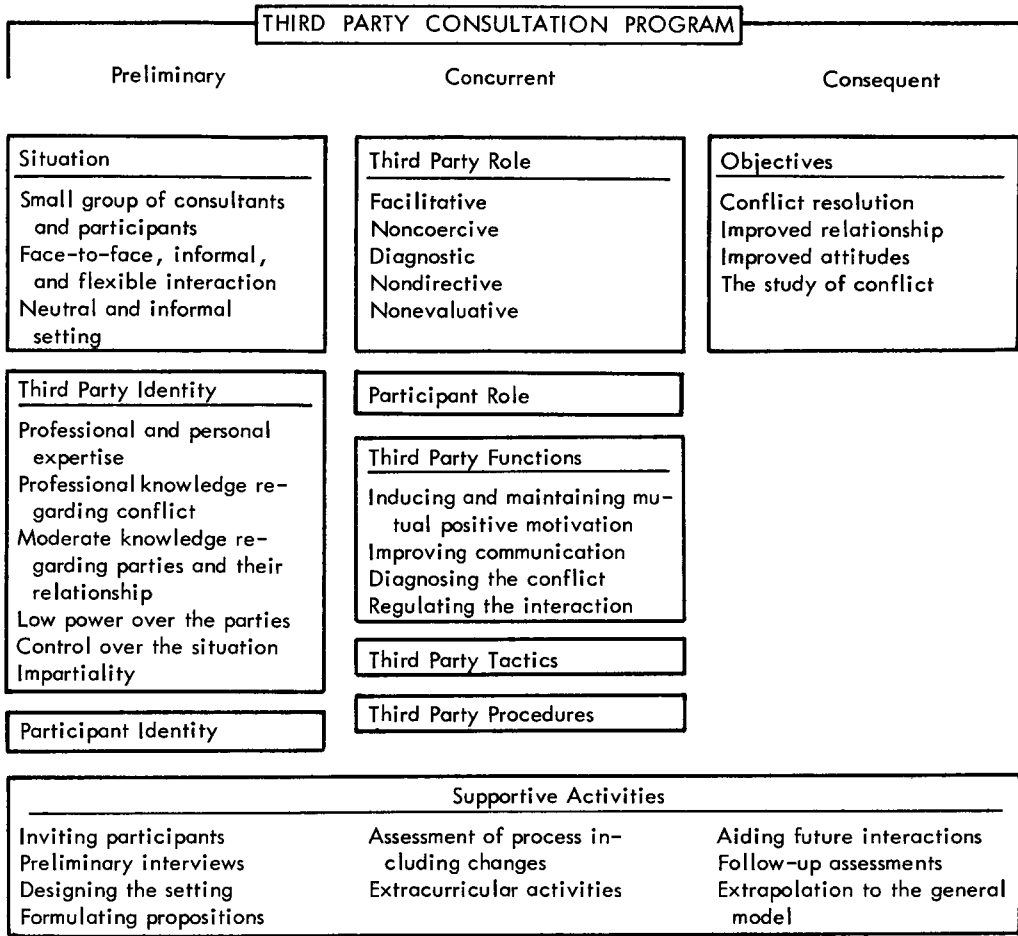


FIG. 1. A model of third party consultation.

then be blended into an overall *program* of consultation for real-life application.

The various categories are of course highly interrelated. For example the role of the third party is intimately tied to his identity, in that how one is expected to behave is dependent on who one is and what attributes he possesses. Similarly the functions and tactics further define the role and are both dependent on the identity, especially with respect to capabilities. Such connections are elaborated more fully in the following detailed exposition of the categories.

THE THIRD PARTY CONSULTATION SITUATION

The fundamental arrangements for third party consultation are simple: the consultant meets with antagonists to a conflict in a face-to-face small group setting on neutral ground to undertake informal and flexible discussions focusing directly on the nature of the conflict. While the basic characteristics of this situation cannot be spelled out precisely, they can be described as falling within some roughly specifiable range.

Size and Composition of the Group. Minimally the situation requires one third party meeting with two antagonists; this is common at the interpersonal level. However other interested individuals and real or potential third parties may be present thus adding to the social complexity of the minimal situation. Walton (1969) has commented on some of the potential effects of additional persons. In the intergroup and international applications it is common for both the third party and the principals to be comprised of more than one individual each. In both the Blake, Shepard, and Mouton (1964) and Burton (1969) works the third party is a team of social scientists who may come from various disciplines but whose common interests revolve around conflict theory and resolution. The actual number of consultants and participants appears to be flexible and is not precisely given for all cases. However the main consideration is that group size be restricted so that small group discussion is possible. Although neither research nor experience provides the magic number, most indications point to an optimum range of 10 to 20 individuals. This is close to Burton's (1969) rule of thumb stipulating 12 to 15 as a good number. A second major consideration may be the relative proportions of consultants and participants. It is possible that having a majority of consultants, as seems to have occurred in some of Burton's (1969) work, might result in a norm-setting process wherein the behavior of the participants is disproportionately compliant. Thus the issue of public versus private behavior and attitude change becomes manifest, and more sophisticated techniques of assessment beyond consultants' impressions become necessary. It is evident that Burton (1969) has incorporated considerations which attempt to offset even the most subtle forms of coercive social influence. Nevertheless it is probably desirable for the consultants to be in a minority whenever feasible.

Nature of the Interaction. It is regarded as

essential that most, if not all, of the interaction be of a face-to-face nature. Burton in an illustrative invitation to one party has stated: "On the basis of our own experience, and the history of disputes, we feel we cannot stress this procedural aspect too much: without face-to-face participation in the consideration of proposals, there can never take place the complex adjustments in attitudes and perceptions that is necessary for any set of proposals to succeed" (1969, p. 39). This direct involvement is evident in all of the above applications and appears necessary for the exploratory, creative atmosphere in which participants can react and adjust to the ongoing stream of activity.

A second keynote of the interaction is flexibility applied to what is said, how it is said, and how long it takes. In other words the time limits as well as the agenda are flexible, although there is a progression to the interaction which the third party attempts to bring about sometimes by assigning specific procedures. The point is that exploratory, accommodative discussions are not simply turned on and off, and while the third party can arrange meeting times and approximate durations, greater flexibility than is often found in conflict settlement procedures is required.

A third and related characteristic of the interaction is that of informality. The tone is quite removed from that of a business staff meeting, labor-management negotiations, or especially diplomatic meetings at the international level. Burton sums up the atmosphere by noting, "In due course what emerges is a highly sophisticated seminar discussion as might take place among experienced staff members of an interdisciplinary university department" (1969, p. 67).

Nature of the Setting. The most important characteristic of the setting is its neutrality: it should not favor one party over the other in any way. Therefore the third party must make available or choose a setting which is not the "home base" of either party, or biased in some less conspicuous manner. Essentially, as Wal-

ton has stated, "The site for the confrontation affects the balance of situational power" (1969, p. 117), and consequently the site has motivational ramifications as well as affecting the perception of the third party's impartiality.

The formality of the setting should in general match the informal atmosphere required for the discussions. Beyond that, it may be possible and useful, especially in the interpersonal arena as noted by Walton (1969), to vary the formality of the setting to correspond to the type of work required at any given stage.

A more specific structural aspect of the setting is that of seating arrangements at the table which, as Burton (1969) points out, is not a trivial matter. Antagonists can be quite sensitive to positioning, and require flexibility in focusing on other participants and consultants.

