14

Step 9. Consider Diversity Issues at Play in the Conflict

“I do not want my house to be walled in on all sides and my windows to be stuffed. I want the cultures of all the lands to be blown about my house as freely as possible. But I refuse to be blown off my feet by any.”

— Mahatma Gandhi

“In individuals, insanity is rare; but in groups, parties, nations, and epochs it is the rule.”

— Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil

In this chapter, you will learn...

◆ The influences of stereotyping, culture, and social-group power on interpersonal conflict.
◆ The reasons people stereotype others and why stereotypes are so resistant to change.
◆ “Red flags” that alert you to a situation in which you might be led astray by stereotypes.
◆ Tactics and strategies you can use to counteract the negative impact of stereotyping.
◆ How cultural and subcultural differences have an impact on the perception of and handling of interpersonal conflict.
◆ Some effective ways of minimizing damage due to the unrecognized and unacknowledged impact of cultural differences in conflicts.
◆ Some of the ways that racism and sexism affect the handling of conflict, and what to do about it.
On 1 April 2001, a United States Navy plane operating in the South China Sea collided with one of two Chinese fighter jets flying nearby. One of the Chinese planes was lost, with the pilot missing and presumed dead, and the American plane, which had been conducting surveillance and was loaded with sophisticated spying equipment, was severely damaged and almost crashed before making an emergency landing on Hainan Island, land under the sovereignty of mainland China.

In the immediate aftermath of the incident, it was apparent that neither the United States nor China was eager to provoke a serious confrontation. It was a very sensitive time in Sino-American relations, given the recent inauguration of a new U.S. president and a contemplated sale by the United States of weapons to Taiwan. Following the incident, the United States communicated its concern to the Chinese over the incident and asked that its crew be treated well (“U.S. Spy Plane, Chinese Fighter Collide” 2001).

From the beginning, responses to the incident reflected the differences in language and culture between the two nations. The United States issued a noncommittal but self-serving statement indicating that the plane was on a routine surveillance mission and that it was unclear whether the collision was an accident or the result of the Chinese jet’s bumping the American plane purposefully (“Bush Statement on China, U.S. Spy Plane Incident” 2001). Western media indicated that the plane was in international airspace (although later reports indicated that the Chinese considered the territory their own), and U.S. military sources began to leak an opinion, widely held among those in the know, that the Chinese pilot who had hit the spy plane had a reputation as a “hot dog” whose predilection for “buzzing” American planes had been the subject of a complaint to the Chinese some six months before (“U.S. Defense Secretary: Chinese Pilot Harassed U.S. crew” 2001).

On 2 April, the Chinese allowed U.S. diplomats to meet with the crew of the downed spy plane, who were being housed and questioned by the Chinese. The meeting went well, but thereafter China publicly referred to itself as the victim in the incident and called for the United States to take responsibility for the incident, reasoning that the missing jet and pilot were Chinese and the U.S. plane “entered Chinese airspace in violation of relevant regulations and landed on Chinese territory without permission” (“Jiang Demands U.S. Apology for Plane Collision” 2001).

On 3 April, two days after the collision, President Bush publicly warned the Chinese that it was time for the return of the U.S. crew, as well as the plane itself. “We have allowed the Chinese government time to do the right thing,” Bush said. “This accident has the potential of undermining our hopes for a fruitful and productive relationship between our two countries. To keep that from happening, our service men and women need to come home” (“Diplomats Visit, but China Still Holds U.S. Crew” 2001). U.S. officials, including those in the military, expressed puzzlement over what they viewed as an unacceptable delay in the Chinese response, and privately they regarded it as likely that the Chinese were using the delay to learn more about the plane’s sophisticated technology. The Chinese did, in fact, assert a right to enter and inspect the aircraft.

In response to the Chinese demand for an apology, the United States, through its secretary of state, Colin Powell, expressed “regret” and called for an investigation and an exchange of explanations. However, Bush’s spokesperson reiterated the president’s stance that the United States had done nothing wrong and that the accident had taken place in international airspace. The Chinese, through their ambassador, Yang Jiechi, dismissed the expression of regret and commented, “The U.S. side should share all the responsibility and apologize to the Chinese side” (“Plane Deadlock Continues Despite ‘Regret’ “ 2001).

Over time, it became clear that the apology was the principal sticking point in a deepening crisis. The United States refused to apologize without a prior finding of fault, and the Chinese insisted that an apology was necessary before anything further should be done. As the public rhetoric on both sides escalated, angry anti-American demonstrations broke out in China. Longstanding mistrust between country persons of both China and the United States fed the escalating standoff. Meanwhile, diplomats worked behind the scenes to defuse the situation. The Americans, in keeping with their principle that the facts must come out, recommended a joint Sino-American investigation of the incident. President Bush, for the first time, expressed regret over the apparent loss of life
of the Chinese pilot. However, the Chinese continued to seek an apology. President Jiang Zemin commented, on a trip to Chile, “I have visited many countries and I see it as very normal that when people clash (bump into each other), it is normal that these people apologize. Now, we see that these planes come in to our country and they don’t want to ask forgiveness. Is that normal?” (“U.S. Considering Joint Investigation of Plane Collision” 2001).

Finally, on 11 April, an accord was reached. The crux of the deal was a brief letter issued by Joseph W. Pruehler, the U.S. ambassador to China, to Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan. The letter included the following passage: “We are very sorry the entering of China’s airspace and the landing did not have verbal clearance, but very pleased the crew landed safely. We appreciate China’s efforts to see to the well-being of the crew.” The Chinese were able to use the text—translated in a manner the Chinese found acceptable—to imply that the United States had taken responsibility for flying into Chinese airspace, as it had contended, thus saving face for their country (Goldberg, K. 2001). The United States, on the other hand, also included the phrase “the full picture of what transpired is still unclear” (Prueher 2001), thus preserving its ability to maintain its position that the plane was flying appropriately when hit by the Chinese fighter jet and protecting the needs of its citizens for factual investigation before an assignment of responsibility. Based on the mutual preservation of face that the letter allowed, the crew was released by the Chinese and allowed to return home.

The Navy spy plane incident illustrates some of the complexities that cultural diversity imposes on interpersonal conflict. The predilections for people in both countries to fear the worst in the motives of the other undoubtedly arose in part from stereotypes held by all concerned—the Chinese saw the Americans as arrogant, aggressive, and insensitive, whereas the Americans saw the Chinese as inscrutable totalitarians bent on world domination. Beyond the issue of inappropriate attribution based on stereotypes, the spy plane controversy is an example of the trouble that confronts disputants when they have to deal with someone whose culture is different—whose language is not directly translatable, whose cultural values are different from one’s own, and whose social context is very different. The U.S. interpretation of the Chinese response to the spy plane incident as “delayed” hardened the American side, with its rapid and goal-directed approach to conflict management. From the Chinese perspective, however, the time it took to resolve the incident was anything but delayed, given the comparatively relaxed attitude toward the passage of time in the typical Chinese approach to negotiation. Further, a language and etiquette problem was a crucial source of conflict: the Chinese demand for an apology from the United States, something apparently akin to saying “excuse me” when bumping into someone, was interpreted by U.S. leaders as something different, more similar to admitting legal liability for causing the incident. Thus, differences in style, language, and patterns of etiquette contributed to the standoff. Moreover, the need for the United States to get all the facts before allocating blame—and the need for the Chinese to interact in a manner that saves face—each of which went largely unacknowledged by the other—together probably constituted the largest single impediment to getting the plane’s crew home. The Chinese loss of face was probably exacerbated by the power differences between the United States, generally regarded as the supreme superpower on Earth, and China, which, although...
huge, lacks the resources and might of the United States. Comments by the Chi-
inese people about U.S. “arrogance” in the dispute were probably fed by the in-
teraction between the refusal of the United States to apologize and Chinese
shame in the face of an incident involving a more powerful rival.

This chapter will summarize some of the troublesome issues that confront
conflict diagnosticians and conflict participants when dealing with a conflict in-
volving people and groups from other cultures. The area of diversity issues in in-
terpersonal conflict is among the most perplexing, yet fascinating, topics for the
diagnostician.

DEFINITION AND SCOPE

For our purposes, a “diversity” issue is one involving the apparent or actual mem-
bership of conflict participants in diverse social groups. The term social group in-
cludes nationality, ethnicity, gender, race, cultural or subcultural affiliation,
religious affiliation, and professional affiliation—any affiliation that involves the
sharing of special values, communication styles, or patterns of behavior; tends to
be the subject of stereotyping by others; or is associated with inequities of power,
compared with other groups involved in the conflict.

Analyzing the impact of diversity is an important part of the conflict diag-
nosis process. Diversity considerations affect the choice of the most effective dis-
pute resolution process, the most effective ADR process and provider (if any),
and ways to prepare for the resolution of the conflict. Diversity considerations
strongly affect the sources of conflict; differences of opinion over what the con-
flict is about, negotiation styles, power differences, and so forth. Thus, every le-
gal professional, every person who negotiates frequently—in fact, increasingly in
this day of globalization, every individual—needs to be aware of how diversity is-
issues affect interpersonal conflict.

CATEGORIES OF DIVERSITY ISSUES

Diversity issues fall into three major categories. The first category is stereotyping.
Stereotyping is the attribution of thoughts, qualities, behaviors, and attitudes to
others based on their categorization into a social group. (For example, the attri-

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity Issues in Interpersonal Conflict</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>∗ Any issue involving the membership of one or more conflict participants in a social group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∗ Kinds of diversity issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∗ Stereotyping</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>∗ Culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>∗ Power</td>
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Step 9. Consider Diversity Issues at Play in the Conflict

Bution of gentleness to a woman based on her gender is the application of a stereotype. The second category includes considerations of culture. This category includes issues of language difference, cultural values and frames of reference, and cultural attitudes toward conflict, negotiation, and conflict resolution. The Navy spy plane crisis most profoundly reflects this category of diversity problem. The third category of diversity issue is the issue of power. Power problems in diversity conflicts include the disempowerment of particular social groups and the existence of bigotry and prejudice based on social group membership. A banker who insists on charging racial minorities a higher price for a home loan simply because he thinks he can get away with it is displaying this type of diversity issue. See Table 14-1 for a summary of these three categories of diversity issues.

Although they stand on their own as separate and independent sources of diversity problems in conflict resolution, the categories frequently influence one another. For example, the banker who discriminates against homebuyers on the basis of race may do so because of negative stereotypes he holds about the behaviors, values, and habits of the race he discriminates against. Because of these negative stereotypes, he may interpret culturally originating differences in language and style as reflective of the inferiority of the race, confirming his bigoted beliefs. Thus, a conflict diagnostician should look for all three categories of diversity issues and consider how they interact. Understanding this connection can help the diagnostician counter the negative effects of diversity in an interpersonal conflict and take advantage of the opportunities that diversity brings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity Issue</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stereotyping</td>
<td>Issues that arise because of the propensity to attribute behaviors, attitudes, and traits to people based on their membership in a social group</td>
<td>An attorney underestimates his opponent's ability to negotiate effectively for her client because he stereotypes women as soft and accommodating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Issues that arise because of cultural differences in the framing of conflict, important values, negotiation style, communication, etiquette, and so on.</td>
<td>An Asian-American employee misinterprets her manager's questioning of her decisions as criticism, when, in fact, he is simply trying to learn from her expertise (Rules of Engagement 1997).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>Issues that arise because of inequalities in power that exist between members of social groups</td>
<td>A black job applicant is offered less than a comparable white applicant would be offered because the prospective employer knows that overall the job prospects for blacks are worse, and therefore the employer can get away with offering less.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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Stereotyping

“First impressions are important,” your mother may have said. Stereotypes are similar to first impressions; indeed, many first impressions come from stereotypes.

