

Why Are Some Societies More Conflictual Than Others?

Despite the fact that political conflict and violence are among the most pressing issues of the twentieth century, their dynamics are only partially understood. We do a better job of describing particular disputes than of understanding the underlying general principles. This is not due to a lack of effort, however, for the production of theories of conflict has occupied all the social sciences for quite some time.

Our incomplete understanding of conflict behavior has serious consequences for our ability to manage conflicts constructively. It restricts the help given to adversaries seeking effective solutions and makes it particularly difficult to create arrangements limiting the escalation of conflicts before they get out of hand. The fragmented character of approaches to conflict is a central impetus for this book, which proposes to integrate previously distinct theories.

Complex social and political conflicts invariably have multiple roots. Conflict is about the concrete interests adversaries pursue and, at the same time, about their interpretations of what is at stake in a dispute. Much of the time the issue in dispute is the focal point for underlying differences of which the antagonists may be only partially aware and which, if ignored, are likely to resurface later. Managing a conflict effectively, then, usually means not only doing something about the issue in contention but also addressing deeper concerns. Conflicts become intense not just because of the value of what is being fought over but because of the psychological importance of winning and losing.

I explore these themes by inquiring into how particular societies develop characteristic patterns of disputing. The answers I offer here are different from what I expected when I started considering why some

when they were not necessarily what I was doing or saying, even always be appreciative for the way she could be counted on to focus her energies on my pressing questions, even when her life was filled with other, more acute matters. Katherine read every draft and revised draft of every chapter and continually fiddled with my sometimes opaque prose until she thought it was just right. Because Katherine's effort was truly a labor of love, I dedicate the book to her.

Ross, M.H. *The Culture of Conflict*, pp. 1-14, 183-201 ©1993.

This material is reproduced by permission of the publisher via the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc.

... among the Mbuti. A brief examination of these two cases illustrates several answers that organize this book.

Yanomamo

The Yanomamo, a small-scale horticultural people, live in dispersed, mutually hostile villages of 40 to 250 persons in an isolated jungle area crisscrossed by rivers and streams.¹ Members of a village consist of related males, their wives, and their children.

A militant ideology and the warfare associated with it are the central reality of daily existence among the Yanomamo. Interpersonal relations are tension laden, and there is a preoccupation with attacks from supernatural forces directed by one's enemies as well as ever-present concern with actual enemy raids. Villages are continually planning attacks on, fearing attacks from, or carrying out attacks on one another. One village, Chagnon (1983:183) reports, was raided 25 times during his initial 15 months of field work in the mid-1960s, and he estimates that about a fourth of Yanomamo men die violently.

The capture of women and the achievement of autonomy through overt violence are, according to Chagnon (1968), the primary goals of intervillage fighting. The extreme militancy and hostility toward neighbors, especially in the more densely populated core regions of Yanomamo territory, are associated with efforts to protect village autonomy. Dependence on cultivated crops means that the location of a village is predictable to enemies, however, and although villages move regularly, preparation of new sites takes at least a year.

Villages regularly develop intervillage alliances which involve giving refuge in time of need, sharing gardens if one group is uprooted from its home, and providing active military aid during raiding periods. These alliances are very tenuous, however. Host groups exact a high price (typically in terms of women) from weaker allies, and there are times when a village will turn on an unsuspecting ally in a "treacherous feast" or other opportune situation. Marriage alliances, which might be expected to solidify intercommunity bonds, are inherently unstable be-

1. Throughout the book I use the ethnographic present, the time of the anthropologist's field research, to describe a society which may be quite different today.

... to different, but not necessarily opposing, factors. That one was right did not mean that the other was therefore wrong. Each offered partial answers; coming to understand how the two theories complement, rather than compete with, each other has been particularly important.

My approach is broadly comparative, utilizing data from a worldwide sample of preindustrial societies typically studied by anthropologists. These data provide an opportunity to examine ideas about conflict developed in settings very different from urban, industrial ones. The process can provide insights that help us distinguish more clearly between behavior patterns found across human societies and those that are products of a particular cultural, economic, or political organization.

