

# DIVERSITY CONFLICT AND DIVERSITY CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

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While the literature on conflict and conflict management has grown rapidly in recent years, little is included in the literature about conflict that results from diversity. This chapter describes diversity conflict and diversity conflict management.

The definition, two sides, patterns, impacts, and measures of diversity conflict are explored in the following section on diversity conflict. Two sides of diversity conflict are considered: (1) diversity conflict based in human differences and (2) diversity conflict based in oppression. The section on diversity conflict management examines a range of conflict management approaches for specific diversity-conflict situations and for systemic diversity conflict based in oppression.

## DIVERSITY CONFLICT

Diversity conflict can be defined as:

***Exchanges of incompatible actions, behaviors, or practices among two or more interdependent individuals, groups, or organizations with conflicting interests resulting from group-identity-based differences (Adapted from Brown, 1983, pp. 4-5).***

In this definition, key aspects of diversity conflict are:

**Multiple parties from different groups.** Diversity conflict involves parties with social-group identities based in race, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, spiritual practice, ability, and other human differences.

**Interdependent parties.** Diversity conflict involves interdependent parties. The greater the interdependence, the greater is the potential for conflict. Diversity conflict occurs at the contact point or boundary between parties, where they come face-to-face and interact. Diversity conflict can be interpersonal, inter-group, and inter-organizational. It can also be between two or more parties who are a mix of individuals, groups, or organizations.

**Conflicting interests.** The parties to diversity conflict have different and conflicting interests, concerns, needs. Different interests result from group-identity-based differences in areas such as: facts, methods, goals, values, experiences, ideas, behaviors, language, physical appearance, emotions, spiritual practices, Cultural backgrounds, world views, personalities, personalities, styles, expectations, performance, power, authority, and resources.

**Incompatible actions, behaviors, and practices.** Diversity conflict results from actions, behaviors, or practices by one of the parties that oppose, frustrate, or do violence to the other parties, that impacts their ability to work together, detrimentally affects their relationship, and that creates a hostile work environment (Brown, 1983, p. 5; Jameson, 2001, p. 189). Behaviors can range from passivity, withdrawal, disagreement, and debate to sabotage, violence, and warfare.

Violence involves actions, behaviors, and practices that are life-diminishing, life-deadening, life-threatening, and life-ending experiences, rather than being life-enhancing,, life-enriching, and life-giving.

**Normal and natural human experience.** Diversity conflict is an inevitable, normal, and natural response by individuals, groups, or organizations to differences experienced in “the other” in order to maintain boundaries, integrity, and well-being. In this case, the other is experienced as a “force for change” or as a force keeping things the same. The parties to the conflict are neither good nor bad, right nor wrong. Diversity conflict itself can be both productive and harmful.

**Positive and negative impacts on individuals, groups, and organizations.** Diversity conflict can be beneficial and it can be destructive. It can enhance performance and be a barrier to performance. Diversity conflict can be growth and creativity producing – and destructive and chaotic for organizational performance.

**Conflict events/situations or systemic conflict.** Diversity conflict is often written about and experienced as an event or situation which is related to overt diversity issues that are observable over a specific period of time and labeled as diversity conflict by the parties. Conflict is less often understood as a systemic process in which conflict results from the norms, values, customs, laws, behaviors, policies, structures, practices, and other aspects of the cultures of groups, organizations, and society. With systemic conflict, specific conflict situations may get resolved, only to have new conflict situations arise that affect the same and other parties.

The focus on conflict as a situation can be reinforced by the distinction that some authors make between conflict and a dispute. For example, Costantino and Merchant define conflict as a process of expressing disagreement and a dispute as one of a number of products of conflict which is “tangible and concrete” (1996, pp. 4-7). They list other products of conflict as competition, sabotage, inefficiency, low morale, and withholding knowledge (pp. 6-7). Alternatively, Jameson distinguishes between formal and informal conflict situations, with formal conflict occurring when there are policy, human rights, or other violations that can lead to litigation (Jameson, 2001, p. 189). Other authors use the term “conflict” interchangeably with terms like dispute, disagreement, problem, struggle, tension, contention, and difference (for example, Singer, 1990; Isenhardt and Spangle, 2000; Landau, Landau, Landau, 2001). In most cases, “conflict” is applied to separate events and situations. The distinction between events and situations and systemic conflict has important implications for methods used to address diversity conflict.

## **Two Sides of Diversity Conflict**

Diversity conflict has two sides. It can be based in human differences and it can be based in the actions, behaviors, and practices of oppression. These two sides are described in Chart 1.

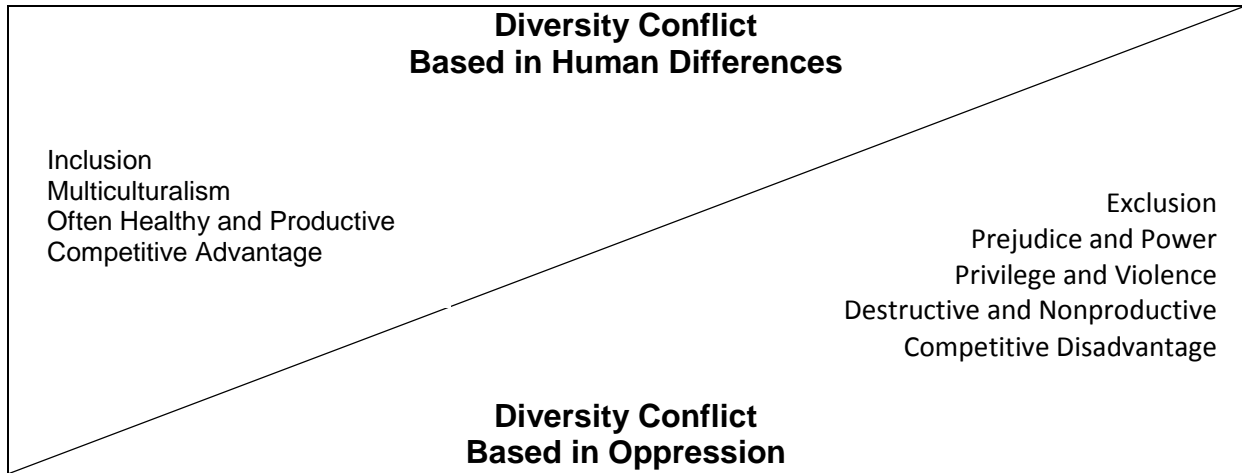
### **Diversity Conflict Based in Human Differences**

Human-differences-based diversity conflict is disagreement and conflict resulting from the different interests, skills, backgrounds, perspectives, values, experiences, abilities, and contributions of members of all groups. It is conflict based in the merits of difference, rather than prejudice and power differences among groups. The resolution of Human-differences-based diversity conflict provides opportunities for breakthrough and enhanced creativity, innovation, product-development, market-development, problem-solving, decision-making, and competitive advantage (Landau, Landau, and Landau, 2001; Caudron, 1999). Sy, Barbara, and Daryl Landau write that the conflict which results from human differences and interdependence is “the oxygen of creativity” (2001, pp. x-xi). Diversity conflict based in human differences results from an organizational strategy of inclusion and multiculturalism; embracing and fully

involving all people and their differences in the work, fabric, and life of the organization in a way that makes use of their differences to enhance organizational effectiveness and performance.

Human-differences-based diversity conflict is productive conflict when it enhances individual, group, and organizational performance. This form of diversity conflict is healthy and needs to be supported and nurtured when it is productive and managed so that it does not get out of hand. Human-differences-based diversity conflict can be nonproductive when there is too much or too little conflict.

### Chart 1: Two Sides of Diversity Conflict



### Diversity Conflict Based in Oppression

- Oppression-based diversity conflict is conflict between dominant and marginalized groups and group members that results from racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression.
- Oppression is a system of inequality, privilege, and violent actions, behaviors, and practices that benefit dominant group members and harm members of marginalized groups. Oppression is:
- Based in a combination of prejudice and power exercised by dominant groups over marginalized groups,
- Institutionalized in the norms, values, customs, laws, behaviors, policies, structures, and practices of groups, organizations, and society and internalized in the values, beliefs, and actions of individuals.
- Kept in place by the interdependent actions and collusion of members of both the dominant and marginalized groups,
- Composed of the “isms” which are based in social identity group membership: racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression.

Oppression and the diversity conflict from it, is nonproductive. Oppression-based diversity conflict has negative impacts on the performance of individuals, groups, and organizations. To

resolve this form of diversity conflict, an organization must follow a conflict management strategy that addresses its basis in oppression.