If you believe you’re not one to stereotype, you’re wrong. All human beings stereotype. The propensity to judge people based on stereotypes is believed to be hard-wired into the human cognitive system. Stereotypes serve a useful purpose for the human species: they allow us to make estimates or predictions about people we deal with in social interactions without having sufficient information to know for certain just what they are thinking or feeling. Since we can’t mind-read, and since we don’t know many of the people we have to deal with on an intimate basis, we need ways to guess at their motives, abilities, feelings, and likely behaviors. Stereotypes allow us to deal with social interaction in a rapid-fire, automatic fashion. Without stereotypes, social interaction would grind to a halt.

For example, if you enter an office to keep an appointment and see a woman sitting at a desk in the open, telephone on the desk, with a door behind her, you are likely to conclude subconsciously that she is the receptionist. This social category helps you make guesses and predictions about her behavior: that she will be relatively polite, docile, willing to help, and able to shepherd you to your appointment. Your ability to categorize this individual as a receptionist based on the limited number of visual clues (woman, desk in open, presence of phone, office door behind her) saves you valuable time and effort.

The Effect of Stereotypes. When we stereotype, we make estimates and predictions about people based on our expectations about members of their social group. In essence, stereotyping involves attributing to social group membership the characteristics, traits, and predicted behavior that, in fact, are due to individual background and experience. There are two major problems with this sort of attribution. First, the attributions that one makes as the result of stereotyping may be totally wrong. In general, relying on stereotypes to judge people involved in a conflict is a dangerous proposition, because it can lead to poor conflict diagnosis and, hence, poor strategic decision making. For example, suppose you are negotiating with a woman and you unconsciously assume, based on your stereotypes, that she will be compliant and gentle. Such a woman, if she chooses to negotiate using adversarial tactics, is likely to catch you totally off guard.

Second, it is demeaning to be stereotyped. Being the subject of a stereotype—even a flattering one—is dehumanizing. And many stereotypes are viciously negative. Thus, besides being morally reprehensible, using a stereotype to judge or predict someone’s behavior or characteristics in an interpersonal conflict is likely to generate considerable resentment. As you will recall from Chapter 9, the generation of personal animosity is likely to trigger the escalation of a conflict into a destructive competition cycle.

1 In fact, there is no clear empirical evidence that women are more compliant or less competitive than men during negotiation.
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Reasons to Be Concerned About Stereotyping During Interpersonal Conflict

- Stereotypes are often wrong, leading to bad strategy.
- People are demeaned when they are stereotyped, making conflict escalation likely.

Red Flags: Recognizing When Stereotypes Are Most Likely to Be Applied.
Stereotypes are used more in some situations than others. To clarify when stereotyping is most likely, it's helpful to refer to one of the currently dominant theories of social psychology, the dual-process theory (Fiske & Neuberg 1990, 1–74). The idea behind the dual-process theory is simple. When people are forming impressions about people and things in their world, they either gather the information they need “from scratch” or draw inferences about the person by fitting him or her into various categories, including his or her social category. The former type of impression formation is called systematic processing, whereas the latter is called category-based processing. Using stereotypes is a form of category-based processing.

When you first encountered the receptionist, you used category-based processing. First, you used readily handy clues to categorize the woman as “the receptionist,” and then you used this social categorization to make predictions about how your social interaction would proceed. Suppose, instead, you decided to use systematic processing. You might begin by walking up to the desk and asking, “Are you the receptionist for Dennis Brown?” Her answer to this question would most likely provide the social category information you need to begin impression formation, but this social categorization does not necessarily mean that she will be polite, competent, or helpful to you. Thus, as a systematic processor, you might ask others in the office about her professional competence and behavior, observe her behavior with others for a few hours, and obtain a complete job history with employment evaluations to determine whether she will be able to get Dennis Brown if asked, to pin down her personality characteristics, and to reassure you that she isn’t dangerous.

Systematic processing seems silly in the case of the presumptive receptionist—after all, if she doesn’t behave in accordance with your stereotypes, the consequences aren’t very serious: she’s unlikely to be a closet axe murderer and would have trouble pulling off a violent victimization in a public setting, anyway. In this case, the use of category-based methods of processing—of which stereotypes are a familiar example—is reasonable. But consider the following example instead:

You receive a knock at the door and open it, to find a conservatively dressed, white-haired woman who looks to be about seventy-five. She identifies herself as a representative of the local Cancer Society. She has a wonderful offer. A generous donor has contributed a subdivided tract in Florida suitable for housing. She can sell you this real estate for a mere $15,000, one-fifth what it's worth, and she'll accept your credit card to make a modest downpayment. The proceeds will go to finding a cure for cancer.
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Here, your use of category-based processing ("little old ladies are honest; she
must be O K ") could be seriously damaging to your wallet. You'd have a high mo-
tivation to verify that the person you're taking to is really the person she says she
is, that she really is with the charity, and that the offer is legitimate. Here, sys-
tematic processing is called for.

The thinkers behind the dual-process theory view category-based and system-
atic processing as the poles of a continuum. Thus, in particular cases, a person who
needs to form an impression of someone else in order to take action will engage in
some category-based processing, plus a limited amount of systematic processing.
For example, in the case of the presumptive receptionist, perhaps you sneak a peek
at her desk and observe that she has Dennis Brown's schedule there. This informa-
tion feeds your impression that she is probably his receptionist, and your next move
may be to say to her, "I'm Jane Doe and I'm here for my appointment with Den-
nis Brown." Her response will provide further verification or refutation of your
stereotype of this person as polite and able to help you. On the other hand, if, when
you sneak a peek at her desk, you saw that she was engaged in complex mathe-
matical calculations, your initial category-based impression would be challenged.
Then you would have a motivation to seek more information. Perhaps a question
addressed to the desk occupant, such as "Can you direct me to Mr. Brown's recep-
tionist?" would give you enough information to give you the confidence you
needed to take further action. Or if, when you ask for Dennis Brown, the woman
responds loudly with language you wouldn't allow your twelve-year-old cousin to
hear, your stereotype about her docile and helpful personality might be challenged,
also prompting you to turn to a more systematic approach.

The dual-process theory relies on the so-called cognitive miser assumption.
This assumption is, in essence, that, because category-based processing is a lot
easier than systematic processing, category-based processing will be used unless
the person forming the impression judges it to be insufficient under the circum-
stances. A person forming an impression will be motivated to use systematic pro-
cessing if he or she is motivated to obtain a highly accurate result (as with our
caller selling land in Florida)—this motivational set is called accuracy motivation.

Systematic processing may also be promoted by two other motivational sets:
one designed to protect the impression former's deeply seated, deeply valued self-
concepts if threatened, called defense motivation, and one designed to reach a con-
clusion that satisfies a social goal, such as agreeing with a more powerful person
or going along with a group—called impression motivation (Chaiken, Gruenfeld,
& Judd 2000, 144–65). The following is an example of defense motivation:

Leonard has stereotyped Cynthia as a "typical female—a doormat." How-
ever, her behavior in negotiating a deal with him has been anything but ac-
commodating: in fact, she has been a very hard bargainer. Leonard has
reacted by being tough in return. However, he does not believe in "hitting
a lady"—his tough response bothers him. He reacts by going beyond his
stereotypes—seeing Cynthia as an exception to the stereotype—and as less
defenseless than a "typical female." He uses his observations of Cynthia to
exceed his stereotypes. This systematic processing allows Leonard to feel
OK about "playing rough" with Cynthia.
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The following is an example of impression motivation:

Jennifer’s best friend, Agatha, is against abortion. Jennifer is pro-choice. In a conversation, Agatha discusses how much she looks up to a prominent anti-abortion activist, Jack Jones. Jennifer would ordinarily dismiss Jack unthinkingly as “an idiot,” but, in light of her friend’s feelings, Jennifer looks harder at him and discovers that, although he comes to conclusions she opposes, his underlying value system seems to be pretty similar to her own.

Although accuracy motivation tends to produce an unbiased form of systematic processing, defense and impression motivation tend to produce an intermediate form of systematic processing, one that is biased and truncated to attain the defensive or social goal sought by the perceiver. Most of the time, the application of a stereotype, which is category-based, also serves the impression former’s defensive motivation to validate his or her world view (which is usually based in part on stereotypes). Thus, most of the time, defense motivation produces stereotyping, not systematic processing. On the other hand, an impression former who holds stereotypes, but who believes they are inaccurate or morally wrong, may have a defense motivation to process systematically if he or she becomes aware that he or she is likely to apply a stereotype to a situation. For example, studies show that socially egalitarian impression formers apply racial stereotypes unconsciously, just as bigots do, but rework their impressions to eliminate stereotype-based conclusions if they become aware that they might stereotype (Devine 1989).

Even if there is a strong motive to go beyond category-based processing in a particular situation, the dual-process theory predicts that category-based processing will be used, anyway, if there are insufficient resources (time, energy, attention, and the like) to devote to systematic impression formation. Why? Because, without sufficient resources to process systematically, category-based processing provides the best available prediction of what others will do. This corollary to the dual-process theory is called the sufficiency principle.

Characteristics of the situation or of the impression former may each contribute to a resource deficit that triggers category-based processing. Time resources may be challenged if time is short or the social interaction is an abbreviated one, whereas attention-related resources may be compromised if the impression former is stressed, if the situation is complicated, if the impression former is cognitively limited, if the impression former is ill or highly emotionally aroused, and in a host of other situations involving a high degree of “cognitive load.”

In short, the sufficiency principle can be expressed as follows:

- People use systematic processing to try to understand other people only if they have plenty of time and resources to devote to the task, AND
- they are highly motivated to understand the situation accurately.
- In the absence of these two requirements, people will use categories, such as stereotypes, to draw inferences about people.
How do these theoretical principles help a conflict diagnostician? They help raise “red flags” in the search for situations in which stereotypes are likely to interfere with accurate assessment and appropriate behavior in a conflict situation. We can identify six such cautionary situations, described in the following sections and summarized in Table 14-2.

The Effect of Stress and Situational Complexity The more stressful the situation, the more likely it is that stereotyping will occur. This is because stressful situations impose a high degree of cognitive load. Involved persons are so busy coping with the stress that they don’t have the internal resources to devote to systematic processing. Similarly, complex situations promote the application of stereotypes, again by increasing cognitive load on the perceiver.

Interpersonal conflict, in and of itself, tends to be an inherently stressful and complex situation that tends to impose a high degree of cognitive load. Because it involves the complicated goals and interests of two (or more) people, it is often complex. A conflict with numerous participants is still more complicated. And the simultaneous involvement of legal, financial, interpersonal, and intra-personal issues makes conflict still more complex. A disputant who wishes to engage in integrating tactics to resolve the conflict must perform the complex mental task of keeping numerous and seemingly inconsistent personal goals in mind, as well as engaging in difficult self-reflection to keep him- or herself operating in an unbiased fashion. Coping with the complexities of interpersonal conflict is taxing and stressful. The likelihood of intense emotions further stresses the participants. The combination of stress and complexity makes the application of stereotypes in an interpersonal conflict setting highly likely because of the strain on cognitive resources.