The argument I propose is that the culture of conflict—a society's particular constellation of norms, practices, and institutions—affects what groups and individuals fight about, the culturally approved ways to pursue their goals in disputes, and institutional resources that shape the course and outcomes of the conflicts (Avruch and Black 1991). Cultural dispositions about conflict are rooted in early developmental experiences, while a society's structural features identify who the targets of conflict behavior are. While conflict is played out around concrete interests, the interpretations of the participants are equally important in establishing whether conflict develops and whether it can be managed constructively. Understanding the origin, course, and management of a conflict requires consideration of both structural and psychocultural factors.

Two Contrasting Cases

Conflict is a ubiquitous feature of behavior within and between human groups. Problems of theft, murder, unpaid debts, sexual assault, jealousy, and anger are human universals in that there are virtually no communities where they are unknown (Nader and Todd 1978). At the same time, there is great variation from society to society in both the amount of conflict and what people do when it occurs. Consider two well-described preindustrial societies which are very different from our own: the Yanomamo of southern Venezuela (Chagnon 1968, 1983) and the Mbuti pygmies of the Zaire rain forest (Turnbull 1961, 1978). Why

societies have far more conflict and violence than others do. Initially I stressed the contrasts between what I call structural and psychocultural theories. As I worked to make sense of my empirical results, however, I found myself emphasizing ways in which these theories drew attention to different, but not necessarily opposing, factors. That one was right did not mean that the other was therefore wrong. Each offered partial answers; coming to understand how the two theories complement, rather than compete with, each other has been particularly important.

My approach is broadly comparative, utilizing data from a worldwide sample of preindustrial societies typically studied by anthropologists. These data provide an opportunity to examine ideas about conflict developed in settings very different from urban, industrial ones. The process can provide insights that help us distinguish more clearly between behavior patterns found across human societies and those that are products of a particular cultural, economic, or political organization.

The argument I propose is that the culture of conflict—a society's particular constellation of norms, practices, and institutions—affects what groups and individuals fight about, the culturally approved ways to pursue their goals in disputes, and institutional resources that shape the course and outcomes of the conflicts (Avruch and Black 1991). Cultural dispositions about conflict are rooted in early developmental experiences, while a society's structural features identify who the targets of conflict behavior are. While conflict is played out around concrete interests, the interpretations of the participants are equally important in establishing whether conflict develops and whether it can be managed constructively. Understanding the origin, course, and management of a conflict requires consideration of both structural and psychocultural factors.

Two Contrasting Cases

Conflict is a ubiquitous feature of behavior within and between human groups. Problems of theft, murder, unpaid debts, sexual assault, jealousy, and anger are human universals in that there are virtually no communities where they are unknown (Nader and Todd 1978). At the same time, there is great variation from society to society in both the amount of conflict and what people do when it occurs. Consider two well-described preindustrial societies which are very different from our own: the Yanomamo of southern Venezuela (Chagnon 1968, 1983) and the Mbuti pygmies of the Zaire rain forest (Turnbull 1961, 1978). Why

is conflict a key element in the daily life of the Yanomamo but much less central among the Mbuti? A brief examination of these two cases illustrates several answers that organize this book.

Yanomamo

The Yanomamo, a small-scale horticultural people, live in dispersed, mutually hostile villages of 40 to 250 persons in an isolated jungle area crisscrossed by rivers and streams.¹ Members of a village consist of related males, their wives, and their children.

A militant ideology and the warfare associated with it are the central reality of daily existence among the Yanomamo. Interpersonal relations are tension laden, and there is a preoccupation with attacks from supernatural forces directed by one's enemies as well as ever-present concern with actual enemy raids. Villages are continually planning attacks on, fearing attacks from, or carrying out attacks on one another. One village, Chagnon (1983:183) reports, was raided 25 times during his initial 15 months of field work in the mid-1960s, and he estimates that about a fourth of Yanomamo men die violently.

