
CHAPTER 11

Interteam Relations: Competition and Stereotyping

On June 7, 1998, in Jasper, Texas, three white supremacists captured an African American man, beat him, and then dragged him to his death on the back of a pickup truck in a ghastly and horrid display of racial hatred and violence.

At a company party at the Bell Atlantic Corporation, Willie Bennett, an African American 27-year veteran of the company, was shocked when his white coworkers showed him a video they made, in which a white coworker wearing an Afro wig pretended to be Bennett and portrayed him getting his job because of his basketball-playing skills. Derrick Williams, a 23-year veteran of Bell Atlantic, is haunted by the memory of finding a fake and crudely racist job application in the copy machine, which asked questions such as "Name of father (if known)," whether the applicant was born in a "charity hospital" or a "back alley," and how many words the candidate could "jive" per minute (Grimsley, 1997).

It is a shocking fact that as we approach the next millennium, the fires of racial hatred and crippling prejudice are rampant and widespread. What's more is that acts of racial discrimination are not confined to small towns and lower-class organizations. They exist in corporate America, even in the Fortune 500. No one should take any comfort in the fact that racial prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination are widely frowned upon. How can it be that blatant acts of racism and discrimination exist in corporations when it is clearly against the law to discriminate? What can the manager do to avoid creating a hostile work environment and to build solidarity and respect between groups?

OVERVIEW

Displays of racism in the corporate world are shocking because it is not often that such blatant racial slurs are heard in a work environment. Many people believe that there are no such problems in their workplace. What type of corporate culture leads to this obviously inappropriate behavior, hostile work environment, and poor use of corporate time and energy? What role do teams play in perpetuating or curtailing this behavior? This is the focus of the chapter.

The preceding evidence makes a sobering point: Bias and prejudice are common in organizations and adversely affect the ability of teams and organizations to accomplish their goals. In the following list, we draw distinctions between various kinds of prejudiced thoughts, actions, and reactions.

- **Bias** is any patterned deviation from a standard (e.g., Mark, a senior member of the firm, never evaluates anyone as being "above average"; in contrast, his partner, Lura, consistently evaluates everyone as being "above average"). Each executive, then, displays a bias.

- **Prejudice** is the evaluative or emotional aspect of stereotyping: The tendency to evaluate members of other groups less favorably than members of one's own group (e.g., a white manager is prejudiced when he regards a white male to be more worthy of promotion than a black female, despite their identical objective measures of performance).
- **Stereotyping** is the cognitive aspect of bias: The tendency to assume that members of a particular group also have attributes stereotypical of that group (e.g., an executive manager assumes that the female middle manager likes fashion magazines and soap operas, that the black supervisor is fond of barbecue and watermelon, and that the Asian intern has a camera affinity). Stereotypes are cognitive generalizations about the qualities and characteristics of the members of a particular group or social category. In many ways, stereotypes function as useful labor-saving devices by helping people to make rapid judgments about others based on their category memberships (McCauley, Stitt, & Segal, 1980; Miller, 1982). Stereotypes come with built-in biases, for they usually paint a picture of people that is too simplistic, too extreme, and too uniform.
- **Discrimination** is the behavioral aspect of stereotyping: The tendency for people to change their behavior as a function of assumptions they make about others (e.g., a manager doesn't hire a female whom he believes to be interested in starting a family; a supervisor doesn't promote a Hispanic male whom she regards to be less intelligent).

In the corporate world, people exist in teams, and for this reason it is not too surprising that people identify themselves in terms of their group memberships. On a pre-conscious level, humans categorize themselves and others into groups. This categorization is advantageous in the respect that it can mean an efficient division of labor, and team affiliations provide people with a greater sense of belonging. Furthermore, the division of people into different groups and teams can create a healthy competition between teams. However, much of this can backfire, such as when healthy competition erupts into sabotage and discrimination. The mere categorization of people into different groups sows the seeds of prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping. Perhaps even more disturbing is the fact that most people are completely unaware that their behavior is affected by how they categorize others. Furthermore, intrateam harmony does not guarantee peaceful interteam relations and, in fact, may very well exacerbate conflict between groups.