Rationale of the Situation. The rationale underlying the third party consultation situation is congruent with the objectives of the method and may be stated simply as an attempt to provide a context which will facilitate a productive confrontation between the parties or representatives. Walton states that confrontation refers "to the process in which the parties directly engage each other and focus on the conflict between them" (1969, p. 95). Similarly Blake, Mouton, and Sloma (1965), in introducing an account of a union-management intergroup laboratory, speak of the two groups examining their present relationship in depth, focusing on underlying barriers, and finally resolving misunderstandings so that effective joint effort on common problems is possible. The consequences of such productive confrontations are highly related to the overall objectives of the method, and the third party identity and role are further designed to facilitate this process.

THIRD PARTY IDENTITY

There are several characteristics and capabilities required for potential third parties to be salient and acceptable to antagonists, and to be able to carry out a program of consultation.

Walton (1969) has explicitly considered desirable identifying characteristics, and by modifying and supplementing his descriptive categories with considerations from other applications, one can gain a fairly comprehensive account of the necessary third party identity.

Professional and Personal Expertise. Walton has adequately summed up this aspect of third party identity:

The professional and personal qualities attributed to the third party which give the principals confidence in entering a confrontation and which facilitate confrontation processes include (a) diagnostic skill, (b) behavioral skills in breaking impasses and interrupting repetitive interchange, (c) attitudes of acceptance, and (d) a personal capacity to provide emotional support and reassurance [1969, p. 131].

Similarly Burton (1969) speaks of sensitivity in intervening, pressing points, and so on. Young (1967), although dealing with more general and traditional third party intervention, includes diplomatic and bargaining skill in his systematic list of third party attributes, and cites a number of component elements such as timing in taking action and flexibility in making proposals.

Professional Knowledge. Professional skill in consultation presumes knowledge in a number of possible areas such as conflict theory, group processes, perception, communication, sensitivity training, attitude formation and change, conflict management practices, and general knowledge specifically related to the system within which the third party is working. Consider the following statement from Burton:

Panel members are political and social scientists who have worked in the fields of conflict, including the related areas of decision-making, perception, deterrence, escalation, functionalism, and the very many other aspects that are now the subject of empirical research. Experienced diplomats, journalists, historians, and others who do not have this type of academic background can make little contribution: the role of the third party is to make available a body of knowledge on which the parties can draw, and it is a

specialised knowledge that they would not normally have [1969, p. 63].

In the various procedures developed by Blake and his co-workers (Blake and Mouton, 1961, 1962; Blake, Shepard, and Mouton, 1964) for changing intergroup conflict to intergroup collaboration, the application of behavioral science theory, mainly of social psychological derivation, is an integral part of the process. It not only helps the consultants in their work, but is also directly transmitted to participants to help them understand and modify their relationship. Likewise Walton (1969) demonstrates the relation between knowledge regarding conflict theory and interventional behavior by detailing numerous implications that his diagnostic model of interpersonal conflict has for conflict management. In conclusion, it is partly to stress that the third party consultant is more than a mere facilitator of interaction, that the requirement of professional knowledge has been added to the list of necessary attributes.

Moderate Knowledge Regarding the Parties and Their Relationship. Walton (1969) points out that moderate knowledge in this area enhances the credibility of the third party and the accuracy of his interventions. In controlled communication (Burton, 1969), some of the preliminary activities are directed toward formulating general propositions which may be applicable. However too much knowledge of a particular case is likely to result in prior commitments, a rigidity in discussions, and rejection by the participants. Only the participants can describe the relationship as they perceive it and, stimulated by consultants' questions, only they can clarify their positions and resolve their differences.

Low Power Over the Parties. Any moderate degree of power which the third party has over the antagonists can have a number of disadvantageous effects (Walton, 1969). These include a feeling of risk about candid expression, and the problem of superficially compliant behavior,

designed to elicit the third party's approval. While the specific form of possible illegitimate influence will vary with the application, suffice it to say that the third party should not hold any power which could even inadvertently coerce the participants.

Control Over the Situation. Since a particular type of group size and composition, interaction, and setting is required to facilitate productive confrontation, the third party requires control over these various aspects of the situation. While this is related to third party functions and tactics, especially in the area of regulation, it is useful to regard this power, especially over the setting, as an important third party attribute. In part this requires control of certain physical resources such as meeting places and related facilities.

Impartiality. The term impartiality is used here rather than neutrality, following Young's distinction (1967), because although the third party favors neither side, he most likely will influence outcomes one way or the other by his very intervention. However Walton (1969) uses the term neutrality, and does maintain that the third party is neutral with respect to outcomes and related substantive issues, as well as in the areas of personal distance from the principals and the ground rules of the conflict resolution approach. Another important ingredient of impartiality is Young's attribute of independence (1967), i.e., lack of attachment to any entity having a stake in the conflict. Furthermore the third party must be outside the intense emotional field which typically surrounds a conflict. To be impartial, the consultant must be seen by the parties as not emotionally involved, and therefore as unbiased and worthy of trust. However it must be noted that there is no "holier-than-thou" connotation to impartiality such that the third party is somehow above typical reactions to conflict. Given involvement in a predominantly dysfunctional conflict, any potential or one-time third party would himself require the services of an impartial third party to help resolve the differences.

In practical terms this means that the suitability of third parties fundamentally depends on the given conflict, and their impartiality is defined only with that particular situation in mind. This is especially evident in the international sphere, where national identity combines with past and contemporary relationships among nations to establish beforehand what individuals could be impartial, acceptable, and trusted third parties in any given conflict. In all applications, the development of positive interpersonal relationships is an important ingredient of third party trust, but at the intergroup, especially the interethnic, and international levels, such relations cannot be established as easily as in the interpersonal sphere, and in many cases are ruled out beforehand by a perceived lack of impartiality based on group or national identity. Even when initially established, impartiality is a very fragile condition in the real world, and requires constant consideration for its maintenance.

Result of an Adequate Third Party Identity.

The outcome of an adequate third party identity is to make the consultant salient and acceptable in the eyes of the antagonists, and to lay the foundation for a positive relationship between the third party and the participants. The above attributes are prerequisites for a relationship involving trust, respect, and friendly attitudes between the third party and the participants. This relationship is jointly determined by these initial givens of the third party and by his behavior during consultation. The relative importance of these two bases may vary with the specific conflict as well as with the general sphere of application. For example the difficulty of achieving an adequate identity may increase with the complexity of the conflict relationship, thus making the initial givens more important in the international arena. Conversely the development of positive relationships during the course of interaction is probably easier and may be a stronger determinant in the interpersonal applications. In any event an adequate third party identity and the

development and maintenance of a positive relationship, are regarded as highly conducive, if not essential, to the successful application of the method.

THIRD PARTY ROLE

The emphasis now moves from third party characteristics, or what Walton (1969) has termed role attributes, to the third party role itself, i.e., the pattern of behavior congruent with the position of third party consultant. The role is more general than specific behaviors (tactics) and has role expectations, or norms, intimately associated with it. The role is closely related to third party functions and may be seen as partly defined by them. Since we are referring to an abstracted pattern of behavior, one appropriate method of description is to list and briefly explain a number of adjectives which characterize the third party role. These descriptors are not mutually exclusive and some indicate nonexistence rather than existence in order to contrast the role of third party consultant with the more established roles of arbitrator, mediator, or conciliator.

Facilitative. The most conspicuous feature of the third party consultant's role is that it is facilitative. This is especially noticeable in the functions of stimulating mutual positive motivation on the part of the principals and in improving communication between them. Thus as in some other forms of third party intervention (for example mediation), the consultant may be regarded as a catalyst. However here the emphasis is on facilitating the process of exploration and creative problem-solving with regard to dysfunctional aspects of the basic relationship, rather than aiding the hammering out of a compromise settlement. When a particular agreement on issues largely decided beforehand is the goal of intervention, then the brand of facilitation associated with mediation is more appropriate. Also by way of contrast to other roles, the consultant may enter into a more supportive relationship with the participants since the formal constraints of his office

are fewer. This further helps to facilitate the process of confrontation.