Fatigue, Illness, Hunger, and Intense Emotion. Personal factors contributing to cognitive load also affect the propensity to stereotype—factors such as fatigue, overwork, high levels of anger or sadness, illness, and hunger. These personal stressors deprive the impression former of the mental energy and quiet contemplation needed to engage in systematic processing.

Unfamiliarity with the Other Person. Stereotyping is also more likely if the impression former doesn’t know the other person very well, as when a disputant is negotiating with a disputant he or she has never met from another culture, race, or ethnic group.

Unfamiliarity with the Racial, Ethnic, Religious, or Other Social Group. Similarly, a conflict participant is more likely to apply a stereotype to a member of a social group he or she has not had much experience with.

Social Group Salience. Stereotyping is more likely if the issue of diversity is salient in the situation. Salience is the seeming relevance or importance of the social group membership in the conflict. Stereotyping is more likely if the social group...
**TABLE 14-2  Situations In Which Stereotyping Is Likely To Occur**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Example</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The situation is stressful or situationally complex.</td>
<td>Stress reduces the cognitive energy the impression former can devote to impression formation. Complexity adds to the cognitive load, making it harder to process information systematically.</td>
<td>During a highly contentious ethnic dispute, participants are likely to apply negative stereotypes based on one another’s ethnicity. A disputant who really wants to use an integrating conflict style finds himself stereotyping the other disputant as a “typical police officer.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are tired, hungry, ill or emotionally aroused.</td>
<td>Factors that impair clear thinking create a lack of cognitive resources.</td>
<td>An environmental activist engaged in a marathon negotiating session with an oil company executive finds that, the more exhausted she becomes, the more she questions the latter’s proposals as untrustworthy based on stereotypes of the executive as motivated by greed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are unfamiliar with the other conflict participant.</td>
<td>You have little or no personal knowledge of this individual to counter your stereotypical assumptions. Since your stereotypes have been “activated,” you may attribute the other’s actions as motivated by cultural, subcultural, religious, ethnic, or professional affiliation rather than to individual differences.</td>
<td>You are negotiating with an individual from Japan and are having difficulty understanding his comments; instead of attributing this difficulty to your fatigue or his lack of clarity, you attribute it to his nationality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You have dealt very little with members of the conflict participant’s social group.</td>
<td>Since your stereotypes have been activated, and you don’t have previous experience with members of this group, so that you can differentiate them as individuals, you tend to attribute the behavior of this individual to social group membership rather than individual differences.</td>
<td>Having never met a Jewish person, in your negotiation with a Jewish attorney, you attribute her abrasive manner to her religion, rather than to her individual personality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The social group of conflict participants is salient under the circumstances.</td>
<td>Stereotypes are more likely to be activated if the conflict involves diverse social groups, or if something in the situation makes the social group membership of the individuals stand out.</td>
<td>You are more likely to use racial stereotypes in your diagnosis of a conflict between disputants of different races than you are to use stereotypes in your diagnosis of a conflict between two disputants of the same race. You are more likely to use sex stereotypes to judge the behavior of a female negotiator if the topic of the negotiation is a child custody battle than if the topic is a property dispute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong category features are present: the social group is physically obvious or is associated with rigid social roles in society (or both).</td>
<td>Stereotypes are automatically “activated” by seeing or hearing the individual if his or her social group is physically obvious, or if individuals in the involved social group are traditionally restricted in their social roles.</td>
<td>Police and military personnel, who wear uniforms, are more likely to be stereotyped than office persons, who do not. People are more likely to stereotype African-Americans, who have a history of brutal societal oppression, than they are to stereotype Asian-Americans, whose history of societal oppression is less egregious.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
memberships of the disputants are diverse. Thus, a white male disputant who is negotiating with another white male disputant is unlikely to use his stereotypes of white males in understanding the behavior of his counterpart. On the other hand, if the other disputant is an Asian-American male, the issue of diversity may become more salient, and the propensity to apply racial stereotypes is likely to increase. This point is very tricky because diversity is in the eye of the beholder. Two white males may, for example, stereotype one another if they are members of different professions (consider, for example, a college professor negotiating with a bus boy). And sometimes the stereotypes that are applied are unpredictable. An African-American female lawyer negotiating with an Asian-American male truck driver may be seen by the latter in the “black person” social group, in the “female” social group, in the “lawyer” social group, or in a combination of these social groups. Indeed, the two disputants may see themselves as “people of color” or as “Americans” and therefore in the same social group.

The larger social context can influence which stereotypes are salient to each impression former. For example, in our negotiation between the lawyer and truck driver, race might be more likely to be triggered as the salient social category if the negotiators are conducting their negotiation in a racially charged setting, such as a ghetto in which tensions have been running high. By comparison, if they are conducting their negotiation in India, their shared social category, “American,” might be triggered instead. Moreover, social group membership may be more or less salient, depending on the configuration of the conflict. For example, in a negotiation among ten people, some of whom are white and some of whom are black, the race of one of the whites may not seem very important, whereas in a negotiation involving one white and nine black participants, race may be seen as much more important, and the white negotiator is more likely to be judged on the basis of racial stereotypes. And, if the subject matter of the conflict relates to social group membership, the propensity to stereotype is still greater. For example, imagine an Israeli and a Palestinian negotiating an interpersonal conflict. If the two disputants are negotiating as part of a team trying to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they will be more likely to apply stereotypes to one another than if the Palestinian is a professor negotiating with an Israeli student who is applying for a student assistantship. In a dispute between an American and an Afghan, the ethnicities and religious affiliations of the disputants would be much more salient after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, DC, than previously.

Strong Category Features: Physical Obviousness and Restricted Social Role. There are also greater propensities to stereotype people based on social groups that have two special qualities. First, social groups that are associated with obvious physical attributes, such as skin and hair color, size, facial features, and secondary sex characteristics, are associated with a greater propensity to stereotype. Second, social groups associated with rigid social roles in the society are more likely to be the targets of stereotyping. The combination of obvious physical characteristics and rigid social roles found in a given social group is called a strong category and shows an exceptionally strong tendency to be used by impression formers. In American society, there is evidence
that sex is the strongest category and, hence, the most likely quality upon which people tend to stereotype, followed by race (particularly when an individual is categorized as African-American) and then by age if the ages of the individuals being perceived are at age extremes (Fiske & Neuberg 1990).

Processes of Stereotype Reinforcement. Individuals may hold their own unique and self-generated stereotypes, whereas cultures tend to produce stereotypes that are shared by their members. What all forms of stereotypes have in common, however, is that they are often negative, hurtful, destructive, and wrong. In interpersonal conflict, they can lead to misperception, misunderstanding, poor conflict diagnosis, and insult leading to conflict escalation. Thus, one of the most frustrating qualities of stereotypes, particularly cultural stereotypes, is their resistance to change. What makes stereotypes, which have such potential to inflict damage on their targets, so resistant to change? There are a number of reasons stereotypes are so persistent.

Processes of Stereotype Confirmation. People who hold to a particular belief system are motivated to confirm it. Nobody likes being proven wrong, and, when our beliefs are challenged, it makes us insecure about our ability to get about in the world effectively. Thus, if we hold to a stereotype, we are motivated to prove to ourselves that it’s really true. Seven mental processes are used unconsciously to reinforce stereotypes:

1. Ignoring
2. Explaining away
3. Memory intrusions (memories of things that didn’t happen)
4. Selective weighting processes
5. Stereotype overinterpretation
6. Stereotype-consistent perception
7. Active processes that confirm stereotypes

First, people tend not to notice people who run modestly counter to the stereotype.

Second, an individual whose features are strongly counterstereotypical is often so noticeable that people can’t ignore him or her. However, if noticed, such a person is intensively attended to and is normally explained away as a bizarre oddity. People tend to rationalize people who run counter to stereotypes as exceptions to the rule—that way, they continue to see the stereotype as true. (Social psychologists, in an act of levity, named this the “talking platypus” phenomenon to emphasize the idea of the target person as bizarre.) Individuals may

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2 That is, we want to prove our stereotypes true unless the motivation to be egaliitarian is an important aspect of our self-concept. Even egaliitarian people absorb cultural stereotypes, but they are usually motivated to disprove them.
also explain away counterstereotypical actions by attributing them to something special in the circumstances— for example, a female nursery-school teacher who does not show nurturant behavior might be explained away as having a bad day, a headache, or reacting to difficulties with her employer. On the other hand, stereotype-consistent behavior is attributed to innate qualities of the observed person. The phenomenon of explaining away allows the observer to filter out evidence that runs contrary to the stereotypes and to use stereotype-consistent behavior as further evidence of the truth of held beliefs.

Third, there is some limited evidence from social science research that people actually add stereotype-consistent imaginary evidence (called memory intrusions) to their long-term memories of a complex event. For example, Cantor and Mischel (1977) showed experimental subjects descriptions of a person described as an extrovert, an introvert, or neither (see Figure 14-1). Along with the descriptions, the subjects were shown lists of traits, some of which were consistent with the overall trait of introversion or extraversion, some of which were inconsistent, and some of which were irrelevant. Then the descriptions and lists were withdrawn. Later, the subjects were asked if they recognized trait words from the previous list in a new list, some of which had actually been presented to them and some of which had not. The subjects confidently believed that words they had not been shown, but that were consistent with the specified trait of the person they had studied, were included in the original list. This effect did not appear for trait-inconsistent or trait-irrelevant words on the list. The effect of memory intrusion is to buttress support for a stereotype-consistent inference.

![FIGURE 14-1](Cantor and Mischel's Study)

Experimental subjects people experimented upon.

**Step 1:** subjects were asked to study a page containing a list of characteristics of an introverted person, Jane.

- Jane, an introvert
- quiet
- red hair
- reclusive
- moviegoer
- stamp-collector
- dislikes giving speeches

**Step 2:** later, subjects were given a list of words and asked which ones had been on the page they had previously studied.

- Recall list: which words were on the original list?
- quiet
- red hair
- likes blue
- shy
- dislikes crowds

**Findings:** subjects confidently remembered having seen words that had not been on the original list, such as shy and dislikes crowds, if they were consistent with the stereotype of an introvert.
People with memory intrusion phenomena believe they have encountered more evidence of the truth of a stereotype than they really have.

Fourth, there is evidence that people tend to weight complex evidence in a way that supports their preconceptions and beliefs. For example, readers shown unbiased scientific discussions of controversial topics tend to see the discussions as supportive of their own point of view, with advocates on all sides of an issue picking out and assigning more weight to evidence that supports their conclusions (Lord, Ross, & Lepper 1979). Remarkably, in this study, which involved the controversy over capital punishment, advocates on both sides of the debate had the intensity of their beliefs strengthened by exposure to the same materials. In the case of stereotypes, people may assign great importance to evidence that confirms their stereotypes, while discounting the importance of evidence that contradicts them (Bodenhausen & Wyer 1985).

Fifth, in stereotype overinterpretation, a stereotype that has a kernel of truth is taken to mean more than it does. For example, in statistical terms, women live longer than men: that is, the mean age of women at death is greater than the mean age of men—by about five years. Thus, in one sense, the stereotype of women as more long-lived than men is “true.” Despite the stereotype, however, a considerable number of women die before a considerable number of men. Thus, it makes little sense to assume automatically that, between any man and woman, the man will always die first. If the stereotype is false to begin with, overinterpretation multiplies the effects of the other effects we’ve talked about.