Conflict between groups does not always arise from competition over scarce resources, such as full-time employees, facilities, budgets, and promotions. Much conflict in organizations does not seem to have its roots in resource scarcity, but rather stems from fundamental differences in values. Thus, we distinguish **realistic group conflict** from **symbolic conflict** (Bobo, 1983).

Realistic group conflict involves competition between groups for the same scarce resources (e.g., groups that compete over new hires, office space, assignments, territory, information, contacts, and, of course, remuneration). Naturally, groups in organizations prefer to be the "haves" rather than the "have-nots," so they take steps to achieve two interrelated outcomes: (1) attain the desired resources; and (2) prevent other groups

competition often leads to direct and open conflict. Consider, for example, the relationship between the number of lynchings of black people in 14 states in the American South and two indices of economic conditions: Farm value of cotton and acre value of cotton. The data over a 49-year period were clear: The more negative economic conditions (i.e., the lower the price of cotton), the more lynchings. As another example, consider the conflict between Andersen Consulting and Arthur Andersen. Each group feels justified in claiming a greater share of the profit stream. Andersen Consulting, the smaller of the two groups, is highly profitable and feels justified in demanding more resources; Arthur Andersen, the founding company, sees the situation quite differently and argues that the opportunities they provide entitle them to a greater share of the joint profits.

As a general principle, groups of people are much more competitive than are individuals (Carnevale, Pruitt, & Seilheimer, 1981; Insko et al., 1987; McCallum et al., 1985; van Oostrum & Rabbie, 1995). As an illustration of this, consider the team dilemma game that we reviewed in chapter 7. When individuals play against each other, in a one-on-one fashion, they are not particularly competitive—averaging only 6.6 percent competitive responses over the course of the game. However, when a group of individuals plays against another group, competition rises to 53.5 percent of all moves (Insko et al., 1987). This suggests that even though most people may prefer to cooperate, when they are in groups, a competitive orientation takes over.

The conflicts we have described emanate from the allocation of scarce resources. However, it is not always the case that economic motivations are at the root of all conflicts. Sometimes, groups and teams are not trying to garner more resources, but hold conflicting values. Symbolic conflict involves clashes of values and fundamental beliefs. Consider, for example, the strong protests made against busing by people whose lives are not affected by it (Sears & Allen, 1984). Presumably, people who do not have children or grandchildren are not affected by busing. However, they tend to have strong feelings about it. Busing does not represent an economic issue to them, but rather, a symbolic issue.

GROUP MEMBERSHIP: THE LOCUS OF HUMAN IDENTITY

People naturally seek out group affiliations, and the reputation and accomplishments of the groups people belong to are a critical source of their self-esteem. To a large extent, feeling good about ourselves is dependent upon feeling that our groups are adequate or superior (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Group affiliations also provide people with a buffer against threats and setbacks: When their self-esteem is shaken by personal setbacks, their groups provide them with reassurance and identity (Meindl & Lerner, 1984).

Although there is no limit to the ways in which people might identify themselves and others, the following categories of group identity are common in organizations:

- Gender groups
- Position, level, class (e.g., rank, how many people supervised)
- Functional unit (e.g., marketing, sales)
- Regional unit (e.g., Midwestern, Northeastern)
- Ethnicity and race

In short, these five categories are key when people interact with others in the

Need for Categorization

Categorization is inevitable. Just as people categorize furniture into tables and chairs, they categorize each other into men or women, black or white, rich or poor, educated or not. From the first few microseconds of perception, latent stereotypes shape what people see. The tendency to use stereotypes as a basis of categorization leads people to view others as more similar to the stereotype than they actually are. Furthermore, even when given an opportunity to consider both stereotypical and nonstereotypical information about a person, people preferentially attend to stereotype confirming rather than disconfirming information. When people can question a person directly, they often seek to confirm their stereotypical beliefs (Snyder, 1984).