Noncoercive. The role of the third party must be noncoercive and nonthreatening so that the participants feel maximum security and yet independence at the same time. Satir (1967) has emphasized the role of the family therapist in creating a setting wherein the participants can take the risk, often substantial, of examining themselves and their actions. Burton (1969) speaks of helping the parties stand back and look at their actions, images, etc. In addition the role must be nonjudgmental since judgement implies threat and biases the participants' behavior. Meeting this role requirement is not an easy task. Muench, working in the business sphere, states, "Many times both management and the union committee attempted to induce the psychologist to take sides or act as an arbitrator, but this he refused to do, and soon both groups accepted him as the catalytic agent through which they could deal more directly and effectively with issues, problems, and each other" (1963, p. 93). In a parallel manner Burton (1969) finds that parties appeal on numerous grounds to the consultants who must resist temptations to become judges, and must stress the nonnormative character of contemporary social science. Finally persuasion is practically nonexistent and interpretations are never forced on the parties.

Diagnostic. The main aspect of the third party role, which takes it beyond facilitation to consultation, is related to the function of process orientated diagnosis, wherein the consultants attempt to apply social science theory regarding conflict during the ongoing discussions. It was noted above that Burton required the panel member's role to include drawing on a specialized body of knowledge; this knowledge must be applied in a tentative and suggestive manner:

It needs to be emphasized, however, that it is no more the role of the third party to impose theoretical

explanations than it is to suggest practical solutions. A body of theory is in the minds of the panel, relevant questions are asked as a result. Some are quickly found not to be relevant, others seem to be dodged and may be pressed, but any political scientist who is committed to a theoretical explanation or solution is as disruptive around the table as the regional expert who has made his own study of the particular conflict. The parties must select what is relevant, the panel merely making a general first selection from a vast body of theoretical and comparative studies to sort out what would otherwise be an impossible task for the parties [1969, p. 64].

The degree of suggestiveness of diagnosis may vary with different consultants. For example Blake and Mouton (1961) appear to make stronger suggestions and interventions than Burton (1969), whereas in Walton (1969) the diagnosis is more implicit. Nonetheless there is enough commonality to suggest that the role is substantially diagnostic.

Nondirective. The suggestive characteristic of diagnostic interventions is part of the larger role requirement of general nondirectiveness. The entire process of communication, diagnosis, and hopefully resolution, must come primarily through the joint efforts of the parties, and the direction must be controlled by them. In the first effort at controlled communication, Burton (1969) found that the scholars were initially too directive and rigid, and had to become more humble in order to achieve effective communication. Applications vary of course, and in some cases setting up a series of systematic procedures can be beneficial (Blake, Shepard, and Mouton, 1964). This is related to the function of regulation, wherein the role of third party does involve some degree of control over the ongoing process. Therefore it is perhaps best to speak of a qualified nondirectiveness as part of the third party role, wherein the consultant has some direction over the process of consultation but not over the content of the outcomes as such.

Nonevaluative. In the majority of cases it is simply too arrogant and most probably invalid for an outside party to say specifically how

things should or could be different, or how the parties to a conflict were wrong in what they did. Only the parties themselves have experienced the full complexity of their situation, and only they know most of the determinants of their behavior. Also they do not need an outside observer to tell them what is bad about conflict, for they have experienced that directly. Hence the use of the term "dysfunctional" in referring to conflict, suggests the general point that there may be better ways for both parties to achieve their goals, rather than that either is pathological. Given the complexity of interdependencies at any level, dysfunctional aspects of conflict will often occur and are as understandable and normal as the opposite. It is evident that a good number of the aspects of third party consultation have some parallels with the process of psychotherapy. However the third party consultant is not usually dealing with maladjusted individuals, but with normal, competent people and collectivities. Thus there is no evaluation or consideration given to individual adjustment; rather the focus is on the relationship between entities, (for example, Blake and Mouton, 1962) and on the perceptions and orientations of individuals only as they relate to those entities and their relationship. In addition at the intergroup and international levels, interpersonal considerations become mainly irrelevant. The emphasis is not on changing the relationships between participants themselves, who may be quite friendly, but on modifying the perceived and actual relationships between the social entities. For example Burton (1969) is not aiming for an interpersonal change, but rather for a modification in the perception of alternative goals and alternative means of reaching goals; in general, he is striving toward more realistic perception and effective communication at the international level. Thus it may be appropriate to refer to third party consultation as a branch of sociotherapy (Walton, 1969). But it must be kept in mind that the consultant, who is attempting to facilitate change in social rela-

tionships, should refrain from inferring pathology at the individual entity level, and should be cautioned against arrogant evaluations at the interentity level.

THE IDENTITY AND ROLE OF PARTICIPANTS

The basic identity of the participants in third party consultation is predetermined by the conflict situation, i.e., they are antagonists in the conflict. Beyond that there should be flexibility. In the case of conflict between collectivities, the participants may be the leaders—i.e., decision-makers—as is primarily the case in the work of Blake, Shepard, and Mouton (1964), or they may be official representatives chosen in some manner but with no direct decision-making power, as in Burton (1969). Alternatively participants may simply be members who identify with and are moderately loyal to the general point of view of their group or nation, as in Lakin (1969) and Doob (1970). The most important requirement should be that the participants moderately identify with and adequately represent their side of the conflict. The fact that they may not be committed decision-makers can allow them more flexibility in a number of ways (Burton, 1969). However the closer the participants are to the decision-making process, the more consequential may be the ultimate effects of third party consultation. For the present it is suggested that exploratory applications with a wide range of participants can only add to our knowledge, and therefore there should be no strict requirements in this regard.

The role of the participants is less definable than that of the third party, partly because it is not the responsibility of anyone except the participants to define their role, and partly because the method seeks openly to alter aspects of their role as the confrontation progresses. Characteristically most participants approach the discussions with a bargaining, negotiation predisposition, and one of the objectives is an attempt to modify it toward a

more flexible, exploratory, problem-solving stance. If the participants agree with external assessments that such changes have occurred, then there is indication of successful role modification. Perhaps with the cooperation of future participants, a more complete picture of their role and identity can be formulated. With regard to the participants' roles external to the discussions, there is the same flexibility as with their identity. However the amount of influence that external role requirements and constraints have on behavior probably increases as one moves to the more complex systems, from the interpersonal to the intergroup and to the international. Perhaps it would be useful to think in terms of a ratio of interpersonal to interrole determinants of the discussion interaction, which would decrease as one moved to the more complex levels.

THE OBJECTIVES OF THIRD PARTY CONSULTATION

The method of third party consultation is directed toward certain long-term objectives, which it is hoped will exist beyond the initial process of confrontation. The conditions of productive confrontation—such as motivation to engage, improved communication, and diagnostic orientation—which are established by the related third party functions, can thus be seen as subgoals to the objectives. Nevertheless the conceptual distinction is not complete and it is evident that conditions initially induced by the third party's activities will be paralleled by more enduring states which may eventually come to characterize the parties' relationship itself, if consultation has been successful. For example improved communication is seen both as a useful condition of confrontation and as a desirable enduring aspect of the broader relationship between the parties. At the same time improved communication is a prerequisite for more general and enduring perceptual, cognitive, and emotional modifications in the way the parties regard each other and their relationship. Hence it appears appropriate to distin-

guish the conditions from the consequences of confrontation—that is, the objectives. The problem however is how to analytically describe these general goals while still admitting their existing interrelations, and in a manner which does not create utter havoc with respect to levels of analysis, from the individual to the collectivity, and finally to the relationship between collectivities. In addition the broad academic objective of studying conflict should be explicitly considered. Furthermore in any given application the relative emphasis given to the different objectives will vary depending on a number of related factors, such as the identity of the participants.

