

# CONFLICT & DISPUTE RESOLUTION

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## Structural Change During Conflict

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, "The Structural Change Model".

### Questions

1. Recall that 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 a conflict to escalate?
3. What are the six forms of psychological structural change discussed by Pruitt and Kim?
4. The **crude law of escalation** claims that structural changes encouraging heavier contentious tactics are also encouraged by those tactics. For instance, blame encourages violence (Party blames Other and therefore acts violently towards Other) and blame is also encouraged by violence (Other blames Party for that violent act). How do all the six forms of psychological structural change follow this crude law?
5. The **proliferation law of structural change** claims that structural changes encouraging heavier contentious tactics usually generate further structural changes that also encourage heavier tactics. For instance, blame often generates anger and hostile perceptions. How do all the six forms of psychological structural change tend to follow this proliferation law?

When responding to questions 3, 4, and 5, 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.