The most basic type of categorization is the classification of people into in-groups and out-groups. That is, even though there are any number of categories that people might use, they primarily use two basic social categorizations: In-groups and out-groups (Jones, 1983; Wilder, 1986a, 1986b). People consider in-groups to be people who are like themselves or who belong to the same group; out-groups are people who are not in their group or who are members of competitor groups.

What are the consequences of in-group and out-group categorization? There is a good deal of *subjectivity* in the boundaries that people draw around groups and the groups with which they identify. Categorization is highly influenced by rather arbitrary aspects of the situation. For example, take the case of Lorna W. Lorna is more likely to be categorized (i.e., pegged) by her colleagues because as the only female Hispanic American on the team, she attracts attention. As a consequence of the greater attention she gets, people evaluate her more extremely. This cuts both ways: In the case where Lorna is exceptional in her performance, she will be evaluated even more favorably. However, in the case where Lorna is not performing well or performing at an average level, she will be evaluated more negatively than a man or a Caucasian engaging in the same activities. The take-away message is clear: People who stand out in terms of their membership in gender, racial, or ethnic categories are scrutinized and evaluated more extremely. In short, they are in the spotlight.

How Categorization Affects Behavior

When it comes to predicting behavior in a particular situation, group affiliations are a more powerful determinant than is personal identity. For example, social activism is better predicted by feelings of fraternal deprivation (i.e., the perception that one's group is disadvantaged relative to other groups) than by feelings of personal deprivation (i.e., the perception that one is personally disadvantaged; Dubé & Guimond, 1986; Vanneman & Pettigrew, 1972). Furthermore, individual members of disadvantaged groups frequently perceive higher levels of discrimination directed against their groups than they report against themselves personally (Taylor, Wright, Moghaddam, & Lalonde, 1990). And it is fraternal, or group-level, discrimination that motivates participation in collective action (Taylor, Moghaddam, Gamble, & Zellerer, 1987; Wright, Taylor, & Moghaddam, 1990).

In terms of behavior within organizations, how people categorize themselves vis-à-vis the organization is a key determinant of behavior. Consider the following example.

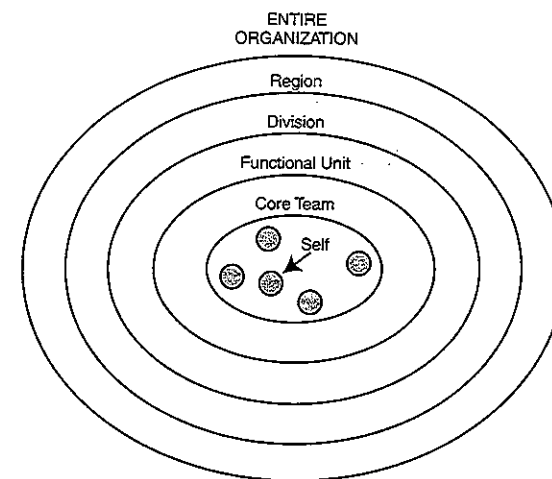


FIGURE 11-1 Level of Identification in an Organization

its own profit center. Don takes this very seriously. In contrast, Terry, a member of the same organization who also belongs to Don's division, has more job responsibilities that bring her into contact with other units. Whereas she is well aware that each division is mandated to act as its own profit center, she is keenly concerned with the prosperity of the company as a whole. In short, Don's primary level of group identification is more narrowly defined than is Terry's (see Figure 11-1). As a consequence, Don is more likely to behave competitively to further the interest of his own division, at the expense of the company as a whole. The key is to try to get Don to identify with the company, rather than just his own division.

The take-away message is clear: People can identify at different levels within their organization (e.g., person, group, department, or unit). However, their behavior is influenced by the nature of their contacts and experiences within the firm. The more narrowly defined their groups are, the more competitive and self-serving their behavior is. Conversely, when they focus on the larger collective, they are more cooperative. The challenge for the team leader is to know how to focus on higher-order group affiliations.