Sixth, in stereotype-consistent perception, ambiguous events are interpreted in a way that confirms stereotypes. A classic study dramatically illustrates the point. Researchers Sagar and Schofield (1980) showed a racially diverse group of schoolchildren pictures of stick figures. For example, one drawing showed a boy poking another boy with a pencil. The drawings were accompanied by verbal descriptions. Both the drawings and the accompanying descriptions were designed to be ambiguous as to the intent of the figures doing the poking. Two different versions of the drawings were created; each was identical to the other except that, in one, the race of the poking child was shown as white, and, in the other, the race was black. (Figure 14-2 illustrates how the drawings differed.) When asked to describe what was portrayed, the children tended to describe the poking child as significantly more mean and threatening, and significantly less playful and friendly, if the child was portrayed as black. Thus, racial stereotypes of blacks as mean and aggressive tended to influence the interpretation of the ambiguous situation in a confirmatory way. This effect was independent of the race of the child who was asked to interpret the drawing, as well as independent of the apparent race of the victim. In numerous other studies familiar to child development students, it has been demonstrated that babies dressed and identified as either girls or boys tend to be attributed physical and personality characteristics consistent with gender stereotypes. For example, in so-called Baby X research reported by Brooks-Gunn and Matthews (1979, 73–74), adults introduced to a baby dressed in a neutral outfit of shirt and pants and identified as a girl commented on her softness, sweetness, and innocence and handed it female sex-typed toys, such as dolls, whereas other adults, introduced to the baby as a
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"Tell a story about the boy in the light colored hat."

(Note: the race of the boy without the hat was also varied.)

Boy, said "he" looked tough, active, and strong and were more likely to interact with the baby in a vigorous, active manner. Shown a videotape of a crying baby dressed in sex-neutral clothes, adults were more likely to say that the baby was "angry" if it had been identified by the researchers as a boy but as "frightened" if it had been identified as a girl.

The preceding six processes occur entirely in the mind of the observer to confirm preconceptions about people in various social categories. But people also actively perpetuate stereotypes. Three processes contribute to this tendency to actively confirm stereotypes:

- the fundamental attribution error,
- behavioral confirmation, and
- data collection errors.

An important variant of "explaining away," the fundamental attribution error, causes people to believe more strongly in the so-called strong-category stereotypes. The fundamental attribution error occurs when members of particular social groups are regimented into rigid social roles. Impression formers tend to attribute behavior to innate traits, rather than to the roles in which people have been placed. Thus, since members of strong-category social groups, whose roles have been restricted by society, are seen engaged in activities that fit the stereotypes, observers come to believe that these social groups possess innate characteristics that suit them for the roles they are playing. In other words, impression formers tend to believe that social roles are the result of innate attributes, rather than the roles themselves being responsible for the observed behavior. Thus, for example, the restriction of women into low-paying, supporting roles and men into leadership roles has led to the widespread belief that women are particularly suited for support positions and men are natural-born leaders. And the overall restriction of African Americans into less intellectual employment positions feeds the stereotype of African Americans as less intellectually capable that persists in many circles to this day.
The way people treat those they are observing often tends to perpetuate stereotypes on its own. This process, known as behavioral confirmation, tends to create a self-fulfilling prophecy. In a classic study of this phenomenon, Word, Zanna, and Cooper (1974) first recruited white Princeton undergraduates as experimental subjects, telling them that they were being asked to serve as job interviewers. Unknown to the experimental subjects, the job candidates were, in fact, confederates, people hired by the researchers to play the part of someone looking for a job, and all were specially trained to respond in a uniform manner to interviewing. The subjects were randomly assigned to interview either black or white confederates. While these interviews were taking place, the researchers carefully and secretly measured the verbal and nonverbal interview tactics used by the subjects. Significant differences in interview styles were found, depending on the race of the candidate: if the candidate was black, the interviewers tended to act more nervous, ask shorter and less interesting questions, and cut off the applicants more quickly. In part 2 of the same study, a group of confederates was trained in the interview tactics seen in the experimental subjects in part 1, with one-half of the group trained to interview the way the subjects had tended to interview white candidates and the other half trained to interview the way the subjects had tended to interview black candidates. Both sets of confederates interviewed white job applicants who knew nothing of the aims of the study. A panel of experimental subjects, blind to the real purposes of the study and told to evaluate the job candidates, watched videotapes of these interviews. They rated the applicants interviewed with “white” tactics more highly than those interviewed with “black” tactics. The study suggests that the differences in the interviewers’ behavior, in and of itself, was enough to perpetuate negative stereotypes of blacks as less well qualified for jobs, even with everything else held constant.

Finally, we tend to acquire information about our world in a manner that confirms stereotypes. This process can be thought of as the making of data collection errors. A sinister example, racial profiling, has been in the news of late. Many Americans hold a stereotype of drug dealing as a predominantly black crime. In accordance with the stereotype, some jurisdictions have used racial
group as justification for stopping and searching automobile drivers on highways believed to carry drug traffic. Because blacks fall into the racial group in the profile, they are more likely to be stopped by the police in these jurisdictions. Because they are more likely to be stopped, if they are actually involved in crime, they are more likely to be caught. Thus, those involved in law enforcement, as well as those watching media accounts of the war on crime, come to see disproportionate numbers of blacks arrested and convicted as a result of traffic stops in these jurisdictions. Regardless of the actual relationship between race and crime rate, blacks thus are seen as proportionately more involved in criminality than they actually are, compared with other social groups.

In summary, a number of mental and social processes make stereotypes more resistant to change. These processes are summarized in Table 14-3. An individual involved in an interpersonal conflict must be on guard to prevent these processes from blinding him or her to the reality of who the other conflict participants are and what they are likely to do. Otherwise, stereotyping can introduce a “wild card” into the conflict, creating unwanted antagonism and making the participant vulnerable to costly errors of judgment. Moreover, a conflict participant should always be wary of the possibility that he or she is being stereotyped by others in the conflict and should think through the best way to deal with it.

Stereotyping is made still more resistant to change by the fact that both the application of stereotypes and the processes that confirm them are usually unconscious. We are largely unaware of the many forces at work that confirm erroneous beliefs about members of particular social groups. Thus, as we grow and develop, we come to believe that our stereotypical beliefs are the result of our rational interpretation of experience, rather than the result of biased interpretation of distorted data. These beliefs further insulate us from confronting the errors inherent in our stereotypes. The best antidote to the forces that perpetuate stereotyping is conscious awareness.

**Coping With Stereotyping Issues in Interpersonal Conflict.** As previously indicated, the act of stereotyping is often subconscious and can be beyond our control at times—unless we work to remain conscious of this tendency. Thus, we can get tripped up. And the bad news is that, according to scientific evidence, even well-meaning people unconsciously apply negative social stereotypes when they are triggered into thinking of a person as a member of a particular gender, race, or other social group. But the good news is that well-meaning people can work against this tendency once they’re aware of it.

What should you, as a conflict diagnostician, or conflict participant, do to deal with the issue of stereotyping? **First, become well educated about the potential for stereotyping in each situation.** Analyze the conflict in light of the factors considered in this chapter. Is it likely that stereotypes will be applied? If stereotypes are likely to be activated, which social groups are likely to be involved and made salient in the situation? And what factors will tend to cause stereotyping to persist or become enhanced? Consider enlisting a negotiating agent, partner, consultant, or neutral who shares the other negotiator’s social group membership, to help interpret behavior within the context of culture/race/ethnicity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ignoring</td>
<td>Stereotype-inconsistent traits are ignored, allowing the stereotype to go unchallenged.</td>
<td>A person who believes that “women are lousy drivers” notices only the few women he has seen driving poorly and not the vast majority who drive well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explaining away</td>
<td>Stereotype-inconsistent behavior is explained as either a fluke or a result of special circumstances, whereas stereotype-consistent behavior is attributed to innate qualities.</td>
<td>A professional boxer’s intellectually advanced approach to negotiation is discounted as the result of “coaching”; accordingly, he is underestimated as the negotiation proceeds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Memory intrusions</td>
<td>Stereotype-consistent aspects of a situation are imagined.</td>
<td>An American involved in a negotiation with a Japanese colleague mistakenly attributes to the colleague behavior she has seen in Japanese Kung-Fu movies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selective weighting processes</td>
<td>Stereotype-consistent events are attributed greater importance than stereotype-inconsistent events.</td>
<td>Both the Israelis and the Palestinians tend to discount the efforts of peaceful people on the other side, focusing instead on the efforts of the most militant factions of the enemy to prove that the other group is up to no good.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype overinterpretation</td>
<td>Stereotypes that are “true” in a limited sense are overextended in importance or applicability.</td>
<td>The fact that, statistically, men are physically stronger than women leads one man to believe that he can beat any woman in a test of strength.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stereotype-consistent perception</td>
<td>Ambiguous situations are interpreted in a way that confirms stereotypes.</td>
<td>A negotiator who holds a stereotype of Latins as “dishonest” assumes that a Latin he is negotiating with, whose comments are confusing, is intending to be misleading, when, in fact, the other negotiator is merely having difficulty with English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamental attribution error</td>
<td>Behavior that is due to restricted social roles is attributed to innate characteristics.</td>
<td>In the nineteenth century, the style of wearing tight corsets predisposed the female wearers to fainting from lack of oxygen; accordingly, a stereotype of females as “the frail sex” was perpetuated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral confirmation</td>
<td>Responses to people based on social categorization tend to create a self-fulfilling prophecy.</td>
<td>Law processor Carol Rose (1995) theorizes that, because women are expected to be “softer” negotiators, people negotiating against them tend to make poorer offers; women negotiators, operating in this sort of environment, often accept poorer offers in the knowledge that they are likely to have no alternative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data collection errors</td>
<td>Information available in the overall social environment is biased in favor of prevailing stereotypes.</td>
<td>Because African-American males are stereotyped in U.S. society as more criminal and violent than other social groups, they are more likely to be scrutinized for potential criminal behavior. Because of increased scrutiny, these men are proportionately more likely to be involved in the criminal justice system, and, hence, publicity about criminality tends to perpetuate the stereotype.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consider how the situation could be controlled so that all conflict participants’ propensities to stereotype could be minimized. To perform this analysis, review the list shown in Table 14-2. First, do your homework about the culture in question and the negotiator in particular. The better you know the other person, the less likely it is that you will stereotype. Second, lower stress. All conflict participants should be very well prepared and get lots of sleep. In a legal dispute, the importance of preparing the case, of researching the facts and the law, and getting a case file well organized cannot be overemphasized. The better prepared you are, the less stressed you will be. And, the less stress involved and the less you have to “shoot from the hip,” the less you will tend to rely on stereotypes. Also consider the motivational set of the conflict participants. The use of an integrating negotiation style is most conducive to accuracy motivation—because effective integrating can’t be done without the sharing of accurate information about interests. On the other hand, a competitive conflict sets the stage for the use of stereotyping: the sharing of information is minimized and the stress and emotionality of a competitive and escalating conflict add to the cognitive load of the situation. Using Table 14-2, strategize any appropriate methods that the conflict participants could use to eliminate the drive to apply stereotypes.

Be careful about attributing behavior or motivation to culture, race, ethnicity, and so on. Think through whether you have actual knowledge that a stereotype is true and what the implications of your knowledge are for this situation; don’t apply stereotypes unless absolutely necessary and only in a manner that respects the dignity of the other negotiator. Remember that social group membership is but one facet of a person’s identity; there are many more differences among people of the same social group than differences between different social groups taken as a whole.