**Dominant and marginalized group memberships.** Social identity groups – for example, men and women – are based in corresponding areas of human differences – for example, gender. Social identity group membership can mean dominant group membership for some individuals (e.g., men) and marginalized group membership for others (e.g., women). Dominant groups are groups with the power in organizations and society to influence and control resources and establish sanctions, rules, laws, policies, standards, values, and expectations that, intentionally or unintentionally, confer or deny privilege, power, recognition, and opportunity to individuals and groups. Marginalized groups do not have that power. When there is conflict between dominant and marginalized groups, this difference in societal- and group-based power gives dominant groups and dominant group members an ability to influence the outcomes of conflict that is not shared by marginalized group members.

The concept of dominant and marginalized groups relates to group identity and not individual identity. An individual dominant group member may hold little or no power over organizational and societal resources, sanctions, rules, and policies. Their dominant group identity confers privilege, however, whether chosen or not. In contrast, an individual marginalized group member may have substantial power, and because of marginalized group identity be denied privilege and subjected to harm, without recourse.

**Dominant group privilege.** Dominant group privilege results from oppression. Privilege is the rights, rewards, benefits, access, opportunities, advantages, and goods and services received by dominant group members because of their group membership. They receive these benefits without regard to individual achievements, performance, contributions, and accomplishments (McIntosh, 1989; Kivel, 1996, pp.30-32). Dominant group privilege is an unearned, unacknowledged, and often-unrecognized form of “affirmative action” for dominant group members that can become internalized and experienced as entitlement.

**Actions, behaviors, and practices of oppression.** Oppression results in a system of actions, behaviors, and practices of oppression directed at marginalized group members because of their group membership, without regard to individual performance and behavior. These actions, behaviors, and practices of oppression experienced by marginalized group members can be conscious and unconscious, intentional and unintentional, and overt and covert. They are all forms of violence, regardless of consciousness, intention, or visibility. They are life-diminishing, life-deadening, life-threatening, and life-ending. Examples of conscious and unconscious actions, behaviors, and practices of oppression can be classified into intentional/unintentional and over/covert categories seen in Table 1 (adapted from Plummer, 1999).

**Table 1: Conscious and Unconscious Actions, Behaviors, and Practices of Oppression**

| <b>Intention/visibility</b> | <b>Overt</b>            | <b>Covert</b>                 |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <b>Intentional</b>          | Entitled Oppression     | Consciously-Hidden Oppression |
| <b>Unintentional</b>        | “Reasonable” Oppression | Unconscious Oppression        |

These categories can be further defined as:

- Conscious oppression: entitled-oppression, consciously-hidden oppression, and “reasonable” oppression, and
- Unconscious oppression.

**Entitled oppression** involves conscious actions, behaviors, and practices by organizations and society toward marginalized groups that are conscious, intentional, and highly visible. These acts are justified from a dominant group perspective of righteousness and entitlement and the conviction that marginalized group members are abnormal, inferior, and less than human. Examples of entitled oppression are the Holocaust; genocide; slavery; ethnic cleansing; cross burnings; breaking car windows and slashing tires; burning, shooting, and bombing homes, places of work, and worship.....and marking/painting them with human waste and threatening and violent words and symbols; denying marginalized group members the ability to have children or taking them away; changing, distorting, obliterating the history of a people or group of people; subjecting marginalized group people to medical experiments and germ warfare; threatening, taunting, shunning, stalking, fondling, raping, sterilizing, castrating, beating, whipping, starving, torturing, detaining, imprisoning, putting them into work camps, concentration camps, and reservations; buying and selling, enslaving, banishing, colonializing, mutilating, poisoning, torching, lynching, and killing them.

**Consciously-hidden oppression** involves actions, behaviors, and practices by organizations and society toward marginalized group members that are conscious, covert, and intentional. They are hidden and denied because they are in violation of civil rights laws and/or the values of organizations and society. Examples include: red-lining; steering; profiling (i.e., group-identity-based stops, searches, arrests, prosecutions); paying marginalized group members lower salaries and charging them higher prices, interest, rents, and taxes; limiting the quantity and quality of their access to jobs, mentoring, coaching, information, feedback, recognition, promotions.....and land, insurance, credit, phone service, houses, utilities, health and medical care, rest rooms, apartments, hotel rooms, restaurant food; Limiting their access to marriage, business, professional and other licenses; limiting their access to professions, education, voting, recreation, entertainment, transportation, police and fire protection, religious services, family care, media; and polluting the water, air, and land of their communities with discarded and stockpiled hazardous materials and waste.

**“Reasonable” oppression** is conscious actions, behaviors, and practices by organizations and society toward marginalized group members that are explained and justified on religious, statistical, legal/constitutional, scientific, cultural, values, beliefs, or other grounds (Armour, 1997). This category of oppression is conscious.....and the focus is on justification and the lack of intention. Impact is ignored. The actions, behaviors, and practices of “reasonable” oppression are seen by dominant group members as unfortunate, unintentional acts that just happen. Examples include: subjecting marginalized group members to demeaning, disrespectful, abusive jokes, slurs, innuendoes, language, and gestures; identifying them as the exception; not acknowledging them; questioning, checking, testing, watching, suspecting, ignoring, rejecting, avoiding, excluding, patronizing, undermining, interrupting, scolding, criticizing, berating, mocking, ridiculing, deceiving, slandering, badgering, isolating, censoring, expelling, exiling, shunning, castigating, following, searching, and stopping them; belittling and/or sexualizing their intelligence, spirituality, emotionality, sexuality, language, physical appearance, and ability. Some of the hate crimes of entitled oppression are included in the “reasonable” oppression category under some circumstances.

**Unconscious oppression** includes actions, behaviors, and practices by organizations and society toward marginalized group members that are unconscious, unintended, and covert. Examples included: attributing the ideas and accomplishments of marginalized group members to others; prejudging them as incompetent; telling them what to do and how to think; saying these actions, behaviors, and practices of oppression are a surprise, are a thing of the past and do not happen here and now; are not intended or conscious, are good for them, are not that bad, are the fault of marginalized group members because of their behavior, are the individual, personal baggage or problems of marginalized group members; saying these actions, behaviors, and practices just do not happen except in rare and unusual circumstances, and are one-time experiences unconnected to a pattern of actions, behaviors,

and practices that have cumulative impacts; saying these actions, behaviors, and practices do not really happen and they happen to dominant group members as well; and being silent about these actions, behaviors, and practices of oppression.

The actions, behaviors, and practices of oppression are all forms of violence, regardless of consciousness, intention, or visibility. They are life-diminishing, life-deadening, life-threatening, and life-ending, rather than life-enhancing, life-enriching, and life-giving experiences. The unintentional overt/covert acts are sometimes labeled “workplace incivility” and “micro-aggression” to distinguish them from the more aggressive and violent forms of mistreatment involved in the intentional overt/categories. Workplace incivility is interaction among parties in which there is ambiguous intention to harm and injure another (Anderson and Pearson, 1999, p. 457; Pearson, Andresson, and Porath, 2000, pp. 124-125).

Diversity conflict can be generated without conscious and intentional actions by dominant and marginalized group members. Because oppression is institutionalized in organizational policies and structure, oppression-based diversity conflict is generated on auto-pilot. It results from oppression’s privilege, violence, and dominant-marginalized group dynamics at the boundaries between different social-identity groups, between dominant and marginalized groups, and within and among specific dominant or marginalized groups.

**Group experiences and perspectives about diversity conflict.** Diversity conflict, like other forms of conflict, results from the interdependent behaviors of two or more parties. Dominant and marginalized group members have very different experiences and perspectives about diversity conflict.

When individuals operate from the perspective of dominant group memberships (for example, senior leaders and managers, white people, men, heterosexuals), they are likely to view and experience diversity as an unexpected, undeserved, and often threatening event or challenge initiated by marginalized group members. Dominant group members see themselves as targeted by marginalized group members, who are being disloyal and disrespectful of organizational rules and are troublemakers.

Individuals operating from marginalized group memberships (for example, employees, people of color, women, gay, lesbian, bi-sexual, transgender people) are likely to have very different experiences and perspectives with diversity conflict. When viewed and experienced from a marginalized group perspective, diversity conflict is likely to be seen and experienced as a process of disregarding unfair dominant-group-imposed rules and conventions; acting to resist implementation of violent actions, behaviors, and practices of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression; not colluding with oppression; or taking the steps necessary to survive ongoing, undeserved consequences of racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression.