The capture of women and the achievement of autonomy through overt violence are, according to Chagnon (1968), the primary goals of intervillage fighting. The extreme militancy and hostility toward neighbors, especially in the more densely populated core regions of Yanomamo territory, are associated with efforts to protect village autonomy. Dependence on cultivated crops means that the location of a village is predictable to enemies, however, and although villages move regularly, preparation of new sites takes at least a year.

Villages regularly develop intervillage alliances which involve giving refuge in time of need, sharing gardens if one group is uprooted from its home, and providing active military aid during raiding periods. These alliances are very tenuous, however. Host groups exact a high price (typically in terms of women) from weaker allies, and there are times when a village will turn on an unsuspecting ally in a "treacherous feast" or other opportune situation. Marriage alliances, which might be expected to solidify intercommunity bonds, are inherently unstable be-

1. Throughout the book I use the ethnographic present, the time of the anthropologist's field research, to describe a society which may be quite different today.

cause of "the reluctance that each group displays in ceding women to others and the aggressiveness with which the demands for women are made" (Chagnon 1968:123). The preferred form of marriage—bilateral, cross-cousin exchanges within the village (in which a man marries the daughter of his father's brother or his mother's sister)—means that social links which might extend political alliances are very narrow indeed.

Even within the village many of the same pressures for autonomy are present. The weak emotional significance of kinship ties means that in larger villages narrow sublineage-based factions with their own interests develop within the more extended lineage. In addition, even in smaller groups there is often high tension among closely related males. Although they are dependent upon one another for mutual support in feuds and military activities, brothers and patrilineal male cousins are also in competition for the same women, who are always seen as in short supply. There are times when intravillage tensions become so severe that fighting breaks out within the village. Larger villages, Chagnon reports (1968), often divide as a result.

In the Yanomamo view, the world is a dangerous place. Enemies, both human and supernatural, are everywhere, and the support of allies is never certain. Autonomy, for the village and the individual, becomes the unattainable solution to this dilemma. It is sought in what Chagnon calls the *waiteri* complex, a fierce political and personal stance in which groups and individuals behave aggressively to forestall dependency and to communicate to others the probable high cost of their own aggression.

The inculcation of fierceness is a dominant theme in socialization, especially for boys. Parents encourage displays of aggression in young boys and taunt those who fail to use physical force in the many situations in which it is considered appropriate. As boys grow older, they are expected to practice the skills of fighting they will need as adults in club fights, chest-pounding duels, and spear fights. Aggressive adult role models abound, and reinforcement for appropriate expressions of aggression in youth is easy to obtain.²

Male-female relationships among the Yanomamo are distant and aggression-laden with male hostility regularly directed against wives and other females. Strong ambivalence also characterizes mother-son relationships. While mothers are the main source of nurturance and protection

2. Although male aggression is the main focus of Chagnon's analysis, his writing and films also provide some examples of female aggression.

tion, boys see women in general, and their mothers in particular, being devalued and physically abused. Becoming a successful adult male requires not only breaking the bond to one's mother but behaving aggressively toward all females. Young boys learn this from an early age, for aggressive behavior toward girls is encouraged.³

From Chagnon's rich case material it is easy to generate several hypotheses about the roots of Yanomamo conflict and violence. Most obvious is the absence of well-established social and political bonds among individuals in different communities, which might limit the intensity of conflict and create pressures for the peaceful resolution of disputes when they occur. Even within the communities where such bonds exist, they are weak and apparently easily set aside when disputes begin to escalate. Alternatively, the absence of institutions and practices that discourage violence as a favored method of conflict management might be attributed to the relatively low level of complexity of the Yanomamo socioeconomic system, with its weak differentiation among communities and the lack of any overarching political authority that might effectively address the ever-present intergroup aggression. Finally, high conflict seems to be rooted in the Yanomamo world views and psychocultural dispositions promoted from earliest childhood. Their socialization emphasizes toughness and physical aggression, especially for males; there is little expression of warmth and affection, particularly in father-child interactions. Male-female relationships are marked by hostility and distance. All these elements are critical in the development of the *waiteri* complex, with its emphasis on low social trust and the need for autonomy. They foster Yanomamo suspiciousness and aggression, contributing to the perpetuation of violence and the failure to develop viable ways to manage conflicts constructively.⁴