If it’s safe and appropriate within the context of the various relationships among conflict participants, make the stereotyping issues part of the discussion. Besides helping the negotiation, this act will build bridges among members of cultural groups.

If you feel that you are being stereotyped by the other negotiator, you might want to ask gently what assumptions are being made about you and find a non-threatening way to show the other negotiator what the truth is. (This task may require creativity and diplomatic restraint.)

If you are a conflict participant in an unavoidably competitive conflict, you may find that being stereotyped creates a deception you can take advantage of—for example, if you are female and you find you are being stereotyped as obliging, you may be able to gain an advantage by letting the other negotiator believe it. If you are dealing with a bigot, perhaps the best revenge is success in the conflict!

Always be vigilant to your own tendencies to stereotype—the best defense is to be aware of your own tendency to stereotype and be prepared to challenge yourself consciously. Be aware of the factors in the situation that increase the likelihood of stereotyping and use them as red flags. If you find you are about to apply a stereotype, always ask yourself what impact applying the stereotype will have. If you were the person being stereotyped, how would you react? How will this reaction affect the conflict, and how does this situation comport with your ideas of moral behavior, as well as your needs in the conflict?
Is Stereotyping Ever Appropriate? You may be wondering if there are ever any situations in which it's appropriate to apply a stereotype. This is a difficult question to address.

In the next section of this chapter, we will consider the cultural differences between people, as well as the impact of this cultural diversity on the process of interpersonal conflict. In an important sense, the issues of stereotyping and of cultural difference are flip sides of the diversity coin. Stereotyping issues concern the trouble conflict participants can get into when they attribute traits and behaviors to social group membership, whereas cultural difference issues concern the trouble conflict participants can get into when they fail to recognize the influence of social group membership on traits and behaviors. Although it is inappropriate to ascribe traits and behaviors to people based on race, sex, ethnicity, nationality, and so forth, it is also insensitive not to take social context into account in dealing with others.

Thus, there is an argument that there are two appropriate uses of stereotyping if you are very careful about it. First, stereotyping may be appropriate in making initial assumptions about someone's social context, the cultural aspects of someone's background. Thus, sometimes, members of specific social groups can be predicted to have undergone characteristic experiences. For example, in negotiating with an African American, it is safe to assume that persistent, probably daily, acts of racial discrimination have been a part of the negotiator's life (although it is not safe to assume that he or she is comfortable acknowledging it to either him- or herself or to you). On the other hand, a white male negotiator may not have similar experiences in his background and may not be sensitive to issues related to bigotry and discrimination. If racial discrimination, or its absence, is an element of the conflict, it would be foolish, and potentially damaging to the resolution of the conflict, to fail to consider this possible element of social context.

Second, various cultures have approaches to conflict and negotiation that may differ from those you are used to, as we will see in the next section. For example, in dealing with a Chinese negotiator, it may be important to recognize that, in Chinese culture, it is traditional to devote considerable periods of time to relationship building before substantive issues are addressed (Riskin & Westbrook 1997, 292–307). If you are working with a Chinese negotiator who seems to be stalling, it is well worth it to consider the possibility that cultural differences, rather than the other person's motives to delay, are the source of your discomfort and suspiciousness. Of course, it is better to accompany any assumption based on social group membership with more systematic information gathering, to ensure that the egregious problems that stereotyping can create do not occur.

In both cases, there are three requirements for the appropriate application of stereotypes. First, they must be based on knowledge and study, rather than on preconceptions. Having consultants who share the cultural background of the conflict participant can help, as can reading up on the culture in question, taking courses in diversity, traveling to the culture in question, and so on. Second, one must always treat the stereotype as an initial hypothesis, as opposed to an ultimate truth. Depending on the nature of the relationship with the other participant, it may be appropriate to apply the stereotype overtly, checking with the person being stereotyped before applying it. In either case, stereotypes should
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only be applied consciously, after carefully thinking out the implications. Third, in any diversity negotiation—indeed, in all negotiations—it is crucial to use perspective taking—trying to see the situation from the other’s point of view. The application of a stereotype in an effort to see things from the other person’s perspective is not as likely to be offensive if you have otherwise demonstrated every effort to understand the other’s point of view.

CULTURE

If stereotyping is the unwarranted attribution of difference to people based on their social group membership, cultural issues arise out of unwarranted beliefs that someone from a different culture is exactly like you. In fact, culture does create differences in background, experience, values, self-concept, communication style, and attitude toward conflict and how best to resolve it.

It is impossible, in the limited space of this book, to exhaustively examine the influences of culture on interpersonal conflict: there are just too many cultures to deal with. Instead, we will categorize these influences and discuss a few salient examples in each category.

Cultural Differences in Self-concept and Identity. You will recall from Chapter 7 that conflicts over self-concept and identity are among the hardest to manage effectively. Culture tends to contribute to identity conflicts because there are culturally originating differences that influence individual identity. Typically, these differences are completely invisible to those in the conflict, which leads to misunderstanding and conflict escalation.

A major organizing principle, one that seems to influence cultural approaches to conflict on multiple levels, is the attitude toward interpersonal harmony among members of one’s in-group. The need to achieve and maintain harmony appears to differ across nations and ethnic groups, and it is closely connected to cultural differences in identity, values, communication forms, and approaches to anything that threatens harmony. Research indicates that Eastern cultures and subcultures, such as those found throughout Japan, China, and India, tend to place the most importance on the preservation of harmony with other members of one’s community or social organization. Western countries tend to be the opposite and place less value on maintaining collective harmony, with the United States lying at the extreme of this continuum (Leung 1988).

The organizing principle of orientation toward harmony begins with the individual self-concept. The terms independent self and interdependent self have been coined to describe how the orientation to social context plays out in an individual. The interdependent self defines him- or herself in terms of his or her roles within social organizations, whereas the independent self sees him- or herself with clear and stable characteristics that do not depend on social context. Thus, for example, while an American man (Americans tend to be highly “inde-
Step 9. Consider Diversity Issues at Play in the Conflict

may define himself as twenty-five years old, with brown hair, and believing in God and social justice, an East Indian man may be more likely to define himself as a father, New Delhi resident, provider of medical services to the poor, and member of the Catholic church.

Because an interdependent self is role-dependent, this person tends to see his or her own characteristics as somewhat fluid and changeable. An independent self, in contrast, sees his or her and others' needs and wants as stable and independent of social context. Thus, when independent and interdependent selves negotiate, the interdependent self may experience the independent self as arrogant and insensitive, unwilling to bend to the vicissitudes of the situation because of "principle," whereas the independent self may experience the interdependent self's "fluidity" as dishonest and lacking in integrity.

When culture produces variations in self-concept, these variations create differences in the manner in which interests and basic needs are interpreted and expressed. Thus, although the basic needs theory of Abraham Maslow (Chapter 8) is accurate insofar as the needs that all human beings hold in common, the hierarchy may be somewhat different in different cultures. For example, the need of an interdependent self for honor and "face" can sometimes transcend deficiency needs for safety and security for a highly interdependent self.

A young attorney provided legal representation for an Iranian-American family embroiled in a dispute over the estate of the eldest son. The family, including the son and his wife, had emigrated to the United States; after that, the son's wife filed for divorce, an act unheard of in her culture of origin. When the family objected, she explained that they were in America now and she was entitled to her autonomy. The eldest son was so dishonored by her act of disrespect that he hanged himself.

The members of the legal team, none of whom were familiar with Iranian culture, were shocked and, for a time, believed that the son must have suffered from some sort of severe mental illness. However, family members explained that the suicide, although horrific, was not at all surprising, in light of the shame that the wife had brought on her husband by pursuing a divorce. The act of suicide in this situation, which would seem bizarre to most Americans, made sense in light of the close connection between social role and sense of self in the son's culture. When his honor in the context of his family and community was destroyed, he felt destroyed as well. Given his self-interdependence, it was but a small step from social to biological annihilation.

Although there are cultural dimensions to identity and self-concept, it should be remembered that these aspects of the self vary within cultures. Thus, although one can stereotype a Westerner as an independent self and an Easterner as an interdependent self, in specific instances these stereotypes will prove wrong. Thus, in conflict diagnosis, self-interdependence differences should be looked for, but not automatically assumed, in a cross-cultural conflict. Moreover, even in a conflict that appears to lack cultural diversity, self-interdependence may be an important variable.
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Cultural Differences in Values. Cultural groups are also associated with commonalities in values. For example, many individuals in the United States highly value religious freedom and assume that this value is basic and transcends cultural differences. On the other hand, members of other cultures hold different values. For example, a number of countries have established governments founded on the notion that a single religion is appropriate and should be enforced across the nation.

One of the most ubiquitous of culturally influenced values is the attitude toward how to balance the rights of the individual against the needs of the collective. Cultures that influence their members to value highly the rights of the individual are known as individualistic cultures, whereas cultures that influence their members to value highly the needs of the collective are known as collectivist cultures. People who value individualism also tend to value individual rights and to be independent selves, whereas individuals who value collectivism also tend to value interpersonal harmony and tend to be interdependent selves. Disputants hailing from cultures with differences in the individualism-collectivism dimension tend to disagree not only on the substance of interpersonal conflict but also in how such conflicts should be resolved. Collectivists, on average, more comfortable than individualists with dispute resolution mechanisms that involve an active, powerful, and personally interested intervenor, such as a village elder, whereas individualists value strictly neutral adjudicators and mediators and insist on strict due process protections during adjudication. This distinction reflects the greater propensity of collectivists to value efficient dispute resolution that seems to restore social harmony, whereas individualists value individual rights and fairness and are more willing to sacrifice harmony and efficiency to achieve such ends (Tjosvold, Leung, & Johnson 2000).

Cross-cultural differences in values can prove intractable. One reason these sorts of conflicts are so hard to deal with is that culturally determined values tend to be invisible to those raised in the culture. People absorb culturally based values from all aspects of their social environment, from their parents all the way to the media and governmental systems; as a result, they tend to see such values as obvious and beyond question. Confronted with the values of a different culture, individuals usually see them as bizarre and obviously misdirected.

A fascinating example of this phenomenon occurred during the President Clinton impeachment process in the late 1990s. There were clear racial differences in judgments about President Clinton and his personal transgressions (Connolly & Pierre 1998). These differences might have been due to a cultural difference in values. It is likely that many European Americans, particularly conservative white males, saw Clinton's sexual behavior with the young White House intern, Monica Lewinsky, as bordering on abuse. Many also may have seen his bending of the truth in the Paula Jones lawsuit as patent criminality, warranting his stepping down as president. European Americans are, by and large, accustomed to receiving benefits from the strict application of the law. On the other hand, African Americans, whose history and present circumstances feature oppressive victimization frequently clothed in the rule of law, may have been more likely than their European-American counterparts to see Clinton's
Step 9. Consider Diversity Issues at Play in the Conflict

sexual dalliances as "little" crimes unsuitable for impeachment ("Direct Access: Jesse Jackson" (1998)) and his behavior in the Paula Jones case as an understandable response to an oppressive effort to misuse the law to achieve immoral ends—the bloodless coup of a Democratic leader who was making an effort to overcome longstanding inequities in the social system. (For an explication of this view of the Clinton impeachment, see Hutchinson (1998)). For many African Americans, looking back on a history that included legally sanctioned enslavement and patent inequality of opportunity, the concept that the strict rule of law should always prevail over what is morally right must border on the laughable. These differing values remained largely unspoken and unacknowledged during the impeachment process, with advocates seemingly talking past each other.