## **Patterns of Diversity Conflict**

### **Levels of System**

Diversity conflict is an interaction between two or more interdependent parties that involves exchanges of actions and reactions. Because of the exchanges of actions and reactions involved in diversity conflict, participants are both instigators and targets. If the conflict broadens in scope, bystanders and witnesses to initial conflict, within and outside the workplace, can be swept up as participants

Conflict parties can be individuals, groups, and organizations. Diversity conflict occurs at interpersonal, inter-group, and inter-organizational levels of system. It can also exist across

levels of system – for example, between and individual and a group or organization and between a group and an organization.

## **Conflict Spirals, Cascades, and other Diversity Conflict Patterns**

Diversity conflict can include very complex combinations of intensity, breadth, and power:

- **Intensity** – the level of aggressiveness/coercion in the parties' behavior.
- **Breadth** – The number of parties involved in the conflict.
- **Power differences** – Power differences that result from group membership and oppression, with dominant group members obtaining benefits and privilege from their group memberships and marginalized group members being targeted for their group memberships.

Patterns of diversity conflict can include non-escalating, escalating, de-escalating, cascading, hidden, suppressed, and reoccurring conflict. These patterns of diversity conflict are described below and also illustrated in the chart on the following page.

*Power differences and group memberships are signified in the chart and diagrams for specific conflict patterns by an uppercase "D" for dominant groups and a lowercase "s" for subordinated groups. The term "subordinated group" is used in the chart. "Subordinated group" has the same meaning as the term "marginalized group" which is used throughout this chapter.*

**Escalating conflict.** Escalating diversity conflict is a spiraling cycle of conflict between the parties that increases in intensity. For example, an exchange of avoidance, interruptions, and name calling could lead to retaliatory ridicule, castigation, and revengeful shunning or exile. Pruitt and Rubin name five ways in which conflict escalates (1984, pp. 64-65):

- Conflict behaviors or tactics increase in the level of aggressiveness and coercion.
- Issues proliferate and increasing resources are devoted to winning.
- There is a shift from specific issues to general, overarching issues and the relationship between the parties deteriorates.
- Desired outcomes shift from doing well, to winning, to hurting the other party.
- The number of conflict participants increases as the parties seek allies.

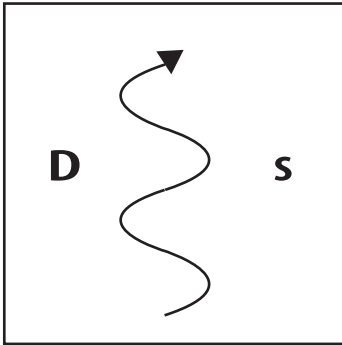
The potential for escalating diversity conflict is magnified by the backdrop of oppression in organizations and society. Dominant group members are blind to or in denial of their privilege and of the cumulative impacts on marginalized group members of ongoing negative experiences in the workplace and society. In conflict situations, organizations are likely to act more aggressively toward marginalized groups and marginalized group members than their dominant group counterparts.

**Non-escalating conflict/stalemate.** Diversity conflict can cycle between parties in an ongoing exchange of actions and reactions where the intensity of conflict is sustained.....neither escalating nor de-escalating. An example is a kind of "cold war" of criticizing, ridiculing, and name-calling between the parties. Persistence of non-escalating conflict can lead to cumulative intolerance between the parties and escalating conflict or it can lead to fatigue and de-escalation. Pruitt and Rubin describe stalemate as an intermediate stage between escalating and de-escalating conflict resulting from "failure of contentious tactics, exhaustion of resources, loss of social support, and unacceptable costs" (1984, pp. 126-127).

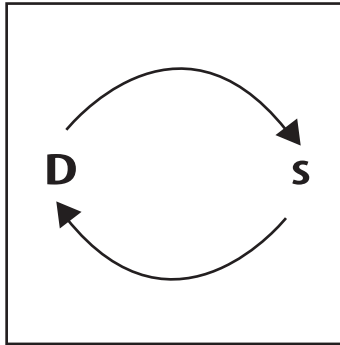
# PATTERNS OF CONFLICT\*

Power differences and group membership are signified in the following diagrams for conflict patterns by an uppercase "D" for dominant groups and a lowercase "s" for subordinated groups.

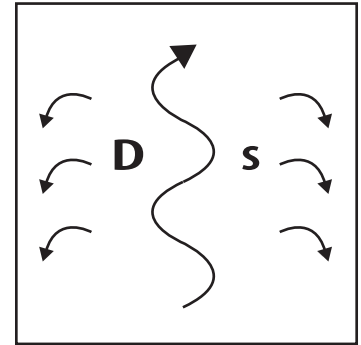
**Escalating Conflict**



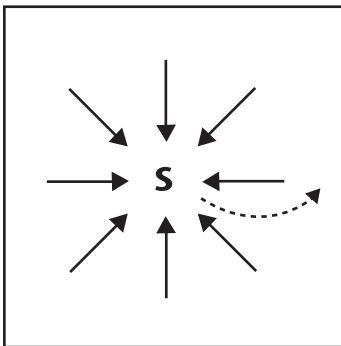
**Non-Escalating Conflict/  
Stalemate**



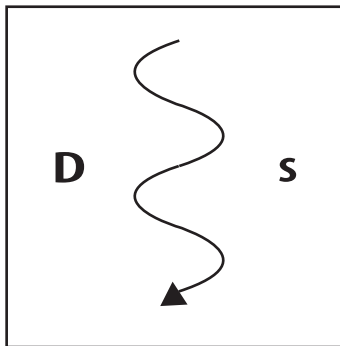
**Cascading Conflict**



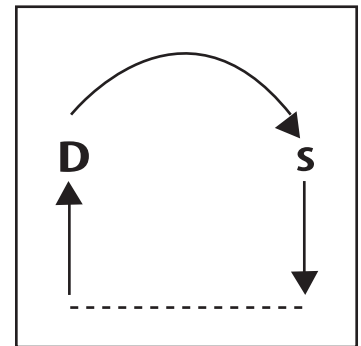
**Scapegoating  
Workplace Mobbing**



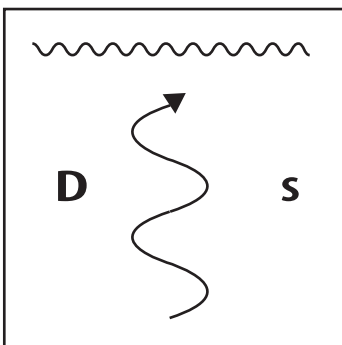
**De-escalating Conflict**



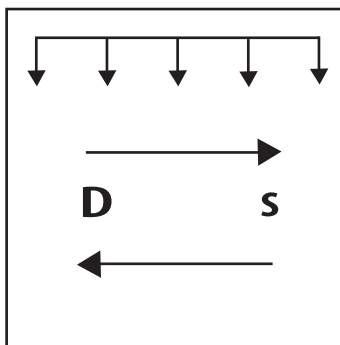
**Reoccurring Conflict**



**Hidden Conflict**



**Suppressed Conflict**



\* Adapted from Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliott (1999), *Mobbing: Emotional Abuse in the American Workplace*, Ames, IA: Civil Society Publishing; Pearson, Andersson, and Porath, (2000), "Assessing and Attacking Workplace Incivility," *Organizational Dynamics*, 29 (2), pp. 123-137; and Pruitt and Rubin (1986), *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement*, New York, NY: Random House.



**Cascading conflict.** Escalating diversity conflict between two parties can spread to other individuals, groups, and departments inside an organization and to employee families, customers, suppliers, and other entities in the organization's environment. Pearson, Andersson, and Porath (2000, pp. 132-133; also Andersson and Pearson, 1999, pp. 465-466) identify ways initial escalating conflict can cascade within and outside an organization through secondary conflict spirals:

- Modeling of the conflict behaviors and enactment of them by witnesses and bystanders to the original conflict.
- Displacement or retaliation toward new parties.
- Cumulative impacts of secondary conflict spirals and word-of-mouth descriptions of the conflict resulting in an organizational culture of disrespect and conflict.

Cascading conflict is often directed toward marginalized group members through the actions and behaviors of both dominant and marginalized group members.