Conflict Resolution. The ultimate goal of third party consultation is conflict resolution which can be distinguished from other types of conflict management such as regulation or control, compromise or settlement, and avoidance. Resolution involves agreement regarding basic issues which thus terminates the conflict in a self-perpetuating manner as opposed to control which eliminates some of the symptomatic issues and concurrently deescalates and reduces the costs of the conflict (Walton, 1969). Resolution is also seen as superior to the temporary deescalation which may follow the more specific compromises of bargaining, and to the mere smoothing over of differences which peaceful coexistence entails (Blake, Shepard, and Mouton, 1964). In addition Burton (1969) points out that resolution, as opposed to settlement, involves a new relationship and a final solution, which are freely determined by the parties and which are self-supporting unless related circumstances are changed. Burton (1969) also regards his method as going beyond traditional settlement techniques in that it is applicable to conflict avoidance, both in the sense of resolving anticipated conflicts before escalation, and by way of maintaining peaceful relationships between friendly parties. These authors are joined by other social scientists in suggesting that some form of creative problem-solving can result in

the true resolution of conflict. For example Katz (1965) at the international level distinguishes between bargaining and compromise on the one hand, and problem-solving and creative integration on the other, by drawing on Follett's (1924) and Holt's (1915) distinctions at the social and individual levels. Katz also notes Rappoport's (1961) call for a deeper analysis, and a more flexible approach and frame of reference in solving problems which appear to be dilemmas.

All of this is not to contend however that resolution will always be the immediate outcome of successful third party consultation. On the contrary often the method may prepare the parties to deal with their relationship in a way which leads to continued consideration of basic issues, to conflict reduction, and therefore to ultimate resolution. It could also prepare the ground for more meaningful bargaining or negotiation on specific issues, especially the type of more flexible, understanding, and trusting negotiation proposed by Klineberg (1964). However this is not to deny that there may exist purely economic or other simpler and unexacerbated types of conflicts, within a regulated or institutionalized relationship, which can adequately be terminated through bargaining. In such cases the dysfunctional aspects and emotional symptomatic issues may be minimal and the basic relationship between the parties may not be a source of problems. When the fundamental relationship is an issue, a further objective of third party consultation is to facilitate the modification of that relationship in a manner congruent with conflict resolution.

Improved Relationship Between the Parties. Blake and Mouton (1961) and Blake, Shepard, and Mouton (1964) have been the most explicit in stating the objective of changing the relationship between the parties from a destructively competitive win-lose orientation to a cooperative collaborative problem-solving orientation. In cooperation the parties jointly explore a wide range of alternative approaches

and solutions, rather than each searching for the conditions under which the opponent will have to yield. Similarly Burton states that his method of controlled communication produces an atmosphere "that enables participants to treat the conflict, not as a contest, but as a problem to be solved" (1969, p. 42). As part of this atmosphere, parties are more willing not only to explore alternative means of reaching their goals, but also to consider modifying or replacing their goals. If consultation is ultimately successful, this atmosphere carries over to the broader long-term relationship between the parties. This new relationship then involves the replacement of competitive interests with common values, and may lead to a much wider sphere of collaboration which Burton (1969) terms functional cooperation. Congruent with these changes must come modifications in the attitudes of the parties so that the flexible, cooperative relationship is at the same time a trusting and friendly one.

Improved Attitudes of the Parties Toward Each Other. The constellation of negative attitudes which characterize the antagonists in a conflict have been detailed in various treatments of intergroup and international conflict (for example, Adorno *et al.*, 1950; Allport, 1958; Kelman, 1965; Klineberg, 1964) and are further described as substantial barriers to resolution in most of the examples of third party consultation. In addition the distorting effects of negative attitudes on perception and communication, and the rigid restrictions they place on deescalative and cooperative behavior, are often seen as further barriers to conflict resolution. It is therefore not surprising that one of the objectives of third party consultation is to facilitate change in the attitudes of the participants in a favorable, more realistic, and cooperative direction.

With respect to the affective or emotional component of attitudes, all the authors reviewed agree that the principals must become more friendly and trusting; a decrease in suspi-

cion and a growth of mutual trust is prerequisite to any enduring resolution. This point is emphasized by Deutsch (1962) who also notes that a third party may be a substitute object of trust. The objective here is to eventually transfer this trust to the parties themselves.

With regard to the cognitive component of attitudes, more recently connoted by the term image, third party consultation strives to improve both the veridicality and the complexity of the beliefs which the parties have of each other. Typically it is maintained that the parties hold oversimplified stereotypes and contradictory beliefs about each other which simply could not exist if both were right. Often the beliefs follow the good-bad mirror image as described by Bronfenbrenner (1961) in the American-Russian context. The face-to-face, exploratory nature of third party consultation helps parties to see each other as they really are, helps them to appreciate the other side's frame of reference or point of view, and helps them to understand the system constraints or structural realities within which the other party must operate. Thus much emphasis here is placed on clarifications and re-perceptions regarding the causes of the conflict, the issues in the conflict, and the character of the present relationship. Part of these clarifications may involve negative aspects, but a basis for realistic responding will be laid and the negative aspects can be handled constructively rather than destructively. This parallels the desired modifications in behavioral intentions: the parties should become oriented toward the kind of collaborative, problem-solving relationship outlined above.

Further consequences of favorable attitude change may be the lessening of biased selectivity and distortion in perception, the improvement of communication, and the decreased rigidity in responding to the other party. Thus it is evident that the attitudes of the parties are intimately intertwined with the relationship between them, and that through modifications in all these areas, the objective of conflict reso-

lution may be simultaneously or ultimately achieved.²

The Study of Conflict. In addition to any practical benefits, third party consultation provides an unparalleled opportunity for research and learning by social scientists with regard to the process of conflict itself, especially as it is manifested in the thinking and interactive behavior of the participants. Thus the method can serve as a vehicle for the study of conflict which takes the researcher-practitioner out into the real world. It can be useful not only to test existing social science propositions regarding conflict, but also to develop new models and theories which otherwise might not emerge. The reactions of participants in both of these areas are seen as crucial in testing the validity of general principles (Burton, 1969). Thus third party consultation can serve as an essential empirical complement to experimental and theoretical contributions to the study of conflict. The importance of this objective should not be ignored, especially in preliminary work where the other objectives may be inappropriate and idealistic.

THIRD PARTY FUNCTIONS AND TACTICS

The functions or broad strategies of the third party consultant are carried out in large measure by tactics, or specific behavioral interventions. The usage of these concepts parallels Walton (1969) and has some similarities with Young (1967). However the term tactic is used

² It is hoped that empirical assessments of actual applications will accumulatively indicate whether the social-psychological emphasis on attitudes in conflict is realistic and also whether the concept of attitude can be stretched to include all of the aspects enumerated here. In addition the rigorous operationalization of some of these ideas in the form of well-specified dimensions would help indicate what changes may actually occur as a result of consultation. These considerations are important since the attitudinal approach involves some rather arrogant and derogatory implications on the part of social scientists with regard to the antagonists in a conflict.

here in a more specific manner than in Walton (1969), in which some tactics are broad enough to be seen as procedures or supportive activities in the present model—for example obtaining background information in a preliminary interview. In the ongoing dialogue any tactic may perform any of the functions (Walton, 1969); however since many tactics are more particularly suited to carrying out a certain function, examples of tactics will be categorized with their related function for purposes of illustrative description. With regard to the number and identity of functions, the present schema presents four as compared to Walton's (1969) seven. Other contributors to the method are less analytic, and it is difficult to interpret what function categories they might have used if they had so chosen. The present classification condenses Walton's (1969), since it combines some of his categories, and yet broadens his treatment, since it includes additional aspects. Thus it may be more generic, and yet less applicable to any given application. In any event what is suggested is that the strategic functions define the very essence of the method, and are thus more important than all previously defined concepts in the development of the model.