"Us" versus "Them": The Psychology of In-Groups and Out-Groups

The very processes that allow people to build relationships with each other are the ones that may cause alienation, discrimination, and stereotyping. In short, social categorization sows the seeds for discrimination and prejudice by creating an "us" and "them."

Unfortunately, people are trigger-happy when it comes to categorizing people as members of in-groups or out-groups. The basis for inclusion and exclusion constantly fluctuates as a function of largely irrelevant aspects of the situation. Consider what happens in situations that on the surface do not seem to contain any meaningful basis of

In a room of adults who do not know one another, a box is passed around containing several cards. One card randomly draws a card from the box. Two groups are formed on the basis of the card drawn, an obviously arbitrary procedure. Members of each do not speak or communicate in any form with the members of the other group, nor do they talk to themselves. They are a group in name only. Nevertheless, in a subsequent period, members of each group rate the members of their own group on a number of dimensions relative to members of the other group (Tajfel, 1979; Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

In a room of adults who do not know one another, each person is presented with a page containing several dots and then asked to make an estimate of the number of dots on the page. Two groups are then formed: Those who overestimate the actual number of dots on the page and those who underestimate the actual number of dots (Bettencourt, Brewer, Croak, & Miller, 1992). When group members are subsequently asked to evaluate the competence, intelligence, creativity, and personal qualities of both groups, they favor their own group—even though they have not communicated with the other members of their group and the comparison is nondiagnostic.

In a series of simulated negotiations between Stanford and Cornell M.B.A. students, the Stanford students awarded the other significantly fewer stock options when given the opportunity (Thompson, Valley, & Kramer, 1995). Furthermore, group members who were expected to pay both teams extremely well; instead, team members were more intent on creating large payment differences, rather than maximizing the welfare of both teams.

In the preceding examples, when people categorize the world into two or more groups and then face the task of evaluating or judging these groups, they tend to favor their own group. There is a nearly universal tendency to rate one's own group more favorably than an out-group, even on the basis of little or no information. In cases where the members of groups never interacted; the personal identities of the in-group and out-group members were unknown, and no one gained personally by discriminating against the out-group. If there is no incentive to derogate others, why does it occur? When people identify with groups, they are psychologically invested in making their own group that their group is worthwhile and deserving. This raises a thorny question for the manager: The very process of creating cohesion and group identity can be a source of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination.

"More Than They Are": In-Group Supremacy

When we segment the world into in-group and out-group members; once they are formed, we view members of their own group more favorably than members of other groups. When this occurs at the group level, it is called **in-group bias**; among individuals, it is called **in-group favoritism**. When this occurs across ethnic categories, nations, and regions, this is **ethnocentrism** (Sumner, 1906), or the universal strong liking of one's own group and the simultaneous dislike or devaluation of out-groups, generates a set of universal reciprocal evaluations of each group as good and the out-group as bad, even when

BOX 11-1

In-Group Bias in Response to an Organizational Merger

Employees from two hospitals were studied during the period of planning for a merger (Terry & Callan, 1998). One hospital was higher in status than the other hospital—a common issue that occurs when firms merge. How did the proposed merger affect intergroup relations between the two hospitals? A merger between two previously independent organizations made employees' premerger group membership more salient, and the unequal status issues meant an accentuation of intergroup status differences. There was clear evidence of an in-group ("we are better than they are") bias, particularly among the low-status employees. Why? Employees of the lower-status organization may have been particularly threatened by the merger situation and, therefore, more likely to engage in a high level of in-group bias—a form of identity protection.

High-status employees rated the in-group far better than the low-status hospital on status-relevant dimensions (high prestige in the community, challenging job opportunities, and high variety in patient type). In contrast, the low-status

employees engaged in greater in-group bias on the status-irrelevant dimensions (degree of industrial unrest, good relations between staff, good communication by management, relaxed work environment, and modern patient accommodations). The question is, why? High-status employees were motivated to acknowledge their position of relatively high status. In contrast, the low-status employees, motivated by a desire to attain positive social identity, focused on dimensions that did not highlight the status differential that existed between the hospitals. Indeed, low-status employees recognized the superior status of the high-status hospital, and high-status employees were especially generous when evaluating the low-status group on dimensions that are irrelevant to status. Yet the amount of in-group bias that the low-status employees exhibited on the status-irrelevant dimensions exceeded the extent to which the high-status employees were willing to acknowledge the strengths of the low-status employees on these dimensions.

interpretation is not: "We are loyal; they are clannish; we are brave and willing to defend our rights; they are hostile and arrogant." The negative effects of in-group bias may be heightened when companies merge (see Box 11-1).