**Workplace mobbing/scapegoating.** Workplace mobbing is a form of escalating and cascading conflict focused on one individual or group. Its purpose is to force them out of the workplace. It is a form of group violence. Colleagues, peers, superiors, and subordinates attack the integrity, competence, dignity, and self-esteem of an individual through psychological, emotional, and physical abuse over a sufficient period of time to isolate and force them out of the workplace (Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliot, 1999). Workplace mobbing is also a form of scapegoating in which the target is held responsible for organizational ills and then sacrificed. The targets of workplace mobbing are often marginalized group members, who are branded as difficult, incompetent, and mentally-ill workers, who have brought about their own downfall. The parties to mobbing can be both dominant and marginalized group members and they may be participating voluntarily and involuntarily.

**De-escalating conflict.** De-escalating conflict is a cycle of action and reaction between the parties that decreases in intensity. The de-escalation can result from actions by one or both parties. Parties may react with inaction, behaviors of lesser aggression, apology, denying intent to harm, yielding to the other, withdrawal, or mutual problem-solving (Pruitt and Rubin, 1986, pp. 130-132; Pearson, Andersson, and Porath, 2000, p. 133). While dominant groups are best positioned to initiate de-escalation, marginalized groups and group members may have more limited conflict options that favor their strategic use of de-escalating behaviors and actions.

**Reoccurring conflict.** The absence of diversity conflict behaviors in an organization does not necessarily mean that conflict no longer exists in the organization. Parties to escalating diversity conflict may withdraw into inaction, take time to reorganize and gather resources, and then reenter the cycle of action and reaction. For example, resignations of employees who are marginalized group members can represent a form of reoccurring conflict for organizations. Pearson, Andersson, and Porath report that employees who decide to leave their jobs after experiencing an incident of incivility often spend a year or more looking for a new job before they leave their organization (2000, p. 130).

**Hidden conflict.** Diversity conflict in organizations is often hidden, denied, suppressed, dismissed as an interpersonal dispute, or attributed to the individual, personal problems of marginalized group members who are labeled as difficult, often incompetent, employees (Kolb and Putnam, 1992). Organizations are most likely to notice and address diversity conflict when it is the interest of dominant group members to do so. Diversity conflict may be ignored when it is generated within and among dominant or marginalized groups or is the result of institutionalized privilege and oppression, unless there is strong and visible resistance from marginalized groups or the threat of litigation. Diversity conflict based in oppression is often unseen, denied, unnamed and /or not acted upon by organizations that operate out of dominant group perspectives.

**Suppressed conflict.** Organizations can attempt to serve the interests of dominant groups by suppressing actions and reactions of marginalized groups and members through implied and actual threats, exclusion, co-optation, isolation, exile, and expulsion. Inaction, withdrawal, assimilation, and submission can create the appearance of the absence of conflict.....when, in actuality, the conflict continues unseen and underground as withdrawn energy, resistance, and sabotage or is delayed and re-emerges at a later time.

## Impacts of Diversity Conflict

Diversity conflict has positive and negative impacts on individuals, groups, and organizations. The pattern of impacts depends on whether the diversity conflict is based in human differences or oppression.

### Impacts of human-differences-based conflict

Diversity conflict based in human differences can be productive for performance at various levels of system. If there is too little conflict or too much, diversity conflict based in human differences can act as a barrier to performance. Diversity conflict can be growth and creativity producing – and destructive and chaotic for organizational performance.

- **Positive conflict outcomes can include:** increased involvement and motivation, improved mastery and retention of material, spontaneity in communications and relationships, growth and development, strengthened relationships, creativity and innovation, greater cohesion and increased productivity.
- **Negative conflict outcomes can include:** less energy available for tasks, destruction of morale and relationships, polarization of individuals and groups, reduced cooperation, dysfunctional behavior, suspicion and mistrust, and diminished productivity.

### Impacts of oppression-based conflict

Oppression, and the diversity conflict from it, have negative impacts on the performance of individuals, groups, and organizations. The actions, behaviors, and practices of oppression that are part of this form of diversity conflict can harm employees, the organization, as well as family members, friends, customers, and other stakeholders in what results from diversity conflict. Following are some examples of the impacts of oppression-based conflict.

Pearson, Andersson, and Porath have collected information about the impacts of incidents of workplace incivility from interviews and questionnaires of workers, managers, and professionals in a wide range of U.S. profit, non-profit, and government organizations (2000, p. 125). Workplace incivility involves the unintentional, overt/covert actions, behaviors, and practices of oppression described above. Pearson, Andersson, and Porath defined workplace incivility as interaction among parties in which there is violation of workplace norms and values about mutual respect and ambiguous intention to harm and injure another. They differentiated workplace incivility from the more aggressive and violent forms of mistreatment involved in the intentional, overt/covert categories.

Pearson, Andersson, and Porath found lasting, negative emotional and psychological effects of workplace incivility on employee attendance, commitment, performance, and turnover because the workplace was unpleasant, or even hostile. Their findings include (2000, pp. 129-131):

- Effects that last a decade or more.
- Fear, confusion, panic, and hopelessness that anything will change.

- Reduced commitment to the job and the organization: disengagement from tasks beyond job specifications, reduced efforts to meet work responsibilities, no longer doing their best work, decreased time spent at work, quitting their job, or thinking about changing jobs.
- Reduced workplace contributions: lost work time spent worrying about incivility incidents or avoiding perpetrators, no longer making voluntary efforts to help newcomers and assist colleagues, dropping off committees and task forces, reduced time generating and facilitating innovations.
- Stealing property in retaliation toward perpetrators or the organization.

Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliott report on the effects of workplace mobbing based on research from Europe, Asia, and North America and their own interviews in the U.S. (1999). Workplace mobbing is group violence by colleagues, peers, superiors, and subordinates that attacks the integrity, competence, dignity, and self-esteem of an individual through psychological, emotional, and physical abuse over a sufficient period of time to isolate and force them out of the workplace. (Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliott, 1999).

Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliott define first, second, and third degree mobbing in terms of duration, psychological, emotional, and physical effects and the resulting ability of individuals to function in the workplace (1999, pp. 39, 89-92):

- **First-degree mobbing:** Individuals experience mobbing for a relatively short period of time, are functional in the workplace, and experience anger, distress, confusion, irritability, crying, some sleep difficulties, and lack of concentration.
- **Second-degree mobbing:** individuals experience mobbing for a longer time, have health problems that begin to affect performance in the workplace, and experience high-blood pressure, gastro-intestinal illness, persistent sleep problems, depression, weight gain/loss, alcohol/drug problems, avoidance of the workplace, and unusual fearfulness.
- **Third-degree mobbing:** individuals experience mobbing for a protracted period. They are not functional and may be unable to remain in the workplace. They experience severe physical and emotional difficulties that impact on work and families, including: depression, despair, rage, panic attacks, heart attacks and other severe illness, accidents, suicide attempts, and violence directed at self and others.

Second- and third-degree mobbing can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (Davenport, Schwartz, and Elliott, 1999, pp. 94-95).

## Measures of Diversity Conflict Impacts

Positive and negative impacts of diversity conflict can be defined and measured in some of the following dimensions (Cox, 1994; White, 1998a and 1998b):

**Outcomes:** profit, return on investment, revenue, cost, achievement of organizational goals and specific diversity initiatives, productivity; satisfaction of customers, vendors, community organizations, and specific group-oriented charities and organizations; market share; shareholder satisfaction and share price; representation of groups of people in customer sales and purchases from vendors; being listed/not listed by the media as employer of choice for women, people of color and specific other groups; and being benchmarked/not benchmarked for diversity practices by other organizations.

**Organization climate:** employee satisfaction and commitment, employee motivation, complaints/grievances, litigation, turnover rate, hiring and attrition rate, offer-to-acceptance rate, job involvement and identification with work, job motivation, promotability ratings, job performance

ratings, attendance and absence rates, employee perceptions about organization, and leadership commitment and accountability.

**Workplace management:** recruitment and retention of the most talented people, salary levels and parity, creativity, innovation, problem-solving and decision-making, organizational flexibility and tolerance of ambiguity, effectiveness of marketing strategies, communication efficiency, and representation of groups of people across organizational levels, salary bands, units, managerial, technical and professional jobs, customers, and vendors.

## DIVERSITY CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

Diversity is woven into the fabric of organizations. Diversity conflict, as well, is an integral part of the life of organizations. Diversity conflict management addresses (1) specific diversity-conflict situations and (2) the systemic causes of diversity conflict based in oppression. It involves:

- Identifying and addressing specific diversity-conflict situations by maintaining and supporting productive conflict based in human differences and resolving nonproductive diversity conflict, and
- Eliminating the systemic causes of diversity conflict based in oppression.

From the perspectives of this chapter, the purpose of diversity conflict management is to enhance individual, group, and organizational performance.