Inducing and Maintaining Mutual Positive Motivation. The term motivation is used here in a very broad sense to refer to all significant motives and goals which lead the participants to enter and sustain the problem-solving confrontation and to resolve their conflict. The necessity of some minimal amount of such motivation is alluded to by several authors including Blake and Mouton (1961) and Burton (1969). Given this, one aspect of the present function is to stimulate or induce sufficient motivation to confront the conflict and adopt the problem-solving orientation before and especially during the initial stages of the discussions. Also where possible, such as in the interpersonal sphere, the third party can assess the parties' motivation beforehand and decide whether and when to arrange a confrontation.

In addition, he can work toward a balance between the motivation of the principals so that the discussions are optimally productive. Walton (1969) terms these aspects as the function of ensuring mutual positive motivation. Maintaining motivation involves a number of considerations. The third party simply through his presence (Douglas, 1962; Young, 1967), but also through his attributes and capabilities (Muench, 1960; Walton, 1969) serves as the oft-quoted catalytic agent who motivates parties toward settlement in bargaining, or toward resolution in consultation. He must establish an atmosphere in which participants do not fear blame (Satir, 1967), and in which the risks of negative evaluations are reduced (Walton, 1969). Furthermore the consultant can maintain an optimum level of tension, thus controlling an important component of the overall motivational atmosphere, and simultaneously creating conditions in which cognition is less rigid and communication is less distorted (Walton, 1969).

A related but more general aspect of the motivational function is that third party consultation removes the participants from the highly charged emotional and tension-ridden field in which the conflict typically holds them. Once out of the conflict environment and associated roles, the participants are likely to become more motivated to resolve their differences in a constructive manner, and are probably able to view the situation more objectively. This will further aid communication. Walton's (1969) function of balancing situational power during the discussions is also included here. Balance is required for the growth of trust and uninhibited dialogue, and the consultant can, within the limitations of his impartiality, use his control over the situation and his interventionary skills to offset serious imbalances, whether the asymmetry is constant throughout or shifts as the discussion progresses.

A final aspect of the motivational function is stimulating the consideration of common interests, values, goals, and so on. Sherif has given

prime emphasis to the usefulness of superordinate goals, i.e., "those that have a compelling appeal for members of each group, but that neither group can achieve without participation of the other" (1966, p. 89), and contends that such goals are awaiting accentuation in every group and national relationship. Sherif maintains that superordinate goals are essential prerequisites which provide the motivational basis for all other conflict-reducing measures, whereas other investigators, for example Blake (1959), contend that mutual problem-solving motivation must come first. In any case the majority of authors agree that superordinate and common goals frequently emerge from joint problem-centered discussions, and it is thus valuable for the third party to create and sustain an atmosphere which facilitates this process.

The tactics used to carry out the motivational function are relatively straightforward and in some cases simply require interventions to describe the necessity and usefulness of a problem-solving and cooperative atmosphere. The consultant can stimulate hope by interjecting the possibility of alternative and superior approaches to the relationship. In order to reduce threat and the fear of being blamed, the third party can refrain from making critically evaluative comments, while emphasizing the influence of the past on present behavior (Satir, 1967) and the principle that the parties' behavior is primarily a reaction to the environment (Burton, 1969) rather than due to any negative intrinsic characteristics of the parties themselves. Similarly the effects of poor communications and other factors can be pointed out, while at the same time the good intentions of the antagonists are accentuated (Satir, 1967). Walton (1969) has recorded a number of tactics to control the tension level such as using humor to lessen tension, and to balance situational power such as insuring equal talking-time. Finally the third party can suggest common and superordinate goals at appropriate times in order to facilitate their emergence,

and can point out present and future dangers of nonagreement in critical areas of common interest.

Improving Communication. There are two major aspects of the communication function: the first is to increase the openness of communication, while the second is to increase the accuracy. Walton (1969) specifically enunciates the function of promoting openness in the dialogue as an essential prerequisite to productive interpersonal confrontation. In general conflict relationships are fraught with cognitions which the parties for numerous reasons are reluctant to divulge, especially in a face-to-face situation, but which must become an essential part of the discussions if movement toward resolution is to occur. This is true not only of embarrassing negative admissions but also of positive intentions and overtures. The admission of plans and intentions is one procedure outlined by Janis and Katz (1959) as a possible ethical means of reducing intergroup hostility. However in general such conflict resolution procedures are typically misperceived and, more importantly, not reciprocated, whereas conflict intensifying actions are usually reciprocated, thereby producing escalation. If however the third party consultation situation and the behavior of the consultant can reduce threat and risk, openness may be reciprocated and the exchange of positive intentions could have an illuminating and beneficial effect on the relationship of the antagonists. The second major aspect of the communication function is to increase the accuracy and effectiveness of sending, receiving, interpreting, and responding to messages, i.e., all components of the total communication process. Walton (1969) enunciates the function of enhancing the reliability of communicative signs, and discusses the factors of perceptual selectivity and predisposed evaluation which must be overcome. Satir (1967) appears to place this function above any others, and suggests that the family therapist must be seen as both a model and a teacher of accurate com-

munication who follows certain essential rules. Likewise the intergroup applications (Blake, Shepard, and Mouton, 1964; Muench, 1960, 1963) stress improving communication, but the emphasis appears to reach a climax in Burton:

The technique of controlled communication derives from the hypothesis that conflict occurs as a result of ineffective communication, and that its resolution, therefore, must involve processes by which communication can be made to be effective. By effective communication is meant the deliberate conveying and accurate receipt and interpretation of what was intended should be conveyed, and the full employment of information as received and stored in the allocation and re-allocation of values, interests and goals [1969, p. 49].

Improving communication is perhaps the most pervasive third party function, since it is required to clear up initial misunderstandings, to make accurate diagnosis possible, to explore alternative means, goals, and areas of commonality, and so on. Thus it is essential to all stages of the process, and is basic to the success of the other functions.

There are numerous tactics a third party consultant may undertake to improve communication. To induce openness he should be very candid, and yet considerate and respectful, both in giving his observations and in eliciting those of the participants. He can respond to difficult admissions in a nonevaluative manner, and can intervene to moderate overly critical, counterproductive responses by participants. Some of the tactics of sensitivity training are appropriate here, and if the participants are inexperienced in this regard, then the third party can emphasize such things as giving feedback, separating thoughts and feelings, adopting a process approach, etc., in the earlier sessions (Lakin, 1969; Walton, 1969). These tactics also involve improving the accuracy of communication, and can be added to such things as translating, articulating, summarizing, and developing a common language for the parties (Walton, 1969). For example Walton (1969), points out that summarizing either party's view, makes the first party feel that he

has adequately transmitted a justifiable view, while at the same time it increases the understanding of the second party through decreased distortion in his perception. In addition there is the oft-suggested tactic of having one party repeat what the other said, to the satisfaction of all, before he is allowed to respond to it. It is useful to check meaning given with meaning received, to check on invalid assumptions, and to repeat, restate, and emphasize the observations of all parties (Satir, 1967). Similar tactics appear in related third party methods, for example Young's (1967) tactic of enunciation. This diversity and generality thus underscores the importance of the communication function.