3. Male children provide continual reminders of their fathers and husbands invoking feelings of fear and danger at times. Responses to these emotions probably decrease a young child's sense of trust and security and reinforce the idea of the tenuous nature of social relationships. In addition, from a psychoanalytic viewpoint, the relationship between mothers and daughters probably has strong ambivalence as well.

4. Ferguson (1992) suggests that the extensive warfare among the Yanomamo that Chagnon describes is best understood in terms of the extensive contact-related changes that affected the region prior to Chagnon's arrival. He argues that "the occurrence and patterning of warfare... among the Yanomami is a result of antagonistic interests regarding access to or control over Western manufactured goods" (1992:201). The unequal availability of goods such as steel

Chagnon's portrait of the Yanomamo is consistent with a Hobbesian view of small-scale societies, whereas Turnbull's writings on the Mbuti present a very different picture. If there is a human propensity toward violent conflict, or if the smallest and technologically simplest societies are more prone to unmanageable conflict than other peoples, the Ituri rain forest where the Mbuti live ought to be filled with violence; it is not.

The Mbuti live in small hunting and foraging groups deep in the rain forest. As Turnbull portrays them, the Mbuti are at peace with themselves and with their environment. The forest is a source not only of sustenance but also of the deepest emotional support. Each camp consists of a number of kin groups living together, but the group's composition frequently changes because of individual decisions to spend time with other relatives or close friends and seasonal differences in the organization of foraging and hunting tasks.

There are no formal leaders in an Mbuti band, and the only real division of labor is by age and gender, although even here the boundaries are far less rigid and their emotional significance less charged than in many other societies. Cooperation in hunting is essential for subsistence, and Turnbull describes how community members coordinate their actions to capture and kill the swift, and sometimes large, game. When a hunt is successful, all band members share the meat. That it might belong to a single hunter or that a member of the community could go hungry while there is food for others is unthinkable to the Mbuti.

A striking feature of Mbuti life is its social density. In the settlement, people live very close to one another, and the concerns of any axes and machetes in the region, Ferguson argues, affected patterns of local trade, marriage exchanges, village location, social cohesion, and warfare.

Although Ferguson's argument is interesting, particularly for understanding the overall level of conflict in the region, it does not contradict the argument that Yanomamo social organization and world views encouraged hostility and aggression even prior to extensive western contact. In addition, Ferguson reminds us that the impact of western cultures tends to be felt earlier than we often believe and that there are important indirect effects, as well as direct ones. Ferguson's strong argument that all Yanomamo warfare can be explained in terms of conflict over western goods is obviously not consistent with Chagnon's published materials. Ferguson plans to document it in a future publication.

one or two individuals easily become matters involving everyone. If, for example, someone complains about another's actions, a third person is likely to join in the conversation, which soon can involve all those present. At times, tempers flare and people scream or even toss burning logs at each other. Occasionally a third party needs to step between disputants to restore order.

Turnbull suggests that most of the time, however, even in situations where feelings are intense, community discussion of a dispute leads to a solution acceptable to all concerned. Critical to this process is the fact that disputers are "generally settled with little reference to the alleged rights and wrongs of the case, but chiefly with the intention of restoring peace to the community" (Turnbull 1961:188). Assessing penalties for past wrongs is far less important than clearing the air so that future relations will be harmonious. Sometimes this means the separation of disputants while tempers cool down.

In his portrait of Mbuti nonviolence, Turnbull (1978) places great emphasis on ways in which the community is a critical source of support and nurturance at each stage of the life cycle. An Mbuti mother-to-be gently sings to her unborn child. Following the birth, the parents and all others in the community welcome the infant and feel a collective responsibility for its physical and spiritual well-being. Security and dependence are essential Mbuti values that work against the open expression of aggression. Individuals may tease and laugh at each other, but the result is not frustration, for underneath these actions they apparently find tremendous security through links to others.

