

Conflict & Dispute Resolution

The Structural Change Model

As you read the material for our next class, keep the questions below in mind. To answer these questions you will have to reflect critically on what you have read and possibly re-read important passages. Keep in mind that there are two basic kinds of information that you need to look for in the reading:

1. What are the main points or conclusions that an author accepts with respect to a particular issue?
2. What are the reasons, important considerations, and evidence that lead the author to accept that conclusion?

For our purposes, *it is information of the second sort that will be our primary concern* since our most basic task is to *evaluate the reasons and evidence* that are offered to support accepting one possible conclusion about an issue, rather than another.

Although I strongly suggest that you write out brief answers to these questions, you do not have to turn in written responses. You do, however, need to be prepared to speak intelligently about these issues at our next class meeting.

Reading

- Dean G. Pruitt & Sung Hee Kim, *Social Conflict*, chapter 6 (only pages 101–113).

Questions

1. A model is an abstract pattern of thought from which explanations or predictions of particular events can be derived. Why is it generally important for a problem solver to understand the three models of conflict escalation discussed in the reading?
2. What is a “structural change” during a conflict? Why do these changes encourage conflict escalation? Can you think of some conflicts where structural changes led to this pattern of escalation?
3. What are the forms of psychological structural changes discussed by Pruitt and Kim? For each of these changes, how do they tend to follow the “Crude” Law of Escalation (changes encouraging heavier tactics are also encouraged by those tactics) and the “Proliferation” Law of Structural Change (changes encouraging heavier tactics also generate other changes encouraging heavier tactics)?

When responding to 3, fill out the table posted on the website. I’ve already done the first row for you. Please print out and bring this table to class, so we can go over it together as a group.