Diversity conflict management in organizations is often linked with the concepts of diversity conflict settlement and resolution. Diversity conflict management, settlement, or resolution are viewed in many different ways:

- **Closure:** that the conflict is ended.....or that it appears to go away because it is hidden or suppressed.
- **Winning and losing:** that some parties win and the others lose, that all parties lose, that each party wins something and loses something, and that all parties win.
- **Achievement of a desired outcome:** that a particular outcome is forced or imposed on some of the parties, that parties go along with an outcome with which they do not agree, that they withdraw from the conflict into silence, inaction, and denial, that they leave the organization, or that all parties agree to an outcome.
- **Mutual agreement:** that a satisfactory solution to the conflict is agreed to by all parties.
- **Enhanced individual, group, and organizational performance:** that productive diversity conflict is provided to enhance performance at different levels of system or that non-productive diversity conflict that reduces performance is eliminated.

Dominant groups are likely to define conflict management, settlement, and resolution in terms of closure, winning/not losing, and achieving desired objectives. These are perspectives that manifest the power differences between dominant and marginalized groups. Marginalized groups may prefer that conflict management, settlement, and resolution be viewed in terms of mutual agreement and enhanced individual, group, and organizational performance.

Diversity conflict management is complex because diversity conflict is based both in human differences and in oppression and because diversity conflict management processes can be used as a means for supporting oppression. Parties to conflict bring incompatible actions, behaviors, and practices and conflicting interests. The parties can also bring prejudice and the power differences of dominant and marginalized groups that result from oppression. Diversity conflict management can incorporate and extend the power differences of dominant and marginalized groups and support and extend oppression as a system of privilege, inequality, and violence.

## Conflict Management in Specific Diversity-Conflict Situations

Organizations can address specific diversity-conflict situations (1) by changing the nature of the conflict situation, (2) with power-over and power-with conflict strategies, and (3) by using conflict management processes involving negotiation, arbitration, and adjudication. Specific conflict situations can be based either in human differences or in oppression. Many of the conflict management approaches used by organizations are appropriate for human-differences-based conflict, rather than oppression-based conflict. They do not address the systemic causes of oppression and can, in fact, be conflict management processes and systems that maintain and extend power imbalance and oppression.

### Change the Nature of the Conflict Situation

Diversity conflict situations based in human differences provide opportunities for breakthrough and enhanced creativity, innovation, product-development, market-development, problem-solving, decision-making, and competitive advantage. Too much or too little conflict can hinder performance. Organizations benefit by adopting a stance toward human-differences-based diversity conflict which supports productive conflict and discourages too little or too much conflict that reduces organizational performance. Too little conflict generates low levels of energy for challenging traditional patterns and methods of operation, resulting in lower performance levels. Too much conflict mobilizes high levels of energy and disrupts information flow and decision-making, resulting in lower levels of performance.

**Table 2. Actions that Change the Nature and Intensity  
of Specific Conflict Situations**

*--Brown, 1983, pp.51-80.*

| Areas for Changing the Nature of the Conflict   | Actions that Increase Conflict                  | Actions that Reduce Conflict                  |
|---|---|---|
| <b>Issues</b>   | Fractionate                                     | Consolidate                                   |
| <b>Critical personnel, information or other resources that change relationships among parties</b> | Expand diversity                                | Contract, consolidate                         |
| <b>Superordinate goals</b>  |   | Focus on                                      |
| <b>Diversity of interests</b>   | Focus on  |   |
| <b>Perspectives</b>   | Reconceptualize to differentiate                | Reconceptualize to include                    |
| <b>Forces that promote conflict</b>   | Clarify   | Reduce  |
| <b>Perceptions, communications, and tactics</b>   | Raise awareness of those that escalate conflict | Raise awareness of those that reduce conflict |
| <b>Boundaries among parties</b>   | Create, clarify                                 | De-emphasis                                   |
| <b>New, provocative or disruptive parties</b>   | Include   | Remove  |
| <b>Relationship between parties</b>   | Reduce distance                                 | Reduce overlap                                |
| <b>Parties – boundaries to information, personnel, inputs, outputs</b>                            | open  | Close   |
| <b>Rules and procedures</b>   | Loosen  | Tighten                                       |
| <b>Shared norms, standards of behavior, and values</b>  | Loosen  | Tighten                                       |

David Brown suggests a number of actions organizations can take to increase or lower conflict by changing the nature and intensity of specific conflict situations – actions involving interests/issues, boundaries, extent of interdependence, sources and distribution of power, perceptions and values, resources, and organizational rules and processes (1983, pp. 51-80). They are listed in Table 2.

Brown (pp. 51-80) identifies actions that can either increase or reduce conflict depending on the conflict situation. They include:

- Organize parties to cope with conflict.
- Define and clarify alternatives, choices, and trade-offs.
- Provide trustworthy, less distorted communications, information exchange, and information flow.
- Define and clarify optional tactics for initial presentations, initiatives, and self-defense.
- Involve upper management, key stakeholders, or outside mediators.
- Clarify incentives and cost of continued/more/less conflict.
- Reduce stereotypes of parties' innocence, victimization, helplessness, villainy, dangerousness, or similarity

These actions change the nature of specific conflict situations and are an effective means to encourage and discourage conflict based in human difference to enhance performance and support productive outcomes. They can also be used to enhance the power of dominant groups and dominant organizational cultures by resolving conflict situations to the benefit of dominant groups and the disadvantage of marginalized groups. These actions then would reinforce oppression and diversity conflict based in oppression.

## Conflict Strategies

Actions to address specific conflict situations can also be viewed in term of strategies for handling conflict that are used by individuals, groups, and organizations when involved in conflict. They can be grouped according to (1) the degree of assertiveness the strategies represent for satisfying one's own needs, concerns, and interests and (2) the degree of cooperativeness with satisfying the other's needs, concerns, and interests (Thomas and Kilmann, 1974; Leas, 1984). Some are strategies that seldom work to provide productive diversity conflict and enhance performance. Others are strategies that sometimes work. Some are conflict strategies that give further privilege to dominant groups and harm marginalized groups. These strategies are shown in Chart 3.

These conflict strategies can also be categorized in relation to their stance toward the use of power, where power is a party's ability to influence the outcome of a conflict situation. The strategies can be power-over and power-with strategies.

### Power-Over Strategies

**High assertiveness, low cooperativeness strategies.** The purpose of these strategies is to prevail or win over the other conflict parties, achieve a desired outcome, insure that other parties lose, and force timely closure to conflict. They include the following strategies: Compete, force, command, contend, Dominate, change rules, tell, educate, sell, advocate, persuade, lie, deceive, belittle, slander, patronize, co-opt, oblige, coerce, compel, threaten, badger, harass, sabotage, isolate, exile, expel, attack, kill. Killing the other party – emotionally, physically, or figuratively is a high aggression, high coercion example of this group of win-lose strategies. These strategies are often preferred by dominant groups and dominant group members. The conscious actions, behaviors, and practices of oppression – the entitled, consciously-hidden, and “reasonable” oppression categories -- listed earlier in this chapter are high assertiveness, low cooperativeness diversity conflict strategies. They create too much conflict and reduce organizational performance....and often lead to escalation and retaliation. These strategies range from using power to get rid of the other party, to making the other party do want you wish, and to



The three groups of conflict strategies discussed above -- high assertiveness, low cooperativeness strategies, low assertiveness, low cooperativeness strategies, low assertiveness, and high cooperativeness strategies – are power-over conflict strategies that seldom work to provide productive diversity conflict and enhance performance. They:

- Are adversarial, “win-lose” approaches where one party wins and the other loses.
- Make conflict resolution the work of one party.
- Can make the other party wrong, blame and demonize them, and create “power-over” systems of oppression based in prejudice, superiority, and power.
- Lead to escalation, polarization, retaliation, litigation, or forcing conflict underground where it cannot be addressed or is not addressed.
- Are unstable and cannot be sustained. One of the parties is likely to be dissatisfied with the outcome and with the lack of resolution of the conflict.

**Medium assertiveness, medium cooperativeness strategies.** These strategies include: compromise, bargain, haggle, trade, give and take. They are transitional or intermediate strategies between power-over and power-with conflict strategies in which both parties give up something to reach agreement. The conflict parties all win something and all lose something in the compromise process. These strategies can have even more unstable consequences than the three win-lose strategies described above. Compromise can lead all parties to be dissatisfied with the outcome and with the lack of resolution of the conflict.