Diagnosing the Conflict. The first significant property of the third party function of diagnosis is that it occurs in the ongoing context of the discussions; hence it might be termed process-orientated diagnosis. Emphasis is placed on understanding the process rather than the content of what is happening in the discussions and in the broader relationship between the parties. In addition all contributors to the method agree that the third party can supply useful concepts and models concerning conflict and related processes which will help the participants clarify their thinking about themselves and their relationship. This material is drawn from various social science disciplines and covers a wide range of individual and social behavior relevant to the study of conflict. Some of these were mentioned under the professional knowledge requirement of the third party identity. In addition to stressing general principles of conflict, each application must inject information which is uniquely applicable to its particular sphere, for example international relations. The manner of injecting information may vary from straightforward demonstrations, for example on the process of human perception (Burton, 1969), to the more tentative injection of theory at seemingly appropriate times. However the purpose here is not to provide ready-made explanations for the behavior of the parties, but to offer suggestions

which will help the participants to clarify their thinking and to evolve explanations which are mutually acceptable to them. In other words much of the knowledge is offered in an attempt to stimulate self-diagnosis. For example Burton (1969) speaks of aiding the parties to stand back from their conflict, and to perceive it from a behavioral point of view, which is congruent with the objective frame of reference mentioned under the motivation function. This, combined with the application of appropriate theory, helps the participants to identify the issues between them, and to diagnose and understand the origins and manifestations of the conflict, as well as the processes of proliferation and escalation which may have exacerbated it. At the same time the participants' reactions as to the validity and usefulness of the conceptual material provided can be an essential ingredient of the learning process which the consultant is undergoing as part of his involvement in the method.

With regard to tactics, the consultant may find it necessary to intervene periodically, and specifically call for a process orientation. Often such directives will have to be firmly imposed or they will be ignored (Lakin, 1969). The following example from Blake, Shepard, and Mouton is aptly illustrative. It occurred after union representatives had difficulty understanding the procedure of developing the union's image of itself.

After several minutes, the behavioral scientist intervened. He redefined the task for them. "The present task is to describe the character, the quality, of the relationship: that is, typical behavior and attitudes. The task is not to debate technical and legalistic issues." At the beginning then, the union members did not have the concept of examining the process of behavior—to examine and discuss actions, feelings and attitudes. Their thinking pattern was so deeply ingrained on the content side that they were not able to think about the dynamics of the relationship except as they happened to erupt in content terms. It must be said then, that to step back from content and to take a process approach proved to be very, very tough for the union. Eventually, however, they were able to do so [1964, p. 161].

Similarly tactics for introducing information can be straightforward. The consultant simply states, in an active and yet nondirective suggestive fashion, what concept, principle, or model might be useful in understanding the conflict. Walton explicitly refers to tactics for diagnosing the conflict, such as offering alternative interpretations of a party's behavior, and describes ways of diagnosing conditions causing poor dialogue, such as identifying "more basic attitudes or other reality factors that are limiting the prospects for productive dialogue" (1969, p. 126). In general any means by which the third party can bring important aspects of the conflict under flexible and nonevaluative scrutiny, are regarded as useful tactics.

Regulating the Interaction. The function of regulation is manifested in two general ways. First the third party attempts to regulate or pace the phases of the interaction, as noted by Walton:

At least two phases of an effective conflict dialogue can be identified—a differentiation phase and an integration phase. The basic idea of the differentiation phase is that it usually takes some extended period of time for parties in conflict to describe the issues that divide them, and to ventilate their feelings about each other. This differentiation phase requires not only that a person be allowed to state his views, but also that he be given some indication his views are understood by the other principal. An effective confrontation will involve an integration phase where the parties appreciate their similarities, acknowledge their common goals, own up to positive aspects of their ambivalences, express warmth and respect, and/or engage in other positive actions to manage their conflict [1969, p. 105].

Walton (1969) also points out that a conflict resolution episode may comprise a series of phases rather than just one sequence. The essential requirement is that sufficient differentiation must occur before integration is attempted, or the latter will be impossible, at least in a genuine productive manner. The second main aspect of the regulation function involves controlling and thus facilitating the dialogue, and maintaining the problem-solving

atmosphere. Thus at times the consultant is a moderately directive synchronizer and referee, who may synchronize confrontation efforts both before (Walton, 1969) and during the interaction, and who can regulate the discussions and control precipitous actions which might lead to nonproductive warfare (Blake, Shepard, and Mouton, 1964).

Tactics include direct suggestions for differentiation or integration, and the injection of specific issues or the suggestion of commonalities to aid these respective processes. The suggesting of areas of discussion corresponds to a broader set of tactics given by Walton (1969) under the heading of initiating agenda. Relatedly Burton (1969) speaks of techniques required to keep the participants on the main issues. This leads to the second aspect wherein other relevant tactics, given by Walton, include prescribing discussion methods to "assist the parties in joining the issues and engaging each other more directly" (1969, p. 125), and other assorted counseling interventions. In addition Walton (1969) describes tactics for refereeing the interaction such as terminating a repetitive discussion and providing for equal time. The consultant must also intervene directly to prevent the hostile reemergence of the vindictive win-lose orientation in which the problem-solving approach would be lost (Blake, Shepard, and Mouton, 1964).

THIRD PARTY PROCEDURES, SUPPORTIVE ACTIVITIES, AND PROGRAM

Procedures refer to broader interventions wherein the participants are given tasks or exercises with specified objectives. These can add significantly to the totality of third party behavior, and may be carried out at the intraparty level as well as in joint meetings, thus adding more structure and regulation to a consultation program. In their various intergroup laboratories, Blake, Shepard, and Mouton (1964) and Blake and Mouton (1961) have used procedures such as intragroup development of own and other group's image, intra-

group diagnoses of the groups' present relationship, and the exchange and clarification of images and diagnoses in joint sessions. Other examples include norm-setting conferences to support cooperation, post-mortem examinations to prevent a return to a win-lose orientation, joint meetings to gain a priority listing of issues, fishbowl meetings, and sessions to plan future steps. Various combinations of such procedures can serve as the core for a variety of programs.

Supportive activities are simple but essential to the success of the method, before, during, and after the actual discussions. Preliminary activities might include inviting participants, formulating relevant propositions regarding the conflict in question, and designing aspects of the situation such as the setting. Concurrent actions could involve extracurricular activities to provide release and vary contacts between participants, and a variety of procedures to assess participants' reactions to the program and any changes which occur relevant to the objectives. Illustrative consequent actions would be facilitating plans for future collaboration, and any follow-up assessments that seemed useful. As with procedures, supportive activities will vary from application to application. For example many of these activities are covered by Walton (1969) under the tactic and tactical choice categories of preliminary interviewing, structuring the context for the confrontation, and planning for future dialogue, whereas Burton (1969) speaks more of inviting participants and formulating propositions.

The term program is reserved for the sequential combination and expression of all of the aspects of third party consultation covered in this article. Thus the concept of program is broader than the concepts of workshop, laboratory, or confrontation, which typically refer only to the actual interaction of participants and consultants. Nevertheless the direct interaction is the essential core of the method, and has thus received emphasis here, as elsewhere. Finally the concept of program emphasizes the

integration of the various components. Like any pattern of complex interaction, third party consultation may be abstractly analyzed in description, but is inseparable in practice.