Cultural Differences in Frame of Reference. The Clinton example in the preceding section also illustrates a crucial issue for diversity conflicts: the importance of cultural differences in frames of reference. Individuals' experiences within certain cultural contexts color their interpretations of events and issues. For example, cultural groups that experience plenty of discrimination, such as the African-American cultural group, are more likely to interpret the ambiguous behavior of others as discriminatory. Members of a dominant cultural group—European-American males, for example—have little experience with discrimination based on race, gender, or ethnicity and are less likely to interpret the behavior of others within that framework. The reaction to the Clinton impeachment illustrates this phenomenon.

Disagreements over how to frame a conflict are particularly important and widespread in diversity-type conflicts. Consider the Ron-Stella employment discrimination dispute, first described in Chapter 7. You'll recall that Stella, a new employee, and African-American, kept to herself, seemed aloof and withdrawn, and did not improve her job skills as rapidly as expected. Ron, her white supervisor, without a personal history of experience with racial discrimination and bigotry, attributed Stella's difficulties on the job to something he's familiar with: personality conflicts and motivational problems. On the other hand, Stella, who has had to deal repeatedly with racial discrimination, easily concluded that the racism explanation fit her situation.

In the case of Ron and Stella, each is observing the same general situation from a very different frame of reference; as a result, there is a failure of the two disputants to agree even about the nature of the conflict itself. The first step in resolving such a conflict is for each disputant to become aware of the role of personal frame of reference in influencing how the conflict is perceived.

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Cultural frames of reference also influence the interpretation of ambiguous behavior, leading to disputes over facts. Following is a simple illustration:

Claire, a white female, lived two doors from her close friend, Monique, who is African-American. A young white couple moved into the house between the two. Claire found the wife to be extremely shy—indeed, many times she averted her gaze and refused to greet or acknowledge Claire as she went by. One day, Monique and Claire were walking together when this young woman was coming out of her house. As usual, she looked down and refused to answer when Monique said, “Hello.” As soon as she was out of earshot, Claire shrugged and said, carelessly, “She always does that with me.” “Really?” said Monique. “I thought... well, you know what I thought,” meaning that she had attributed the woman’s behavior to racism. Obviously, being white, Claire had not given the behavior a similar attribution.

Such differences in attribution can lead to an escalation of conflict. For example, in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, many meta-conflicts are bred by the escalating situation and the differences in frames of reference. For example, the Baltimore Sun on 21 August 2001, in an article by Peter Hermann, entitled “Human Rights Are Battle, Too, in Mideast: Tracking Abuses Hard with Sympathy Waning,” reported a controversy over the shooting of a Palestinian, Muhammad Alwan, who was injured at an Israeli checkpoint in the summer of 2001. Alwan, a Palestinian used to the notion of Israeli oppression, framed the incident as a shooting by an Israeli soldier without provocation, whereas the Israeli army, with its history of defending Israel from constant threat, concluded that Alwan was the victim of a Palestinian gunman. In fact, as a neutral human rights group found, the shooting occurred under ambiguous circumstances, and there is no way to confirm either version of the events. Each group used the incident as further evidence of the other group’s evil motives and indefensible conduct.

Culturally originating differences in the framing of conflict are among the most difficult cultural impediments to a conflict’s resolution. Before serious efforts to resolve such a conflict can begin, negotiators from each group must acknowledge the perspective of the other: “If I saw things from your point of view, I believe I would feel just the same way.” Only after each frame of reference is acknowledged can negotiators move beyond statements of position and need and toward a solution that addresses the conflict from everyone’s frame of reference.

Cultural Differences in Communication and Etiquette. As illustrated by the U.S. spy plane incident, cultural differences in communication can act as powerful barriers to the resolution of conflict. Communication issues can include outright language barriers, misunderstandings wrought by shades of meaning in terms all participants think they understand, and differences in etiquette and other elements of the “pragmatics” of communication.

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4 The Baltimore Sun article indicated that it was more likely, according to the neutral rights group, that the victim was shot by another Palestinian, not by an Israeli.
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Obviously, when disputants speak different languages, the lack of understanding can prevent resolution of the conflict. But, even when disputants use a common language, shades of meaning can prevent the resolution of or even escalate a dispute. Because disputants think they are talking about the same thing, these misunderstandings can lead to even more problems than an outright lack of a translation.

A somewhat comical example of this phenomenon occurred at an American Bar Association Section meeting in Washington, D.C., several years ago (some details have been changed and names have been omitted):

A panel of pre-eminent international experts in the ADR field had been chosen to lead a conference presentation on the topic of court-connected ADR programs in their respective countries. The presentation was conducted in English, which all participants spoke fluently. Professor A, from a Latin American country, described a program in which all litigants filing lawsuits in his country's court system were required to submit to mediation. He was interrupted by Professor B, hailing from Europe, who, with a concerned expression, asked whether the outcomes reached in mediation were binding. The discussion that followed went something like the following.

"Of course," replied Professor A. "If the results of mediation weren't binding, why would we do it at all?"

Professor B sat a little more upright and argued, forcefully, that, if the results of mediation were binding, litigants would be denied their day in court: "You should use conciliation instead."

"No, they aren't denied their rights to go to court," replied Professor A. "In what sense would mediating litigants be considered to have been denied their day in court? And why would we refer the litigants to a process like conciliation? That would only make the situation worse."

This disagreement became more and more heated until the panel discussants (being, after all, conflict resolution experts) were finally able to pinpoint the problem. The source of the conflict was that, in Professor A's country, mediation was defined as a process in which disputants were helped to reach agreement by a neutral third party. In Professor B's country, on the other hand, mediation was what in this text is called "nonbinding arbitration": each disputant argued his or her case to a neutral, who issued a decision. Had litigants been mandated to participate in such a process and then required to submit to the outcome, no lawsuit would ever be tried: since the outcome would have been binding, no such lawsuit would ever have gotten to court. On the other hand, since mediating litigants in Professor A's country had the right not to agree to any settlement, their rights to litigate were preserved. Any agreement was the result of mutual acceptance and was as binding as any other contract.

Making the language problems more confusing was the definition of conciliation: in Professor A's country, conciliation had the same definition as mediation in Professor B's country, whereas conciliation in Professor B's country meant the same thing as mediation in Professor A's country. Adding a further element of absurdity to the presentation was the revelation, by Professor C (who hailed from Asia), that statutes in effect in his country expressly provided that mediation and conciliation were interchangeable terms.
So-called *pragmatics*, the words and behaviors deemed to be appropriate in specific situations, can also create problems during diversity conflicts. For example, in many cultures, such as Japan, it is considered inappropriate to *express an outward disagreement*, and the language of negotiation is extremely subtle. In a negotiation that is not going well, a Japanese negotiator might thank the other party for the very interesting proposal just made and suggest a short period for the negotiator to study the details. For the Japanese negotiator, this response is a polite signal that the negotiation has ended unsuccessfully (Riskin & Westbrook 1997, 300–304). An American unfamiliar with the Japanese style of negotiation is likely to misunderstand this signal. On the other hand, an American is more likely to take an “in your face” tactic—even if a negotiation is going very well, he or she might reject a proposal outright—and, if this tactic is used with a Japanese negotiation partner, the latter may experience the communication as expressing not only the utter failure of the negotiation but outright enmity besides.

The nonverbal context of communication may also create difficulties in a diversity conflict. Some cultures (most notably, those speaking English and other Northern European languages) rely on minimal contextual factors: the language itself is sufficiently precise that nonverbal context is not needed to convey information. High-context language speakers (including those who speak Japanese, Chinese, Arabic, and Mediterranean languages) rely on the listener to infer meanings from the speaker using the surrounding social context. Low-context speakers are likely to be confused by the communication of negotiators who have been raised in cultures using a higher-context language. On the other hand, the use of a low-context language in a negotiation is likely to reduce the ability of negotiators to do the sorts of relationship building needed to create a long-term settlement (Kimmel 2000, 453–74). In a cross-cultural conflict between members of high- and low-context languages, conflict escalation is likely to result if the low-context speakers believe that the high-context speakers are being intentionally vague and if the high-context speakers feel “disrecognized”—denied the appropriate degree of recognition by the impersonality of the low-context speaker’s messages.

There may also be cultural differences in the meaning attributed to nonverbal conduct. A fascinating example of this phenomenon is described by Thomas Kochman in his work *Black and White: Styles in Conflict* (Kochman 1981). Kochman, a sociology professor in New York City, noticed differences in the way in which European- and African-American undergraduates tended to engage in persuasive discussion. The middle-class European-Americans he observed tended to see a soft-spoken, unemotional delivery as indicating a commitment to the position taken. From the speaker’s perspective, the content of the message was so innately correct that passion and advocacy were unnecessary. From this point of view, one didn’t need to raise one’s voice if the position one takes was intrinsically correct. This group saw loudness and passion as a sign of loss of objectivity—that the speaker had been taken in and had poor judgment about the argument being made. Thus, for this group, the effectiveness of advocacy depended on delivering the content of the message with scientific detachment.

For the other group Kochman observed, inner-city African Americans living in New York City, the opposite seemed to be true. Among these group mem-
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bers, persuasive argument was expected to be accompanied by passionate advocacy. Thus, these students were more likely to see emotionality as a sign of honest belief in the truth of an argument; further, they tended to associate the correctness of the position with the vigor of its supporting advocacy. Thus, for an argument to appear persuasive to members of this group, it was important for the speaker to advocate energetically.

Obviously, these nonverbal signals clash. An assertion made by a European-American student and accompanied by the culturally appropriate flat, unemotional delivery would likely be devalued by an African-American listener. (Indeed, Kochman points out that, in a diversity conflict, African Americans are likely to use this sort of delivery when consciously suppressing their true beliefs.) A passionate delivery by an African-American student likely would have been interpreted by a European-American listener as “mere puffery”—speechifying by a speaker who is uncertain of the merits of his or her position and wants to cover it up.

Consider another example of differences in nonverbal pragmatics, from gender relations (according to psychologists who study gender). Males in a negotiation tend to use an emphatic, forceful method of getting their point across. Women are more indirect. They will typically include weakening language, such as “I could be wrong, but,” “Perhaps,” or “I wonder if,” as they make their points. Most women understand that this use of weakening language is (paradoxically) a signal that they believe strongly in their side of an argument. If one is willing to invite others to scrutinize one’s belief, then one must be really sure one is right; however, when women use these weakening phrases, many men think they are conveying doubt about their assertions. Thus, the behaviors of each gender generate misunderstanding when communicating in a mixed-gender situation.

Cultural Differences in Orientation to Conflict. There are cultural differences in the way people handle conflict that can complicate its resolution.

Because the need for interpersonal harmony varies from culture to culture, the drive to avoid open disagreement also varies. In some cultures, the custom is to avoid outward conflict, as with the Japanese. In other cultures, as in some African-American subcultures, outward disagreement is handled easily and is an expected method of discourse (Kochman 1981).

The trend toward valuing interpersonal harmony may also influence the negotiation styles seen cross-culturally. For example, a study comparing American with Taiwanese undergraduates found that, when given a hypothetical conflict involving a group project in a university course, the more collectivist Taiwanese were more likely to prefer approaching the problem using negotiation styles such as obliging and avoiding, which avoided overt disagreement, whereas the U.S. students tended to express preferences for using the dominating style, the style most likely to provoke heated confrontation (Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, & Lin 1991). Similarly, a study by Leung and Lind (1986) found that college students from the United States were more likely than those from Hong Kong to prefer the use of the adversary process to deal with a hypothetical civil tort dispute. Sometimes, these trends are tricky to define. For example, a study by Leung
(1988) comparing Chinese and American students suggests that Chinese students are more likely to be cooperative than Americans when negotiating with an acquaintance but more likely to be competitive than Americans when negotiating with a stranger.