The compromise strategies can bring closure to diversity conflict, though they are likely to require more time than the power-over strategies discussed above. In the compromise strategies, conflict interests and behaviors can become part of the negotiation process and so are available to be addressed by all parties. The compromise strategies can lead to productive conflict and increased organizational performance...though they can also escalate into too much conflict. Power differences between the parties can impact results from the process. Dominant groups are likely to find compromise strategies more advantageous than marginalized groups as a means of resolving conflict.

Power-over conflict strategies include compete, withdraw, accommodate, and compromise strategies. They are adversarial, win-lose approaches in which one party wins and the others lose.....or in the case of the compromise strategies, where all parties give up something in trade for something else. Some or all parties are left dissatisfied with the win-lose outcomes of the resolution process. These strategies seldom work to enhance performance. They are often destructive of relationships among the parties. Where the parties include dominant and marginalized groups, the power-over strategies maintain or extend the power differences that result from the systems of inequality. Even when the diversity conflict situation is based in human differences, rather than oppression, the power-over conflict approaches can make some parties wrong, blame and demonize them, and create power-over systems of oppression based in prejudice, superiority, and power.

## **Power-With Strategies**

**High assertiveness, high cooperativeness strategies.** The purpose of these strategies is to find a mutually-agreed and satisfactory solution to conflict. The parties choose to address the conflict directly in ways that protect and enhance the relationship among the parties. Conflict interests and behaviors are available to be addressed by the parties. These strategies -- collaborate, problem-solve, integrate, engage, dialogue, create – are win-win strategies. They are power-with, rather than power-over, conflict management strategies. Because the parties seek all-benefit solutions there is a greater likelihood they will result in productive diversity conflict and enhanced performance.

Power-with conflict strategies are collaborative approaches to conflict in which the parties seek mutually-agreed and satisfactory outcomes that represent gains for all parties. This approach sometimes, but not always, yields productive conflict that enhances individual and organizational performance. The collaborative conflict strategies do not change already existing power differences among the dominant



and marginalized groups. Where those power differences exist in specific conflict situations, collaborative strategies are likely to result in solutions that favor dominant groups over marginalized groups.

## Conflict Management Processes

Conflict management processes include negotiation, assisted collaborative negotiation arbitration, and adjudication. See Table 3.

**Table 3. Conflict Management Processes**

--Singer, 1990, p. 116; Isenhardt and Spangle, 2000, p.25; CRR Global, 2012.

| <b>Negotiation</b>  | <b>Assisted Collaborative Negotiation</b>   | <b>Arbitration</b>   | <b>Adjudication</b>  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Competitive</li> <li>• Compromise</li> <li>• Avoidance</li> <li>• Conciliatory</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediation</li> <li>• Facilitation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Non-binding</li> <li>• Binding</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Judicial processes</li> </ul> |

**Negotiation.** Our work and personal lives are filled with negotiation. In negotiation, the parties involved in conflict discuss, confer, or bargain with each other to reach agreement. Negotiation processes take a number of forms that mirror the above conflict strategies.

The most mentioned forms of negotiation are competitive and collaborative negotiation. In **competitive or “thrust and parry” negotiation** (Adler, Rosen, and Silverstein, 1996), the parties seek to gain at the expense of the other parties. Alternatively, in **collaborative, mutual gain, integrative, or problem-solving negotiation** the parties work to satisfy all the parties’ interests. Collaborative negotiation will be discussed in more detail below.

There are less mentioned forms of negotiation. **Evasive or avoidance negotiation** is a form of negotiation in which the parties do what they can to escape conflict. In **conciliatory negotiation**, the parties accommodate the interests and outcome of other parties, but not their own. The term “negotiation,” itself, is sometimes used for **compromising or bargaining negotiation** in which the parties give up something in trade for something they want.

Organizations are a complex web of relationships among board members, managers, employees, and others both inside and outside the organization, that take the form of contracts, arrangements, partnerships, alliances. These relationships are tested and forged through negotiations that address conflict and provide agreement. The point of negotiation is to settle conflict. Negotiations are a conflict management process that is often viewed as a series of single, separate, unique events that are the responsibility of the parties involved. Negotiations in organizations can also be viewed systemically. The many ongoing negotiations in organizations have major interrelated impacts. Some organizations are beginning to think systemically about the organization’s capability and responsibility for negotiations and conflict management processes (Ertel, 1999).

**Collaborative negotiation.** The definition and understanding of collaborative negotiation has grown out of the efforts of Roger Fisher, William Ury and the Harvard Negotiation Project to define key steps or principals for negotiations that meet the interests of all parties and maintain ongoing relationships (Fisher and Ury, 1981). Collaborative negotiation has many names (Fisher and Ury, 1981, pp. xi-xii; Bisory, 1999, Isenhardt and Spangle, 2000, pp. 46-51; Jameson, 2001, p. 167):

- **Principled negotiation** that follows the core principles identified by the Harvard Negotiation Project.

- **Problem-solving negotiation** that focuses on a mutually-agreed problem separate from the relationships among the parties involved in the conflict situation.
- **Interest-based negotiation** that focuses on the underlying interests, needs, and concerns of the parties, rather than positions or solutions advocated by the parties.
- **Integrative negotiation** identifies a solution that integrates and addresses the interests, needs, and concerns of the parties.
- **Mutual-gain, win-win negotiation** that provides an outcome that is mutually agreeable to all parties and that gives the parties control over outcomes.

The core principles and steps of collaborative negotiation identified by Fisher and Ury and others are:

- Separate the people from the problem.
- Define issues so they are acceptable to all parties.
- Separate issues from solutions and outcomes.
- Focus on underlying interests, rather than positions.
- Develop options to meet the interests of all parties.
- Identify mutually-agreed standards or criteria for selecting among options.
- Resolve issues based on their merits, rather than on power differences among the parties, that is, level the playing field.
- Define and understand what would happen if the parties fail to reach agreement, that is, the parties' best alternatives to negotiated agreement.

**Assisted Collaborative Negotiation.** When negotiations bog down, a third party can be invited to assist the parties break the negotiation impasse. There are two forms of assisted collaborative negotiation: mediation and facilitation.

### **Mediation**

Mediation is assisted collaborative collaboration supported by a third-party outsider to a conflict situation who has no power to impose a resolution and who meets with the parties to the conflict, together and separately, to help them reach their desired outcomes in an all-win manner for the good of all the parties.

Conflict mediation approaches range from problem-solving, settlement-focused mediation (see e.g., Singer, 1990) to mediation focused on empowerment and recognition or "transformative" mediation (see, e.g., Broderick, 1999 and Bush and Folger, 1994). The core elements of mediation are the same in both approaches. The key differences between the approaches are the mediation outcomes. Mediation outcomes for the parties can include: one-some-all of the following: empowerment, building capacity and skills, recognition and acceptance, building and rebuilding relationships, coalitions and community, agreement, settlement, resolution of differences, and closure.

The mediator provides a container for the mediation process to support all-win outcomes that are good for all the parties to the conflict. Mediator roles include: resource provider, teacher, referee, bridge builder, advocate, healer, witness, and peace-maker. Mediators carry out the following functions:

- Provide information.
- Teach conflict management and problem-solving skills.
- Establish limits and guidelines.
- Strengthen defenses.
- Foster relationships and dialogue among parties.
- Inquire about, listen to, acknowledge, and affirm multiple truths.
- Help to create a climate of safety and trust.
- Foster communications.

- Encourage apologies and forgiveness.
  - Advocate for the interests, needs, and concerns of the parties to the conflict.
  - Bring all parties to sit together at the table.
  - Promote justice and fairness.
  - Support healing and reconciliation.
  - Attend to and raise awareness of signs of conflict and of resolution.
  - Support non-violent action.
  - Intervene to preempt violence and support peace
- Adapted from Ury, 1999, pp. 114-195; Singer, 1990, p. 20).

The mediation process includes the following steps:

1. **Opening:** Introductions, ground rules, roles, processes.
2. **Conflict assessment:** The determination of the current conflict situation, including:
  - Individuals, groups, and organizations who are direct parties or co-creators of the conflict and key spokespersons, and can maintain or change the current conflict situation and key spokespersons.
  - Major and secondary interests of the parties.
  - Actions, behaviors, attitudes, beliefs, and norms of the parties that keep conflict in place.
  - Sources and distribution of power among the parties.
  - Desired and minimally-acceptable outcomes for each of the parties.
  - Expectations of what will happen if the parties fail to reach agreement and incentives and costs for continued-more-less conflict.
  - Impacts of the conflict on the parties and whether there is too much or too little conflict in relation to the conflict impacts.
  - Conflict strategies being used by each party.
3. **Collaborative decision-making** about the mediation outcomes:
  - Define the issue(s) in a way that is acceptable to all parties.
  - Identify resources and the interests, needs, wants, and concerns related to the issue(s), rather than positions of the parties about solutions to the conflict.
  - Develop options for meeting the interests of all parties and criteria for selecting among the options.
  - Reach mutual agreement about the preferred option for addressing the issue(s) and the mediation outcomes.
4. **Closure**, celebration, provision for evaluation and accomplishment of the mediation outcomes.