*Toward a Critique of
Third Party Consultation*

It is suggested that third party consultation is a promising approach for the study and resolution of conflict, and that the model presented above is useful for purposes of systematization and stimulation. However the approach is based on numerous assumptions, both normative and factual, which critics may legitimately wish to question, and there is much need for further work to assess limitations and to develop the full potential of the method. It can be argued that the assumptions and limitations of any undertaking are often better perceived by observers not involved in and committed to the process itself. Nevertheless it is appropriate that the proponents of a method initiate such discussion, with the realization that reactions from a variety of points of view will engender needed clarification. The author acknowledges the humanistic and social-psychological biases of his point of view.

NORMATIVE ASSUMPTIONS

Most of the contributors to the method appear to assume that predominantly dysfunctional conflict is socially undesirable. This is especially true when the conflict is terminated, often only temporarily, in a violent manner. One of the goals of third party consultation is to minimize the dysfunctional components and thus the costs of conflict, while at the same time altering basic relationships in a positive direction acceptable to both parties. In this way the conflict is terminated in a productive rather than a destructive manner. There is no suggestion that conflicts of interests in their many forms can somehow be removed from human social behavior; on the contrary, the

functional aspects of conflict, especially in facilitating social progress, are recognized but it is suggested that the mode of conflict termination should be productive and peaceful.

Thus we say that conflict resolution entails management in the economic sense that benefits outweigh costs as much as possible, but not in the sense of control which minimizes conflict behavior through coercion or through settlement devoid of acceptance by all parties. The humanistic bias of the method leads to the suggestion that humanitarian considerations must be added to economic ones in determining the ratio of benefits to costs. Utilities in the real world must be determined with much more than economic criteria in mind. On the question of management involving coercion, third party consultation assumes that the threat of violence to suppress conflict is undesirable, in the same way that the open use of violence is undesirable, and thus the method allies itself neither with social reactionaries nor social revolutionaries. What it can do is serve as a vehicle of peaceful change (Burton, 1969) wherein social progress retains past aspects of lasting value. This is related to the broader ethical assumption that parties should have a predominant say in decisions which directly affect them while at the same time giving consideration to the concerns of others.

Such assumptions undoubtedly appear idealistic to many, but failure to inject such considerations can only result in approaches to studying conflict which do not parallel reality, and methods of terminating conflict which do not result in genuine and lasting resolution. In short it is difficult to see how conflict and conflict resolution can be conceptualized comprehensively without ethical considerations. Continuing examination of common values evidenced in the major religions and ethical codes of the world, and the relating of these to the study and resolution of conflict, is thus seen as congruent with the method of third party consultation as outlined here.

FACTUAL ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT
THE NATURE OF CONFLICT

It is assumed that certain essential similarities occur in most if not all kinds of conflict. Therefore it is feasible to conceive of a general method of conflict resolution such as third party consultation.

Conflict is a social phenomenon of immense complexity and variety, and is characterized by multiple causation both with respect to origin and development. It can begin with any one or more of numerous basic or primary issues, such as resource scarcity, which through processes of proliferation and escalation, may become intertwined with a diversity of secondary and more emotional issues, such as hatred and distrust. The reverse order is also possible although probably less prevalent. Thus conflict is typically a mixture of the objective and the subjective, the sociological and the psychological.

Conflict appears inherently open to certain self-aggravating mechanisms which foster escalation on a variety of dimensions. There is a strong tendency for conflict escalation moves to be reciprocated, often in the interests of defense and caution, whereas conflict deescalation or resolution actions are typically not reciprocated so readily.

However most of these aspects of the conflict behavior of social entities are predominantly understandable and modifiable reactions to a complex and difficult environment, rather than due to inherent and unchangeable properties of the entities themselves or of their relationship. This is not to deny the importance of sociostructural determinants of conflict, but to point out that these and many other aspects can be dealt with and modified if the parties so desire.

The subjective nature of conflict is especially evident in the basic areas of perception, cognition, and communication. Objective factors in conflict also entail subjective evaluations, so

that modifications in tangible differences of interest are possible through third party consultation.

Conflict, especially the decision-making component, is a mixture of rationality and irrationality. In other words it involves a qualified or subjective rationality wherein purposive intent and behavior is modified by the imperfections and limitations of the human perceptual and behavioral systems, both individual and social, in relation to a diverse and complicated environment.

Finally the complexity of social conflict is typically reflected in a mixture of functional and dysfunctional actions and outcomes. Thus it is oversimplified to evaluatively characterize the phenomenon one way or the other in this regard.

It is thus evident that third party consultation is highly compatible with a broad conception of social conflict as discussed by Fink, who defines social conflict as "any social situation or process in which two or more social entities are linked by at least one form of antagonistic psychological relation or at least one form of antagonistic interaction" (1968, p. 456).

Furthermore third party consultation is compatible with the suggestion that a general theory of conflict must be supplemented by special theories (Fink, 1968). Each application of third party consultation should include or refer to a comprehensive model of the particular kind of conflict in question, and the method should be specifically adapted to the peculiarities of the system in question. Fortunately in the major works to date (Walton, 1969; Blake, Shepard, and Mouton, 1964; Burton, 1969) this has been the case. In this way similarities among applications are made evident, while at the same time important differences are made explicit.

The method is also congruent with an eclectic orientation to the study of conflict which subsumes a variety of distinguishable approaches. These subsumed approaches, to

draw on Fink's distinction, are regarded as complementary, i.e., "as potentially compatible perspectives, each highlighting a different aspect of the phenomena under investigation," rather than competing, i.e., "as alternative ways to account for the same facts" (1968, p. 428). Thus for example Burton's (1969) work as well as third party consultation in general, is consistent with a combination of Bernard's (1957) semanticist and sociological approaches, so that the basis of conflict is seen both in the incompatibility of goals and values, and in the misunderstanding and ineffective communication between the parties.

SOME DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are a number of important questions to which future work on third party consultation should be directed in order to overcome some limitations in past work, to engender the full development of the method, and to ascertain the limits of applicability in relation to some important properties of conflict. In addition the development of third party consultation would be aided by future research on third party intervention in general and on the nature of conflict itself.

There is a basic need for the development and use of more comprehensive evaluation techniques in order to study both the process and outcomes of third party consultation. Fusing the role of practitioner and researcher has advantages (Walton, 1969), but often the assessment of process and of changes brought about by consultation has been based solely on the global impressions of consultants. These evaluations may be open to bias and lack rigor and specificity. This is not to deny the usefulness of the involved observer, especially in the earlier phases of research, but is to point out that his descriptive impressions could be supplemented by more objective assessment devices such as attitude scales, behavioral and content ratings, independent structured interviews, and so on. At the same time experimen-

tal control considerations, such as the use of comparison groups, could be built into some applications where feasible. In these ways some of the evaluation methodology of the social scientist could be combined with the intuitive impressions of the sociotherapist to yield part of a laudable composite not often seen in social research.

There is much more need for a variety of research on the method itself, both empirical and experimental, the results of which could then be integrated into the model. A host of questions may be raised about the relative importance and interrelations between various aspects. For example which functions are most important in attaining which objectives, what combination of tactics will most effectively express which function, and so on. It would help to know which aspects of the third party's identity are crucial and what the possibilities are for training third party consultants. Many of the questions on interrelations of variables within the model are logically amenable to experimental or simulation study. This is not to deny the benefits of involvement in the real world, since the necessary and essential locus of investigation must be in the actual system under study and segmental investigations can only be a supplement to holistic involvement. However experimental supplements can be especially useful in untangling cause-effect relationships. Therefore third party consultation would benefit from a complement of laboratory and real-world investigation, thus overcoming the limitations of each and leading to the further development of the model.