Similarly, cultures vary in average levels of comfort with the expression of angry emotions. Even within single cultures, there are subcultural variations: for example, the expression of anger is considered more appropriate during litigation than in negotiation.

In many cultures and subcultures, the “real negotiation” takes place during social interactions outside of the negotiation. The negotiation simply formalizes what's already been agreed upon. This is true in cultures valuing social harmony and probably occurs not only because the cementing of the personal relationship between the negotiators is seen as essential to the negotiation but also to prevent loss of public face should the negotiation fail. This trend toward the use of “shadow negotiations” also occurs within subcultures and specific contexts in the United States. For example, organizational psychologist Pat Heim comments that many female executives can become baffled and feel betrayed when, prior to a meeting to negotiate a business deal, the actual negotiation has already taken place informally and behind the scenes by the males involved (Rules of Engagement 1996).

There are also cultural differences in people's attitudes toward the appropriateness of specific means of resolving disputes. For example, business scholar Catherine Tinsley (Tinsley 1998) studied about 400 German, Japanese, and American corporate managers. Tinsley provided the subjects with a hypothetical organizational conflict involving colleagues and asked them to identify which sorts of methods they would prefer to use to deal with the conflict. The Americans were more likely than the Germans or the Japanese to say that they would try to identify and meet the interests of everyone in the conflict. The Germans were more likely than either the Americans or the Japanese to say that they preferred to resolve the conflict by recourse to established rules and regulations. And the Japanese were more likely than the other two groups to say that they preferred to resolve the conflict by taking it to a higher-status person for a decision. If these preferences generalize beyond the business organizations context, and there is evidence that they do (Tinsley 1998), it behooves a conflict diagnostician to become aware of these and similar sorts of preferences before attempting to resolve a conflict. An American, for example, who enters into negotiation with a German and simply expects him or her to buy into an interest-based process may find unexpected obstacles to resolution.

Summary: Cultural Issues in Diversity Conflict. Paul Kimmel (2000) has coined the term microculture to refer to the development of a new understanding among conflict participants that recognizes and takes into account, but transcends, cultural difference. He argues that, before effective conflict resolution can take place, an effective microculture must exist, one in which individuals can depend on shared meanings, values, perceptions, and expectations. The building of such a shared context must start with the efforts of each conflict participant to understand the context of every other participant. Without this understand-
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ing, a conflict participant may have expectations that are unreasonable, given the other participants’ frames of reference. When expectations are not met, effective conflict management breaks down and conflict is likely to escalate.

How can you as a conflict participant attain the goal of building a microculture? A necessary first step is to learn as much as possible about the typical context, attributions, goals, strategies, tactics, and communication styles used by members of the culture you are dealing with. Consider retaining a member of the other’s culture on your team to help you understand the other participants’ behaviors and to plan effective strategies. Also learn as much about the individual negotiators as possible to prevent the pitfalls of stereotyping. With this needed information in mind, it is useful to take frequent “times-out” to prevent egocentric thinking: “If I was in his or her shoes, what would I be thinking and feeling at this point?” is a useful question to ask. You may wish to practice your negotiation with a friend from the culture of the person you will be negotiating with, so that you can anticipate how the process might go.

Also, consider using a mediator to help with negotiation. A neutral third party trusted by both can help each side see the other side’s point of view and help each acknowledge the other. It helps to use a mediation team consisting of members of the diverse cultures. Each mediator can help decode the meaning of what the participant from his or her shared culture is saying and can help verbalize the perspectives of the disputants.

As we move into the third millennium, the trend of encountering people from other cultures continues to grow; so understanding how to deal with cultural differences assumes greater and greater importance. However, even when we do not perceive that a conflict participant is culturally different from us, the knowledge of how cultural differences affect the response to conflict is useful. Even within single cultures, the response to conflict falls on a continuum: some people are more interdependent than others, some use more context-based communication than others, and some place more importance than others on saving face and preserving social harmony. Thus, the base of knowledge about the influence of cultural diversity on conflict resolution, and the consideration of ways to create an effective microculture, are relevant to every conflict participant and essential to the diagnosis of all conflicts.

Power

Power issues are the “seamy underbelly” of diversity issues in interpersonal conflict. Power issues arise when cultural, racial, ethnic, or gender-based inequalities in power affect the process and outcome of a conflict. Power issues include the egregious “isms” of our time: racism, sexism, and anti-Semitism, just to name a few. A number of scholars and social scientists have detailed the ways in which dispute resolution processes in our country may disempower women and persons of color.

Chapter 13 touched upon the problems of group power imbalance. A racial, ethnic, gendered, or other cultural group that has experienced disempowerment may suffer from reduced access to resources, greater impoverishment, lessened
ability to use existing social support systems (such as police and medical care systems), negative stereotyping, and lower expectations from others. These disadvantages create a vicious cycle, in which members of these groups fall further and further behind as they encounter interpersonal conflict throughout their lives.

Law professor Carol Rose, in her well-reasoned law review article “Bargaining and Gender” (Rose 1995), makes a cogent argument for why women may get worse deals than men due to stereotypes about their power and conflict behaviors. Rose starts from the prevailing stereotype of women as more obliging than men. She argues that, for her theory to work, it is unnecessary that this stereotype be true, only that the people in power believe it. (Other studies show that this stereotype is probably not true: overall, in carefully controlled studies, women are no more likely to oblige and no less likely to dominate than men. Craver & Baures, 1999.)

Rose then reasons that, since powerful people believe in the stereotype, they are less likely to give in to women. When a powerful person negotiates with an assertive woman, he or she is likely to assume that, if this woman doesn't give in to the powerful person's demands, she is simply unusual and that he or she should hold out for a more typical woman target. Due to the high-powered person's stereotypes about women's negotiation and conflict behaviors, he or she is likely to believe that more compliant women will be plentiful.

Rose further reasons that, since most people in powerful places are operating based on this stereotype of women as more compliant and obliging, statistically poorer offers will be made to women overall. Hence, opportunities offered to women will be poorer overall, and women will tend to get poorer offers on average than men during the negotiation of interpersonal conflicts, disputes, and transactions. Further, because women get wind of these discriminatory trends, they are more likely to take a poor offer (because they see that they have little choice). Over time, this tends to confirm the stereotype.

Rose makes an additional assertion: because women are regarded as poorer economic risks, families and employers are less willing to invest in them; therefore, women will be less likely to be offered financial support to attend college, sufficiently generous startup loans for business ventures, and mortgages for the purchase of homes. In a sense, this discriminatory regard for the economic viability of women is true, in the sense that, if women suffer widespread economic discrimination, they will operate at an economic disadvantage. The result, according to Rose, is that one could expect a widening wealth and resource gap between males and females as each progresses through the life span. Rose's thesis is impossible to verify or disconfirm, but its premise is reasonable and accords with statistical evidence of women's economic disadvantages.

Another empirical study lends support to the idea that women are disadvantaged during interpersonal conflict, but for different reasons. Coltri (1995) gave undergraduates of diverse sexes and races transcripts of child custody mediations and asked the subjects to rate the negotiation styles of each parent. Unbeknownst to the experimental subjects, the transcripts had been cobbled together from several real mediation transcripts, and the names assigned to the parents, John and Mary, had been reversed in half the experimental transcripts. (Thus, for example,
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If part of the mediation transcript read...

**Parent #1:** "But, John, you know Joan is doing better at school since she has been living with me!"

**Parent #2:** "You're full of it! Joan wants to live with me; she's made that clear!"

Then half the subjects received a transcript that read...

**John:** "But, Mary, you know Joan is doing better at school since she has been living with me!"

**Mary:** "You're full of it! Joan wants to live with me; she's made that clear!"

And the other subjects received a transcript that read...

**Mary:** "But, John, you know Joan is doing better at school since she has been living with me!"

**John:** "You're full of it! Joan wants to live with me; she's made that clear!"

*FIGURE 14-3*

Coltri's (1995) Study of Gender and Perception of Mediating Parents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The parent who had the child on Saturdays was named John in half the transcripts and Mary in the other half. See Figure 14-3. The transcript was modified to eliminate any other references to the genders of the parents. Thus, the study assessed sex-stereotype-associated differences in the interpretation of negotiation behavior.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall, the disputant given the name Mary was, on average, rated as more dominating, more avoiding, less compromising, and less integrating than the disputant given the name John. Similarly, the parent labeled John was rated as being more concerned than the parent labeled Mary with the best interests of the child. These results reflected the underlying reaction of the students to the likeability of the target parents; regardless of which parent was given which name, the parent labeled as John was overwhelmingly rated as more likeable than the parent labeled as Mary. Although the results of this study are limited in their generalizability, they suggest that prevailing stereotypes of women as more docile and obliging can hamper the abilities of women to act assertively: men who behave assertively are liked and respected, whereas women behaving in an identical manner tend to be disliked. This attitudinal reaction may bias the interpretation of negotiation behavior so that assertive women are perceived as less cooperative. This bias in perception can place women at a disadvantage: it may be easier for men to come across as cooperative if they behave assertively during interpersonal conflict. This outcome is consistent with women's anecdotal accounts of being between a rock and a hard place in negotiations: being forceful is considered attractive in a male but is considered &quot;uppity&quot; and unattractive in a female. Women, therefore, may be prevented from departing from stereotypically obliging behavior by the negative reactions they receive from other conflict participants when they attempt to assert their interests. Females walk a difficult line in trying to protect themselves and their clients in interpersonal conflict.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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5 This sort of social psychology experiment, in which attitude toward a social group member is assessed by giving subjects a sample of an individual's behavior and manipulating the assigned gender, race, or other social group membership of the "target person" using a name, a photograph, or other information that signals social group membership, is known as the "Goldberg paradigm."
In another study, Professor Ian Ayres of the Northwestern University School of Law (Ayres 1991) and his research team conducted a field study to learn more about the challenges faced by both women and African Americans in a familiar interpersonal transaction context: the purchase of a car. Ayres' team hired white and black actors of both genders to go to automobile dealerships throughout the Chicago area, posing as potential car buyers. The confederates used scripts to conduct their negotiation, so that there would be no actual differences between the behaviors of the buyers on the basis of race or gender. The study tracked the initial offers (the answer to the confederate's early question, "What would I have to pay to buy this car?") and convergence of the offers, and the final offers made by the dealers. The scripts varied, so that the researchers could study the effects of various kinds of information on the negotiation process. Examples of these variations included whether the confederate said he or she had test-driven the car elsewhere and whether the confederate said he or she had another car. Thus, the buyers revealed different levels of personal power to the salespeople during the course of the negotiations. (For example, a buyer who did not have another car displayed lower levels of ecological power, in that he or she had less ability to shop around or to leave if the current negotiation did not go favorably.) These facts were not revealed at the outset but, instead, were revealed gradually and naturally according to the dictates of the scripts. (Results showed that these revealed facts did influence the dealers to make better deals to the buyers with better facts.)