Mbuti rituals express the importance of the community as a source of nurturance. Solemn rituals affirm the connections of each person to the forest and to other Mbuti, living and dead. Less sacred rituals make the same points in a different tone. For example, Turnbull describes a ritual tug-of-war between adult men and women that initially expresses the very real tension between the sexes. Yet as the men begin to win, one of them adjusts his clothing, sings out in a falsetto voice, and joins the women. When the women start to do better, one of them will go to the men's side. Soon the composition of each team is completely reversed. "Each person crossing over tries to outdo the ridicule of the last, causing more and more laughter, until when the contestants are laughing so hard they cannot sing out any more, they let go of the vine rope and fall to the ground in near hysteria" (1978:205). Laughter serves to unite people, emphasizing their

interdependence and shared norms. Differences are not so much denied as put in a larger social perspective.

Aggressive role models are uncommon among the Mbuti. Individual achievement at the expense of another is likewise disapproved, and a real effort is made to emphasize the equality of all. Only inner competition, not competition with others, is approved. Adult men, for example, are obviously the physically strongest members of the community and the hunters on whom everyone depends for meat. At the same time, their physical power is offset by a negative moral judgment concerning the dangers hunting and killing bring to the forest. Men are reminded of their impurity and the need to be properly cleansed and feel the striking contrast between their physical strength and moral power.⁵

In their dealings with Bantu peoples who live in neighboring villages at the edge of the forest, the Mbuti are far more cautious than they are with one another. The villagers seek to control the Mbuti both economically and emotionally. The Bantu need the products of the forest—meat, wild mushrooms, and so on—but have no desire to enter it to acquire them. The Mbuti resist Bantu domination in a number of nonviolent ways, protecting their autonomy and capacity to keep the villagers away from the forest. They regularly acquire goods from the village and, at the insistence of the villagers, participate in a range of rituals and occasional work activities. To the Bantu this binds the Mbuti to them, while for the Mbuti this is the price paid for maintaining the safety of the forest.

As with the Yanomamo, it is possible to build several alternative explanations for Mbuti conflict behavior. For Turnbull, the critical explanatory factors are psychocultural. He emphasizes the importance of the Mbutis' warm, supportive social relationships in the development of trusting, secure individuals. For the Mbuti, profound dependence upon others is a source of support, not threat. Their attention to social relationships emphasizes a shared fate which limits overt aggression and guides conflict management in constructive directions. It is also possible to build a persuasive interest-based explanation for Mbuti conflict patterns by identifying elements in their social organization which

5. Although both men and women participate in hunting, because the men kill the animals they raise a more troubling moral dilemma than the women, whose role in the hunt is to chase the game toward the men and their nets.

create a greater interest in cooperation than competition. Most obviously, one can point to the need for high levels of cooperation in hunting and the powerful social sanctions invoked when anyone violates these norms (Turnbull 1963). In addition, strong links among Mbuti living in different camps make it easy for people to move among groups. Finally, no sizable material wealth provides a motive for one group in the society to seek domination over another.

Overview of the Argument

As illustrated in the examples of the Yanomamo and the Mbuti, interests and psychocultural dispositions provide the bases for very different explanations of societal differences in conflict behavior. They identify dissimilar sources of conflict, offer strikingly different accounts of why conflicts escalate, and point toward alternative mechanisms for effective conflict management. I begin by focusing on the dissimilarities in these two theoretical approaches to emphasize the extent to which each one is plausible. Gradually, building on data from a sample of 90 preindustrial societies, I bring the two theories together to offer a cross-cultural theory of conflict and an explanation for variations in the culture of conflict in these societies.