In order to assess the general applicability of the method, it is essential that future applications cover a greater variety of conflict systems. Some very important areas of community conflict in the educational, religious, and political spheres have not been approached in any substantial way. In general many applications in all arenas are required to assess the applicability and efficacy of the method. Unfortunately one cannot expect such develop-

ment to proceed very rapidly since each application is time-consuming and expensive, and social scientists typically do not invest so much in single pieces of work.

It is evident that third party consultation may have a number of "built-in" limitations in relation to types and properties of conflict. Thus there is much need to assess the applicability and efficacy of the method in relation to variations in such things as parties, issues, intensity, regulation, power discrepancy, and so on. While these are empirical questions, some reasonable conjectures can be made at the present time.

The model appears applicable to a wide range of parties, due to the relative invariance of the consultation situation regardless of the system from which participants are drawn. However other aspects, such as the functions and tactics, must go further in taking into account the identity and system constraints of the participants, and limitations in these areas require exploration.

In relation to basic issues, third party consultation seems less applicable to economic and power conflicts than to ideological or value conflicts—to draw on Katz's (1965) distinction. Pure economic or power conflicts may be better settled through what Walton (1969) terms power-bargaining and/or legal-justice processes, rather than through social science interventions. However as such conflicts escalate and proliferate, thus adding more subjective issues, third party consultation may become more relevant. Ideological conflicts entail the all-or-none quality of moral principles which makes bargaining inappropriate (Katz, 1965) and which would hamper settlement or resolution by any procedure. However of the three types of conflict, this one may be the most open to third party consultation because of its highly subjective nature and escalatory potential. This is not to suggest that all ideological factors are simply distortions; on the contrary they are often realistic components of the entity's identity which must be

accepted. Thus the deescalation which consultation can induce may result in peaceful coexistence rather than ultimate resolution. However the most important basis for optimism here is that superordinate goals in the form of broad humanitarian values may be the key to resolving ideological conflicts. For example in the international sphere, there is the rather functional concern over continued existence and the more recently cited universal interest regarding the welfare of children. In addition the common humanitarian values mentioned earlier may be useful in applying consultation to ideological conflict. Many conflicts are of course complex mixtures of these pure types and the method is seen as more applicable to these since it can help clarify the various issues involved and thus point the way to resolution, by first illuminating the existing and antecedent conditions.

Third party consultation may have limitations at both the low and high ends of the intensity dimension, and may be most applicable to moderately intense conflicts. In the middle range there would be sufficient motivation and complexity to work with, and yet the conflict is not so intense that parties refuse to meet or to constructively interact when they do. At the low end of the intensity continuum, the parties might see intervention as unnecessary; at the high end, as inappropriate and unrealistic.³ This might mean, depending on the identity of the participants, that third party consultation may not be particularly applicable to intense crises.

It would be useful to ascertain the boundaries of applicability in relation to the degree of

³The author has had recent experience in this regard through attempting to arrange a program of consultation with nationals, mainly graduate students, from the countries of India and Pakistan. As the conflict became more intense during the autumn of 1971, there were increasing reservations regarding joint discussions, and when full-scale hostilities began, the project became inappropriate.

regulation (Dahrendorf, 1959) or institutionalization (Mack and Snyder, 1957) of conflicts. At the low end there may not be sufficient norms or rules linking parties to even get them together, while at the high end the interaction may be so rigidly regularized that a novel approach would be rejected. However somewhere in between lies a range of moderately unregulated conflicts wherein there is some absence or breakdown of norms or rules and yet consultation can be applied. In achieving deescalation and reaching resolution, the method will probably point the parties toward jointly acceptable regulatory mechanisms so that their relationship becomes more stable, and continuing or arising differences can then be handled within this more productive framework. It is also conceivable that third party consultation itself can become institutionalized in various systems, such as the international one (Burton, 1969). It could then join the list of institutionalized conflict resolution mechanisms described by Galtung (1965).

The limits of consultation must be assessed by future work in relation to the dimension of power discrepancy between the parties (Stagner, 1967), which is related to Boulding's (1962) concept of viability. If there is an extreme power imbalance, it is likely that the applicability of third party consultation is severely reduced. In the first place the more powerful party may have little urge to enter discussions since it has what it wants and feels that it can keep it, and in the second place the weaker party may feel that it will have no real influence in such discussions. However power is composed of many facets in the real world, and with respect to discussions one must also differentiate between external and situational power. Hence the stating of general relationships with regard to power, but also on all of the above dimensions, is rather speculative. What is required is experimental and empirical work to find out which apparent limitations actually hold true in the world at large.

One way of approaching some of these ques-

tions might be to devise a laboratory simulation of a conflict system and third party consultation in which the efficacy of the method and its various aspects could be studied in relation to assorted aspects of the conflict such as intensity, regulation, or whatever. This manipulative study of relations between variables could perhaps shed light not only on third party consultation, but on the operation of conflict systems themselves. Such an experimental program would be open to the problem of extrapolation and related criticisms of artificiality, triviality, etc., which investigators oriented to the real world feel obligated to raise, but it might help sensitize the holistic and practical-minded to important relations within their own work.

There is a very apparent need for future research to move in the direction of clarifying the entire field of third party intervention. The model presented above is primarily designed to help sensitize third party consultants to some important dimensions relating to intervention, and to help stimulate systematization in both researching and theorizing. But at the same time it points to the need for a comprehensive conceptualization of third party intervention in general, and offers both implicitly and explicitly a number of categories and dimensions which could serve as the basis for a broader *taxonomy of third party intervention*. By building on some of the useful but limited comparisons of different methods, for example Boulding (1962), Burton (1969), and Dahrendorf (1959), it would be possible to construct a set of common dimensions, both qualitative and quantitative, on which the various types of intervention could be tentatively located. Evaluative and comparative research could then ascertain the relative merits and spheres of applicability of the various methods. In these ways third party involvement could move towards what is seen here as its necessary and desirable position in the study and resolution of conflict.

The direction of further research on third

party consultation is highly related to theorizing on the nature of conflict itself. It is suggested that the development of the method would be enhanced by the materialization of eclectic, interdisciplinary theories of conflict. While the history of the study of conflict shows some promising general and descriptive steps in that direction, much contemporary work has tended toward the premature limitation and quantification of variables with a resultant lack of applicability to the real world. For example, most of the recent models of cooperation and conflict discussed by Patchen (1970) are so oversimplified as to be of little use to an eclectic method of studying and resolving conflict. However what Patchen terms "influence models" (including cognitive, learning, and reaction process models) do point up a number of crucial processes, and seem more useful for interpreting third party consultation than do the models of negotiation.

It is extremely significant, from the present point of view, that Patchen calls not only for an integration of these diverse models into a more general theory of conflict, but also suggests that we need "to concentrate more of our empirical work on the testing of models of some generality" (1970, p. 405). It must be noted that the present argument does not oppose the rigorous specification and systematization of variables, but calls for flexible and adequate exploration of the relevant data base before these processes are overzealously instituted. In this way social scientists may have a better chance of developing models which are adequate to the complexity of human social conflict, rather than simply adequate to some particular conception of social science.⁴ Third party consultation is regarded as one more valuable mechanism by which we can broaden our descriptive intake by direct contact with some critical processes of real world conflict,

thus increasing both our knowledge and our options for the future of mankind.

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⁴Some similar points with regard to an earlier period in the history of psychology have been made by Koch (1959).

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