## Facilitation

Facilitation is a collaborative negotiation process, assisted by a third-party facilitator, who helps a group accomplish a task, purpose, or goal by providing group process leadership and expertise (Fleischer and Zumeta, 2000). In contrast, mediation involves third-party assistance for two or more parties, who may be individuals, groups, or organizations. The facilitator provides a container for the work of the group and follows a low assertiveness, high cooperativeness conflict strategy as a facilitator that involves helping the parties meet their interests without interjecting the facilitator's interests.

Facilitation addresses how group members work together, group tasks and work content, and group maintenance processes. Facilitation is a collaborative negotiation process and the facilitator helps the group address the core principles identified by the Harvard Negotiation Project. Emphasis is given to group processes that provide consensus. Facilitator roles involve assisting the group to:

- Satisfy the physical and logistical requirements for the group to work effectively, including support needed from others, room size, seating arrangements, water and food, and other facilities, equipment, and environmental needs of the group.
- Accomplish the group tasks, including establishing ground rules, clarifying purpose, assisting with idea-generation, prioritizing, problem-solving and decision-making processes, balancing time spent on task and process, identifying outcomes, and reaching closure.
- Establish and maintain collaborative relationships, including surfacing and addressing conflict, maintaining effective communication, listening, feedback and disclosure processes, and balancing participation processes.

--Adapted from Isenhart and Spangle, 2000, pp. 110-113.

**Arbitration.** When collaboration is not possible and negotiation fails, the parties to a conflict situation may turn to binding or non-binding arbitration, in which a third-party hears all sides of the conflict and makes a decision for the parties (Isenhart and Spangle, 2000, pp.129-136; Singer, 1990, pp. 27-29). Arbitration is a contractual win-lose process. The parties agree on an arbitrator, whether the arbitrator's decision is binding or non-binding, and any other aspects of the arbitration process. If the decision is non-binding and one of the parties rejects the decision, then the arbitrator's decision does not apply.

**Adjudication.** When negotiation, third-party collaborative processes, or arbitration fail or are not available, the parties may end in litigation. Adjudication is a binding, third-party decision-making process by the courts or administrative agencies (Singer, 1990, p. 29). The third-parties can include administrative and court judges, juries and other third parties appointed by the courts to encourage settlement prior to legal decision-making (Isenhart and Spangle, 2000, pp.147-152; Singer, 1990, p. 29). Adjudication is an adversarial, win-lose process.

Some companies have viewed lawsuits for employee discrimination and harassment as an insurable cost of doing business and as an alternative to diversity policies and programs that prevent the mistreatment of employees (Abelson, 2002; Bean, 2002). The dollar value of jury verdicts and settlements for discrimination and harassment has increased substantially since the early 1990s. Average jury awards increased from \$236,232 in 1994 to \$783,926 in 2000, and 20 percent of jury verdicts were greater than \$1 million in 2000 (Bean, 2002). Since 1990, the number of companies providing employee-practices liability insurance has fallen and there have been substantial increases in premiums and deductibles, lower levels of coverage, and greater care about companies selected for insurance coverage (Abelson, 2002; Bean, 2002).

## Power Imbalance and Oppression in Specific Diversity-Conflict Situations

When the negotiating table is uneven and power imbalance and oppression are an issue, the conflict management processes available to organizations and nations -- negotiation, assisted collaborative negotiation, arbitration, and adjudication -- are poorly suited for addressing diversity-conflict situations. In Morgan Llwyn's novel, 1921, about Ireland's struggle for freedom and independence from England, one of the main characters asks, "What good is political negotiation when one side has all the power?" (2001, p. 87). Llwyn describes the negotiating process between England and Ireland during the early 1900s as incorporating the results of 700 years of English colonialism, nation-state oppression, and the perception of Irish people as inferior humans deserving of their fate.

Specific diversity-conflict situations seldom involve balanced power among the parties and oppression is too often the source of the imbalance of power. Phyllis Beck Kriteck writes in Negotiating at an Uneven Table, "I have never negotiated at a table I believed to be even, whether as a party involved in a conflict or as a negotiator attempting to resolve one. (2002, p. 54). The effectiveness of the conflict management processes of negotiation, assisted collaborative negotiation, arbitration, and adjudication for addressing

and resolving specific diversity-conflict situations are seriously limited by power imbalances among conflict parties.

The balance of power among individual parties in a diversity-conflict situation depends on:

- The power of individual parties.
- The relationships among the parties.
- The organizational and societal environment.

Power is the ability of each of the parties to accomplish their desired outcomes. Sources of power imbalance in conflict negotiation and decision-making are explored below.

**Individual parties.** Power imbalances result because of differences in power among the parties that can be individuals, groups, or organizations. Power differences among the parties result from:

- **Individual resources.** The unique individual attributes and traits that are part of the makeup of the parties and can support or hinder them in the conflict negotiation and decision-making process. Individual resources are a form of social capital or goodwill (Adler and Kwon, 2002; Sobel, 2002) that can include for example: attractiveness, charisma, integrity, eloquence, trustworthiness, confidence, physical presence, willingness to take risks, and patience (Kipnis, 1976, p.22; Gewurz, 2001, p. 148; Bacharach and Lawler, 1980, p. 35). Individual resources may also include tangible commodities like monetary and other assets. For individuals these resources are personal resources. They apply to groups and organizations as well. Consider the ways that individual resources have changed for Arthur Anderson because of the Enron scandal and for the Roman Catholic Church because of the pattern of sexual abuse by priests. For groups and organizations, individual resources are the assets and liabilities which are integral parts of their identity, image, and reputation.
- **Institutional resources.** Resources derived from position and participation in organizations and society. Individuals acquire decision-making control tangible and intangible resources, such as information, monetary and other material resources, technology, networks, opportunity and access, from participation in organizations and society. These resources can include the opportunity and ability to establish or change rules, sanctions, values, laws, policies, structures, and practices. Kipnis writes that "...access to institutional powers transforms insignificant men and women into giants" (1976, p. 23). The more significant the position and the larger the organization, the greater the institutional power and resources that are available. Institutional resources are associated with the institution and stay with the institution when the individual leaves. Groups and associations also have institutional resources, which they gain from participation in societal, national, international, and global affairs.
- **Internalized oppression.** Racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression that are internalized in individuals and institutionalized in groups and organizations. They are internalized systems of inequality that prescribe dominant group members as "better than", normal, and superior and marginalized group members as "less than", abnormal, deficient, inferior, and less than human. Internalized oppression can inappropriately impact a party's sense of self and, depending on group membership, lead to self-aggrandizing or self-denigrating expectations and behavior.
- **Alternative to a negotiated solution.** A party's expectations about what will happen if the negotiation does not produce an agreement and they choose to walk away from the negotiation. The parties can differ in the extent to which they are each dependent on the success of the negotiation and how much of their interests they are willing to forgo to prevent failure of the negotiation process. (Gerwurz, 2001, p. 149).

**Relationships among the parties.** The history and nature of the relationships among the individuals, groups, and organizations who are conflict parties also impact the balance of power among the parties and the extent of power imbalances in negotiating and decision-making processes.

- **Preferred negotiating style:** The competitive negotiating style is an exercise of power. When one of the conflict parties pursues a competitive negotiating style, the purpose of negotiation for them is to win their desired outcome. If the other parties pursue a collaborative negotiating style designed to create a mutually-agreed, mutual-gain solution to the conflict, the competitive negotiator will always win (Gewurz, 2001, p. 148; Kritek, 2001, pp. 258-261, 324-325). Similarly, the competitive negotiator will win over avoidance and conciliatory negotiators. Negotiations between competitive and compromise negotiators are likely to end in stalemate or escalation, with compromise negotiators switching to competitive style.
- **Internalized oppression:** Internalized racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other internalized forms of oppression can also impact the relationships among individuals, groups, and organizations. Conflict parties can internalize and embody systems of inequality in belief systems and behavior in ways that favor dominant group members and disfavor marginalized group members in negotiation processes.