In the most general terms, the psychocultural dispositions rooted in a society's early socialization experiences shape the overall level of conflict, while its specific pattern of social organization determines whether the targets of conflict and aggression are located within a society, outside it, or both. Because structural and psychocultural explanations for conflict behavior are so different, it is easy to view them as incompatible alternatives. Yet each set of factors explains different aspects of conflict behavior, making sense of something the other cannot fully explain. The fears and threats identified in the psychocultural explanation account for the intensity of feelings involved, but only the structural explanation can speak to why actions are taken in a particular direction.

The importance of psychocultural factors in conflict is worth emphasizing for several reasons. One is that the empirical results so clearly show that a society's early socialization is intimately associated with patterns of conflict and violence. Psychocultural effects cannot be reduced to structural conditions explained in terms of simple in-

terests. As a result of the long-standing bias against psychological explanations in the social sciences, this theoretical orientation may be unfamiliar to many readers and will be explained in some detail. In this view, interest-based rational-choice arguments are not so much wrong as far more limited than many of their proponents suggest. Interests matter, I agree, but psychocultural forces are crucial in determining how these interests are defined and what actors do to defend them (Wildavsky 1991, 1992).

Early childhood is when cultures establish orientations, such as trust, security, and efficacy, toward the self and others in one's social world. Early social relationships provide the foundations for the model of social behavior (what I call psychocultural dispositions) one carries throughout life. In particular, the socialization of warmth and affection, the harshness of childrearing, and male gender-identity conflict all affect societal conflict patterns. But early childhood is not the only formative time for interpretations of the world that shape conflict behavior. A wide range of a society's institutions and practices reinforce important psychocultural dispositions through the values and behaviors that are encouraged or discouraged, through cultural definitions of group identity (we versus they), and through culturally approved responses to perceived aggression.

How actors interpret events is central in shaping a group's actions, especially in the situations of ambiguity and high stress that characterize many conflicts. Deeply held dispositions are significant elements in determining how participants interpret conflict and how these interpretations affect the actions they take (Northrup 1989). Psychocultural dispositions shape how groups and individuals process events and the emotions, perceptions, and cognitions the events evoke. Dispositions link particular events to culturally shared threats to self-esteem and identity. I use the term *psychocultural*, as opposed to *psychological*, because it emphasizes assumptions, perceptions, and images about the world that are widely shared with others and not idiosyncratic (Wildavsky 1987).

Conflict is interpretive behavior and psychocultural dispositions serve as a filter through which actions are understood. Dispositional patterns are culturally learned and approved methods of dealing with others. Although disputants have little trouble citing "objective" bases for conflict—"She (or he) took my toy" (land, water, women, cows)—what is striking to an observer is the number of different cultural patterns

of response to the same supposedly provocative action. This distinction means that objective situations alone do not cause conflict; interpretations of such situations also play a central role.

An emphasis on psychocultural dispositions does not require excluding other explanatory forces. Specifically, social groups pursue and defend interests which structural explanations for conflict infer from the organization of society. My analysis identifies two sources of these interests relevant for understanding conflict behavior. First, societies vary greatly in the extent to which people with common interests in one domain also have common interests in others. When social organization reinforces a single dominant cleavage, conflicts escalate because few overlapping interests reinforce mutual interests; when lines of cleavage cross-cut each other and ties among the parties are well established, the same precipitating incident often has far less severe consequences. Where there are strong links among various groups, common interests are forged through interaction and exchange. The results of cross-cultural analysis show that when cross-cutting ties are strong, interests tend to limit the severity of conflict within a society, while conflict with outsiders is more likely.

A second set of interests is associated with a society's particular level of socioeconomic and/or political complexity. At each level of organization, specific interests become salient. Less complex societies have fewer valuable resources, but they also possess weaker capabilities of defending what they do have. Simpler societies, in one view, have a lower incidence of conflict because there is less resource concentration and hence there are fewer motives for groups to attack each other. In contrast, others point to the absence of centralized authority as making conflict more likely. The data analysis supports neither position with respect to internal conflict. I suggest that political differentiation may limit political conflict through direct control—the peacemaking function of the state—while socioeconomic complexity, with its increasing accumulation of resources, inequality, and military capability, increases it. External conflict is a different story, however, and the evi-

6. Yngvesson (1978), for example, describes an isolated, factionalized Atlantic fishing community in which taking items belonging to another person is called theft when it is done by an outsider but borrowing when it is done by a member of the group. In New Guinea, Koch (1974), Meggitt (1977), and others have described the differences in responses to transgressions within the clan, between members of clans of the same phratry, and between phratries.

dence is that more complex societies have higher levels of conflict with outsiders.