Ayres reported a number of findings. The most pertinent relate to the amount of dealer markup initially offered by the salesperson, the amount of markup present in the dealer's final offer, and the amount of change in this markup from the beginning to the end of the negotiation. The research team found substantial differences in the pattern of offers made by salespersons based on the race and gender of the confederate. These findings are shown in Figure 14-4.

**Figure 14-4**
Initial and Final Offer Averages from the Ayres (1991) Study

![Graph showing initial and final offer averages](image-url)
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Compared with the white males, the black males started out with much worse first offers—dealer markups of about double those of the white males. And the black females were even worse off: their initial markups were around triple those of the white males. But these discrepancies decreased a bit as the negotiations progressed. (In mathematical terms, the “slope” of the line for the black buyers was steeper than that for the white males.) This pattern may exist because, initially, stereotypes of blacks as less powerful than whites influenced the initial offers (in keeping with the ideas suggested by Carol Rose, that negotiators base their behaviors on their stereotypes of how assertive the other disputant is likely to be). The convergence of the offers suggests that reality partially canceled out the stereotyping: apparently, as the dealers got to know the facts about the potential buyers, their stereotypical assumptions began to fall away—but not completely: the relative sizes of the discrepancies of the markups remained at around double and triple the white male markup for the black males and females, respectively.

For the white females, there was a different pattern. The initial offers were nearly as good as those made to the white males. But the pattern of concessions made to the white females was worse than that for any other group (in other words, their convergence line was less steep). Why? Perhaps the salespeople, relying on a stereotype about the attitudes of women toward negotiation, assumed that the women would not tolerate as much haggling and that they had to start closer to the final price to avoid the women’s simply picking up and leaving. Nonetheless, the final offers made to the white women were more similar to those made to the white men than to those made to the blacks of both genders, suggesting that the dealers considered the white women more powerful in general than the black customers. Indeed, on average, the initial offers made to the white women were about the same as the average final offers made to the black men, and much better than those made to the black women.

Researcher Ian Ayres discovered patterns of racial and gender discrimination in the practices of automobile salespersons that disadvantaged black and female customers. Dana White, Photo Edit
Chapter 14

Were emotion-based attitudes toward the races and genders, such as bigotry, responsible for these results? Ayres does not think this factor was particularly important. There was evidence that the confederates were steered toward salespeople of their own race and gender. When Ayres looked at the patterns of offers, he did not find that better deals were given to customers of the same race or gender. In fact, when final offers were considered, the confederates tended to receive better deals when negotiating with a salesperson of a different race and gender. Instead, Ayres concluded that the best explanation for the discrimination he found was stereotyping: stereotyping of the blacks—most egregiously, the black females—as having less bargaining power and stereotyping of the white females as less willing to bargain altogether.

Obviously, discrimination, bigotry, and sexism are not dead. Considerable work in the social sciences indicates that stereotypical beliefs about the disempowerment of particular social groups, and about the appropriateness of particular behaviors by women and minorities, affect the ability of such individuals to protect their interests during interpersonal conflicts.

As was discussed in Chapter 13, a high-power group is frequently reluctant to give up power to lower-power groups, even if power-sharing is in the long-term best interests of society as a whole. Hence, individuals committed to the ultimate achievement of effective conflict resolution must be prepared to work for equality and justice, participating effectively in the legal system and being willing to use competitive conflict resolution processes, such as litigation, where warranted. A healthy understanding of conflict diagnosis, negotiation skills, and so forth is of only limited value if the disputant hails from a disempowered social group. No matter what strategy a disempowered disputant uses, the outcome is likely to reflect the power imbalances existing within the social system at large.

It's nearly always appropriate to try the use of principled bargaining and the soft on the person/tough on the problem strategy. The principled-bargaining model, with its emphasis on self-protection and simultaneous attention to gentleness in the relationship between the conflict participants can be consistent with stereotypical expectations about behavior without requiring its user to give into unreasonable demands. A conflict diagnostician considering a diversity conflict involving power imbalance should also consider ways to partially rectify the power imbalance, such as involving advocates who share the cultural group membership of the lower-power group members, maximizing personal power, and clarifying the BATNA. It's also useful to correct stereotypical assumptions about lack of personal power where possible, and, if it appears that the other side is unbending in its bigotry, it may be useful to turn bigoted beliefs to one's advantage.

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6 There were no black female salespeople encountered: the black women were steered mostly to black male salespeople.
SUMMARY: DIVERSITY ISSUES IN INTERPERSONAL CONFLICT

All Interpersonal Conflicts Are Diversity Conflicts

So-called diversity issues are a metaphor for the more general problems confronting those who are involved in interpersonal conflict. Conflict itself generates systematic distortions of perception about others that resemble stereotypes, particularly when the conflict itself is in an escalating spiral. Moreover, conflict itself is characterized by misunderstandings by participants about the context, frame of reference, and meanings of behavior of the others in the conflict. These sorts of misunderstandings are very much like the misunderstandings that occur when people of diverse cultural backgrounds attempt to communicate with one another. Finally, much conflict is marked by efforts by individual participants to use coercive power to overwhelm others, just as powerful racial, ethnic, and national groups may use their superior power to oppress people of a less powerful group. In this way, then, diversity issues complicate and increase the impediments to effective conflict resolution that otherwise exist.

Conflict Diagnosticians and Diversity

Conflict diagnosis must take into account, and deal with, diversity issues. But what should be done to counter the negative impact of stereotyping, cultural misunderstanding, and oppressive action?

To begin with, those involved in the resolution of conflict must be advocates for justice and equality. Conflict diagnosticians who wish to create opportunities for constructive conflict resolution must be prepared to work for equality and equal rights. It’s also important for society to create safe places and forums for us to discuss these issues, so that power issues can gradually be dispelled.

Within specific interpersonal conflicts, it may be useful to gently correct people who are using stereotypes and making wrong assumptions about people (or taking advantage of the mistake in the appropriate case). Sometimes, the application of stereotypes is unintended. If safe to do so, it is useful to educate the other conflict participants about the possibility that they have misapplied a stereotype. If you feel you have been the victim of bigotry or negative stereotyping, don’t automatically assume that the behavior has been generated by malice: recall that diverse social contexts can lead to great differences in the interpretation of a situation. Ignorance about your social context may be operating. Similarly, be open to the likelihood that you will apply stereotypes and unwarranted assumptions to others during a diversity conflict. The best, and only, way to avoid applying stereotypes is to work at being conscious of when you tend to apply them. It is also helpful to educate yourself about other races, ethnicities, and
cultures and to work for diversity in your work, school, and other environments. If you work for and with persons from other races/ethnicities/cultures, take advantage of opportunities to educate and be educated. Act as a bridge for understanding whenever you can.

Use principled-bargaining tactics. Insist on the use of objective standards for decision making. Your work at focusing on underlying interests will help lead you to an understanding of the similarities that underly differences. Be aware, however, of cultural, subcultural, and individual reluctance to adopt the principled-bargaining model of conflict resolution. Educating the other side may be an option, or you may need to bend a bit to accommodate to diverse belief systems about conflict.

If you or the disputant on your team is a member of a low-power social group, consider how this can be turned to advantage. Stereotyping by bigoted opponents may blind them to your motives and behaviors, allowing you to be a bit sneaky.

Most important, do your research and maximize your expert power. It is the best type of power to use and the one you have the most control over acquiring.

**EXERCISES, PROJECTS, AND “THOUGHT EXPERIMENTS”**

1. **Conflict journal.** Write about the following questions and issues in your journal:
   a. Are there any issues of stereotyping that are affecting the course of any of the conflicts you are following in the journal? Are there any issues of cultural differences that are affecting the course of any of the conflicts? Are there issues of group disempowerment connected with race, gender, social status, culture, or subculture?
   b. How is each of these diversity issues affecting the course of the conflict? Be specific and address each issue separately.
   c. What steps could you take to address each of these issues? Be specific and address each issue separately.
   d. You may choose to implement some or all of the steps you identified in question c—if you do, write about how each step you took affected the course of the conflict.

2. Identify yourself mentally with a racial, ethnic, gendered, religious, professional, or cultural group to which you belong. For example, if you are an African-American, Muslim, female attorney, you may use any of these groups as your identified group. Make as complete a list as you can of the stereotypes you believe members of the dominant social group attribute to your chosen cultural group. The stereotypes may be positive, negative, or neutral. Then find a partner in the class who has identified with a different social group. Compare your lists. Do you agree with the stereotypes of the other cultural group that he or she identified? Does he or she agree with your
Step 9. Consider Diversity Issues at Play in the Conflict

list of stereotypes for your identified group? Did you learn anything from this exercise?

3. Break into groups of two people. Taking turns, each person in the pair is to talk about the following questions:
   a. Was there ever a time that you felt you were discriminated against on the basis of race, gender, religion, cultural background, ethnicity, or other social group membership? How did it feel to be discriminated against? Are you satisfied with your conduct? What would you do differently next time?
   b. Was there ever a time that you felt you discriminated against someone else on the basis of social group membership? How did it feel to act in that way? Are you satisfied with your behavior, and, if not, what would you do differently next time?
   c. Was there ever a time that you were present when someone else suffered discrimination on the basis of social group membership? How did it feel to be involved in, or to observe, this interaction? What, if anything, did you do? Are you satisfied with what you did, and, if not, what would you do differently next time?
   d. After each person in the pair has had a chance to answer questions a through c, they should spend some time discussing how to cope with each of these situations. Then pairs of class members should share their results with the rest of the class.

4. Consider an employee who feels she has been discriminated against on the job, due to race, gender, or age, and wishes to file an Equal Employment Opportunity Office (EEO) claim against the alleged perpetrators.
   a. Is such a situation always best resolved through adversarial adjudication? Why or why not?
   b. If you are this woman's legal advisor, and don't share her membership in the social group she is claiming is the reason she has been harmed, how do you advise her accurately without giving her the impression that you are insensitive or bigoted?
   c. What would be the role of interests analysis (see Chapter 8) in assisting such a client?
   d. What would be the role of power analysis (see Chapter 13) in assisting such a client?

5. How is social perception during conflict, in general, similar to the process of stereotyping? Look back to Chapter 5 and write an essay comparing social perception during interpersonal conflict with social perception of the members of social out-groups (an out-group is a social group to which you do not see yourself belonging).

6. Consider Kimmel's idea of a microculture. Is it possible to attain good conflict resolution in a diversity conflict without creating an effective microculture among the disputants and their teams? Write an essay on this topic, or use it as the basis for discussion or debate.
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7. There is some evidence that certain racial minorities within the United States place a great deal of importance on the nonmonetary aspects of dispute outcomes (LaFree and Rack 1996, 790). Read more about this issue in text Chapter 7. Suppose you are a paralegal at a legal-aid clinic and that you are assisting a Hispanic man in negotiating the settlement to a dispute. Your client has done carpentry work for the other disputant, who is a wealthy white homeowner. The homeowner has unlawfully withheld much of your client’s fee, contending that his work was substandard. After considerable case preparation, you are pretty sure your client could get at least $40,000 in court, but, when the homeowner offers $20,000 and an apology, your client seems eager to take it and move on. What should you do? Would your answer change if you were representing this man as his attorney?

8. Consider the situation discussed in question 7. If you were in charge of a court-based program that diverted disputes to an assisted settlement program and studies confirmed that, statistically, Hispanic disputants were settling for less money than white disputants for comparable disputes, would you be concerned? Would you advocate ending the program? Why or why not? What, if any, changes would you advocate? What, if any, additional information would you try to obtain?

RECOMMENDED READINGS


