

## High- versus Low-Power in Negotiation

"A person with more power has generally less interest in the needs of the person with less power and is therefore not so willing to accommodate. (...) Consequently, in a situation where power is not balanced, (...), *the responsibility for generating and selling a win-win solution appears to reside with the lower-power party.*"

### Usual negotiation dynamics in an asymmetrical power situation:

- If high-power holders see their influence being ignored or challenged, they are likely to try to reassert their authority and legitimacy ⇒ not recognizing a clear differential in power *leads to power struggle.*
- Power struggle reduces the likelihood of choosing cooperation over competition.
- Low-power people tend to be fearful. They are likely to attempt to rid themselves of their anger and fear by projecting blame onto others, i.e.: by blaming high-power holders as a means of asserting themselves.
- If attacked or blamed, however, high-power people tend to act defensively and assert their power by coercing or invoking sanctions.
- When people are caught up in a quest for power, they tend to repeat the same strategy rather than draw upon a multitude of possible responses, i.e.: power struggle leads to use of inflexible strategies and loss of effectiveness.

Source: Vivian Wiseman and Jean Pointras, *Mediation Within a Hierarchical Structure: How Can It Be Done Successfully?* in: Conflict Resolution Quarterly, vol. 20, n° 1, Fall 2002, Wiley Periodicals, Inc.