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## ***Channeling Conflict***

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### **Abstract**

Transformations in technology have invigorated the use of communication as a tool for managing conflict. However, the understanding of if and how communication has been effective has lagged behind these changes. The paper provides a review of current projects that use communication to manage conflict and explores the question of how effects might best be achieved in light of normative belief theories in communication.

Whether current communication for conflict-management projects have, or will have had the desired outcomes in stemming violent behavior is not entirely clear. The effect of media on international conflict has been largely assumed, creating a need to borrow from other areas in communication that have studied and found behavioral effects. In health communication theories about normative beliefs provide an explanation for cited effects. These theories tell how media can intervene in order to influence the receiver's normative and attitudinal beliefs and, in turn, their attitudes and subjective norms, which are direct measures of their intentions and behavior.

Although these theories are useful in conflict management, we cannot assume that the act of persuading a receiver - or an agent in a conflict situation - to comply with normative beliefs regarding hate, is the only way, or even the best way to achieve effect. Providing agents with the means to express their hate through a channel other than violent behavior and an incentive with which to do so, may be more successful than trying to change

their normative beliefs. The context of the conflict will determine what method to pursue. Research in the area of communication for conflict management should focus on how to best achieve effects, whether for example, by persuading people to accept normative values and in turn, alter their behaviors, or by providing different tools through which they can communicate their hatred, and incentives for doing so.