Proposed Study of Conflict Resolution in Different Cultural Contexts
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Based upon much research, practical work, and theoretical analysis, conflict resolution theorists, (e.g. Roger Fisher, Dean Pruitt, Jeffrey Rubin, and myself) have more or less agreed upon a set of principles which should be the underpinnings of any thorough program of training in constructive conflict resolution procedures. (See my attached paper, Educating Beyond Hate, for an illustrative description of such principles). Most of the work from which such principles have been derived has been in the United States with research and practice on mainly white, well-educated, middle-class populations. It is reasonable to ask whether these principles are as applicable in other groups and in different cultural settings.

Currently, we are involved in training teachers and students in an alternative high school in New York City in the procedures of constructive conflict resolution. The student population is mostly composed of African-American and Hispanic adolescents from the urban underclass in New York City. From our work so far, it seems evident that there are strong differences between the students and teachers (who are largely white and of middle-class background) in their attitudes toward conflict. Physical fighting is strongly condemned by teachers but students often see it as a necessary precursor to working things out. Teachers are more apt to be oriented to the specific issues about which there is conflict, but students are more likely to be concerned about their social-emotional relations - humiliation, respect, etc. In addition, there seem to be differences among different ethnic groups within the student body and how they approach conflict - e.g. African-American and Asian-American.

We are proposing to do systematic research which would focus on identifying cultural differences in handling disputes. The objective of our research would be to develop a conceptual system and methodology for analyzing cultural differences in dealing with conflicts. Although
interesting ideas have been advanced by several scholars (e.g. Binnendyk, Cohen, G. Fisher, Hofstede, Kimmel, Weiss and Stripp) concerned with international negotiations, there is not yet a systematic conceptual framework for characterizing cultural differences in conflict resolution styles. In developing the proposed conceptual framework, we shall build upon the work of other scholars as well as my own prior work in characterizing the basic dimensions of social situations and the psychological orientation associated with them.

Our fundamental assumption is that different cultures have different conceptions of both the nature of conflict and of the appropriate means of resolving them. These conceptions vary along a number of dimensions, which are similar to the basic dimensions of social situations that I have worked with previously: cooperation-competition, power distribution, social-emotional vs. task orientation, formal-informal, intensity or importance, and time. Associated with different positions on these dimensions are different cognitive, motivational, and moral orientations which regulate one's behavior and influence one's expectations in disputes. For example, if in Culture "A" conflicts with out-groups are usually conceived as win-lose struggles in which power differences are to be enhanced in one's favor, while in "B" they are thought to be mutual problems to be solved cooperatively through equal, joint efforts, then one can expect quite different cognitive schemas, motives, and moral values to be regulating behavior and expectations in conflicts in the two different cultures.

In this brief proposal, it is impossible to do more than suggest some of the details which we will be focusing on in characterizing the cognitive, motivational, and moral orientations of the participants in a dispute. Thus, under cognitive orientation we would be interested in such matters as: the definition of the size of the conflict (e.g., the tendency to expand or minimize the conflict); the type of evidence considered most valid; the method of reasoning; communication style; conceptions of strategy and tactics (in regard to threats and promises, bluffs, risk-taking, etc.); conceptions of what is an agreement; and orientation to time. Under motivational orientation such topics as the following would be considered: what is the primary purpose (e.g., to deal with a specific problem or to develop the relationship); what are the envisaged potential benefits or
harm; how is the level of aspiration set; how likely are central motives related to "self-esteem", "security", "social face" to be involved; the motivational significance of third parties, the conditions for the establishment of trust, etc. Under moral orientation, the focus would be on such issues as: what types of procedures are considered to be fair/unfair; what types of agreements are viewed as just/unjust; what sanctions are considered to be likely if moral norms are violated.

We plan to conduct the research with three subgroups which are likely to provide considerable cultural variety in conflict resolution styles as well as sophistication in constructive conflict resolution skills. The first subgroup will be drawn from the students in the alternative high school in New York City in which we are currently doing training and research; this group is mainly composed of African-American and Hispanic adolescents from the urban underclass. The second group will be drawn from the foreign student population at Columbia University; this group is composed of students from many cultures. The third group will be drawn from UNICEF project directors from many different countries who will be undergoing training in intercultural negotiations by Ellen Raider, the training director of our International Center For Cooperation and Conflict Resolution at Teachers College. This group will be culturally diverse and the most sophisticated with regard to dispute settlement. We shall not be systematically sampling different cultural groups but rather seeking to have enough diversity as well as replication to enable us to study a wide range of conflict resolution styles so as to be able to assess the inclusiveness and robustness of the conceptual framework that we shall be developing for characterizing cultural differences in conflict resolution styles.

Our research will proceed in two stages. The first will involve intensive interviewing employing conflict scenarios of various sorts and systematic observation, video-taping, and analysis of simulated conflicts in which we have our subjects participate. In this stage, we shall be developing, refining, and assessing our conceptual framework. In the second stage, we shall be testing the utility of this framework in a training program for UNICEF officials who are engaged in intercultural negotiations. The conceptual framework will be employed in the training to sensitize the trainees to intercultural differences in dispute resolution styles.
Employing a "before-after, with control group" research design, various measures will be taken of the effectiveness of the negotiations in simulated conflicts.

The first stage of the research will study ten culturally diverse pairs from each of the three subgroups mentioned above. The second stage will study twenty culturally diverse pairs of UNICEF officials who will go through training and ten who will not.

The study will take two years. The first year would be spent in the following manner: a) the initial four months to review literature, refine the initial conceptual framework, and develop research instruments for the first stage; b) the next three months would be devoted to intensive interviewing and conflict simulations with the thirty culturally diverse pairs; c) the next five months would be spent analyzing data, reworking the conceptual framework, and preparing for the second year. The before-after measurements and the training will consume the first six months of the second year and the data analysis and write-up will take up the rest of the year.

The total projected costs for two years is $145,122.
### PROPOSED BUDGET

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<tr>
<th>Personnel</th>
<th>Salary</th>
<th>Fringe</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Year One:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prof. Morton Deutsch</td>
<td>20,000</td>
<td>2,100 (10.5% of salary)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Principal Investigator (25% time)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 research assistants</td>
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<td>1 secretary</td>
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<td>830 (16.8% of salary)</td>
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<td>(25% time)</td>
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**Total Salary & Fringe Benefits:** (47,518) (6,723) $54,241

Educational Benefits (30 credits @ $385 credit): $11,550

**Other Expenses**
- Subject payments (40 subjects @ $50): 2,000
- Supplies, telephone, local travel, etc.: 3,000

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**Total Year One Projected Costs:** $70,791

**Total Projected Costs for Year Two:** $74,331
(Year One costs + 5% = 70,791 + 3,540)

**Total Projected Costs:** $145,122