French and Raven provide an often-cited description of power differences between parties in which the power base or resource of one party is used to accomplish desired outcomes in relation to the needs or motives of the other party (as cited in Kipnis, 1976, pp. 9-12; Gewurz, 2001, pp. 137-138). Five sources of power identified by French and Raven are:

- **Reward power:** Ability to use tangible and symbolic rewards, or the promise of those rewards, to barter for the cooperation of the other party. Rewards may include, for example, money, commodities, formal and informal recognition and promised new opportunities (Broom and Klein, 1995, pp. 63-64; Kipnis, 1976, p. 10; Gewurz, 2001, p. 149).
- **Coercive power:** Ability to get compliance from another party by withholding, or threatening to withhold, desired rewards or by administering, or threatening to administer, emotional, physical, financial, psychological, or legal punishment (Broom and Klein, 1995, pp. 64-66; Kipnis, 1976, p. 10; Gewurz, 2001, p. 149).
- **Legitimate power:** Ability to prescribe or ask for compliance, cooperation, or agreement by a party because of one's position or role in an organization or society. This expectation by other parties of a powerholder's entitlement or legitimate "right" of compliance with the powerholder's wishes can also rest in areas, such as, family background, occupation, and academic degree (Broom and Klein, 1995, pp. 57-63; Kipnis, 1976, p. 11; Gewurz, 2001, p. 150).
- **Expert power:** Ability of a party to influence the behavior of another party based on their belief that the powerholder has superior knowledge, experience, or expertise (Broom and Klein, 1995, pp. 66-68; Kipnis, 1976, p. 11; Gewurz, 2001, p. 147). Examples of people with expert power are medical doctors, scientists, consultants, coaches. Expert power can also apply to organizations, for example, scientific institutes, universities, hospitals, and public utilities.
- **Referral or attraction power:** A party's ability to influence the behavior of another party because of that party's personal identification with, attraction to, or admiration for the powerholder based on prestige, reputation, personal characteristics, or valued group membership (Broom and Klein, 1995, pp. 68-70; Kipnis, 1976, p. 11; Gewurz, 2001, p. 148). Examples of people with referent power include celebrities, religious leaders, and political office holders.

**Organizational and Societal Environment.** Power derives from the organizational and societal environment in which conflict occurs and in which negotiation and decision-making takes place. Power imbalance can result from differential power conferred on individuals, groups, and organizations by the values, laws, rules, policies, structures, programs, and processes that are a part of the cultures of organizations, society, and nations.

Collaborative negotiation, mediation, and facilitation are mutual-gain conflict management processes that support joint problem-solving. Concerns about power imbalance are sometimes addressed in mediation and facilitation by insuring that all parties to a conflict situation have a seat at the negotiation table and the voices of the less powerful parties are heard (Kritek, 2002, p. 39).

There are many possible sources of power differences in specific conflict situations. Some apply to diversity conflict based in human differences, where oppression does not apply. Others result from racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression.

- **Institutionalized oppression:** Race, gender, sexual orientation, and other group-based prejudice is embedded and institutionalized in the beliefs, values, policies, laws, structures, practices, and behaviors of organizations and society. When embedded and institutionalized prejudice is enforced with dominant group power over marginalized group members, oppression manifests and is internalized as privilege and violence at societal, organizational, and group levels of system. This institutionalization process leads to actions, behaviors, and practices that support racism, sexism, heterosexism and other forms of oppression for the benefit of dominant group members and the disadvantage and harm of marginalized group members.
- **Areas for changing the nature of specific conflict situations:** Organizations can increase or lower conflict by changing the nature of specific conflict situations in the areas of: interests/issues, boundaries, extent of interdependence, sources and distribution of power, perceptions and values, resources, and organizational rules and processes (Brown, 1983, pp. 51-80). These actions also can generate power differences among the parties, directly and indirectly. They can enhance the power of dominant groups and dominant organizational cultures by resolving diversity-conflict situations to the benefit of dominant groups and the disadvantage of marginalized groups. This reinforces oppression and diversity conflict based in oppression.

These steps do not change power imbalances that exist among the parties to a diversity-conflict situation. When diversity conflict is based in human differences and oppression is not a factor, the outcomes of collaborative negotiation still reflect existing power imbalances and, as well, the possibility of dominant party retribution after the negotiation process is completed. When racism, sexism, or other forms of oppression are a factor in diversity conflict, collaborative negotiation can recreate and reinforce the outcomes of oppression that give advantage and privilege to dominant group members and disadvantage to marginalized group members.

The central feature of competitive and other power-over negotiation processes is the desire of dominant conflict parties to achieve their desired outcomes at the expense of other parties. Arbitration and adjudication are also win-lose, adversarial processes for addressing conflict situations. High-power parties have a greater likelihood of winning in these processes than parties with lesser power. When the source of power imbalances in specific diversity-conflict situations is racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, arbitration and adjudication decision-making processes are likely to reflect the values, norms, structures, and procedures of the dominant organizational and societal cultures in which they take place. Under these circumstances, arbitration and adjudication can maintain and reinforce oppression, though this is by no means a necessary outcome.

Negotiation, arbitration, and adjudication are used by individuals, groups, and organizations to address specific diversity-conflict situations. These conflict management processes are not effective when there are power imbalances. They are more appropriate for human-differences-based conflict than oppression-based conflict. They do not address systemic diversity conflict and the systemic causes of oppression. They can, in fact, maintain and extend oppression.

## **Conflict Management of Systemic Diversity Conflict**

When diversity conflict is systemic and results from racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression, it cannot be addressed with conflict management processes focused on specific diversity-conflict situations.

Organizations must identify and implement ways to eliminate the systems of inequality that cause oppression-based diversity conflict. A range of organizational diversity programs, strategies, initiatives, and interventions are described in Baytos (1995), Cox (1993, 2001), Cross (2000), Hayles and Russell (1997), Jackson and Hardiman (1994), Katz and Miller (2001), Loden (1996), Miller and Katz (2002), and Thomas (1990). These approaches vary in the extent of their consideration of both human-differences and oppression issues, of diversity conflict, and of the relationship between interventions and the developmental phases of organizations related to diversity and oppression issues.

Some authors describe an early-phase, middle-phase, and later-phase developmental process in which organizations grow and change from dominant-culture organizations to integrated-culture organizations.....as well as, the interventions required to assist organizations to move from one phase to another. See, for example, Cox (1993), Hayles and Russell (1997), Jackson and Hardiman (1981, 1994), Jackson and Holvino (1986, 1988), Katz and Miller (2001), and Miller and Katz (1995). From this perspective the pattern of diversity conflict experienced by organizations depends on the developmental phase of an organization. Interventions and organizational change needed to address systemic diversity-conflict based in oppression require time, conscious commitment of resources and energy, and an understanding of the developmental phases of organizations.

The pattern and understanding of diversity conflict depend on where the organization is in its developmental process from dominant-culture to integrated-culture organization. The composition of diversity conflict changes from a preponderance of oppression-based conflict to human-differences-based diversity conflict as diversity intervention strategies are used to shift the organization toward being an integrated-culture organization. The use of conflict management strategies to resolve specific diversity-conflict situations does not address diversity conflict based in oppression. Oppression-based diversity conflict can only be addressed by eliminating oppression.

## **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

Many organizations today are looking to the advantages of the diversity of their employees – and the conflict inherent in that diversity – for competitive advantage in their networks of partners, allies, and competitors. To realize the advantages of diversity conflict, the destructive side of oppression-based diversity conflict must be addressed intentionally and consciously, not by stamping out all diversity conflict, but by eradicating racism, sexism, heterosexism and other forms of oppression.

Collaborative conflict management processes are useful for resolving specific diversity-conflict situations based in human differences. They do not resolve systemic diversity-conflict based in oppression. Collaborative conflict management processes maintain existing power imbalances and can maintain and extend oppression and diversity conflict based in oppression.

Organizations have a wide range of conflict management interventions to support productive diversity conflict:

- Collaborative, power-with conflict management processes.
- Interventions to increase and reduce the level of conflict.
- Interventions to move organizations from a dominant-culture organization to and integrated-culture organization and change the nature of diversity conflict experienced in organizations from diversity conflict based in oppression to a preponderance of human-differences based diversity conflict.

The most effective approach for diversity conflict management is to support diversity and inclusion and to eliminate racism, sexism, heterosexism, and other forms of oppression.



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