In preindustrial societies, internal and external conflict are positively correlated, as is the case in modern nations. Yet conflict within a society and conflict with outsiders have common psychocultural but different structural roots. Both internal and external conflict are higher in societies in which socialization is relatively low in warmth and affection, harsher, and higher in male gender identity conflict. In societies with strong cross-cutting ties, hostile action is more likely to be directed at external targets, whereas when cross-cutting ties are weak the differentiation between internal and external targets of conflict is weak.

Although any society's culture of conflict has unique features, the analysis here focuses on a small number of general patterns. Variations in each suggest how culture affects conflict and also show that conflict is usefully viewed as cultural behavior reflecting what people in a society value, their socially shared definitions of friends and foes, and the means groups and individuals use to pursue their goals (Avruch 1991; Avruch and Black 1991).

The theory offered here has important consequences for understanding the effectiveness of steps participants and conflict managers take to settle disputes. It is necessary to recognize the importance of interests rooted in social structure as well as psychocultural dispositions in understanding conflict management outcomes. Because structural and psychocultural theories attribute the primary source of conflict to very different forces, they implicitly suggest very different strategies for resolving conflict successfully. Structural theory gives a primary role to conflict-limiting strategies involving altering incentives, payoffs, or—most fundamentally—the organization of society. Divergent interests, in this view, are hard to bridge; therefore, there is an emphasis either on unilateral action or on third parties. In contrast, psychocultural theory points to the need to alter the dominant metaphors surrounding a dispute or the interpretations of the parties in conflict (Ross 1993).

Yet the argument presented here suggests that any culture of conflict has typical patterns of escalation, redefinition, extension to new parties, and termination that have both structural and psychocultural components. Because interests and perceptions matter, conflict management strategies will succeed only to the extent to which they pay

attention to both. In fact, the intensity of psychocultural factors often is so high that until they are addressed, differences in the structurally rooted interests separating adversaries cannot be bridged. And some cultures are better at doing this than others.

Plan of the Book

My central concern is the question of why the world's preindustrial societies differ so greatly in levels and patterns of conflict and violence. The next three chapters offer a theoretical approach to the cross-cultural study of conflict. In chapter 2 I present the concepts of conflict and culture and key elements of a cross-cultural investigation. In chapter 3 I discuss social-structural theory and internal and external conflict and violence, developing a series of hypotheses to be tested cross-culturally. In chapter 4, psychocultural theory is examined in the same way.

The cross-cultural analysis of data to test the structural and psychocultural theories of conflict begins with chapter 5, which outlines the methods used in the study, defines the key conflict measures, and describes the culture of conflict in four preindustrial societies. In chapter 6 I present the tests of the major hypotheses, showing partial support for both structural and psychocultural hypotheses. In chapter 7 I turn to the question of the relationship between internal and external conflict and identification of two different cultures of conflict—one in which there is great differentiation between the levels of internal and external conflict, and a second, more common one, in which there is generalization in the levels of conflict across domains. The data in these chapters support the idea that a society's overall level of conflict is determined by its psychocultural features while the targets of conflict are most related to its social organization. In chapter 8 I then consider variations in the general model, exploring cases in the sample that fit the model least well and suggesting contextually specific variations in the culture of conflict.

In chapter 9 I extend the analysis, using the model developed from examination of conflict in preindustrial societies to explain the protracted conflict in Northern Ireland and the relatively low level of conflict in modern Norway. In chapter 10 I integrate the findings through a discussion of the mechanisms of interests and interpretations that underlie structural and psychocultural explanations. In the final