"They All Look Alike": The Out-Group Homogeneity Effect

One unfortunate by-product of social categorization is the tendency to view out-group members as interchangeable, faceless, stereotypical caricatures.

Suppose that white managers watch a videotape of a discussion among members of a mixed-race group: Three African American men and three Caucasian men.

conversation and are asked to indicate who said what. They are told they will be evaluated based upon the accuracy of their memory. They are accurate at remembering whether a black or white person made a particular comment, and are fairly accurate in distinguishing among the three white males' comments, but their accuracy in terms of differentiating which African American male said what is abysmal (Linville, Fischer, & Salovey, 1989). Thus, within-race errors are more prevalent than between-race errors, because people categorize members of out-groups not as individuals, but simply as "black men."

The faulty memory of the manager illustrates a pervasive tendency for people to assume much greater homogeneity of opinion, belief, expression, and interest among members of the out-group than among members of their own group (Judd & Park, 1988; Katz & Braley, 1933; Park & Rothbart, 1982). This is another way of saying that most people believe that members of their own group are individuals and, consequently, should be evaluated upon their own merits, whereas members of out-groups are mere clones of one another, with no distinct identity.

The managerial implications of the "they all look alike" effect are very serious. Consider, for example, a police lineup in which a victim is asked to identify an assailant. A white victim is more likely to falsely identify a black perpetrator than a white one (Knight-Ridder Newspapers, 1991). Consider, also, the implications of a mixed-sex task force in a corporation.

Minority Groups

Members of minority groups are particularly likely to be targets of prejudice and discrimination in the organization. The reason is related to the principle of social categorization that we introduced earlier. As an example, consider a young, female manager on an otherwise all-male team:

- She is more likely to be severely judged than is the man. This cuts two ways: If she is excellent, she will be judged more favorably; if she is below average, she is judged more harshly. (Principle: Most people judge members of minority groups more harshly than others.)
- Her behavior in general will be viewed as more stereotypically "female" than if she were a member of a more gender-balanced group.
- Her own performance will be subverted to the extent that she is made to feel that women are at a disadvantage. (Principle: Believing that others ascribe to a stereotype can lead to self-handicapping behavior and worsened performance.)
- She holds lower expectations about her career than do the men; she expects to receive lower starting and peak salaries (Jackson, Gardner, & Sullivan, 1992), and she views these lower salaries as being fair (Jackson & Grabski, 1988).
- She expresses lower self-confidence than the men.
- If she succeeds at the task and attains the same level of performance as a man, it is assumed by relevant others that she was "lucky" or "fortunate" or had extra help; in contrast, the man's performance is attributed to effort and ability (Deaux, 1985; Nieva & Gutek, 1981).

Women continue to occupy a relatively disadvantaged position in most societies in a number of respects; they are concentrated in low-paying, low-status jobs, and their average salary remains lower than that of men

When selecting applicants for jobs, especially high-level ones, organizations seek a good match: They want to hire people whose characteristics most closely resemble those that they view as necessary for effective performance (O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). This is a reasonable hiring strategy, but in the context of gender stereotypes, it may be highly damaging to women. The traits that are assumed to be necessary for success in high-level jobs are closer to the content of male gender stereotypes than to female gender stereotypes. Leaders are almost uniformly desired to be bold, assertive, tough, and decisive—all traits traditionally viewed as masculine in nature. In contrast, few companies want or expect leaders to be kind, sensitive, emotional, and nurturing—the typical female stereotype. To the extent that females are subject to traditional gender stereotypes, they may face a difficult struggle in their efforts to launch and advance their careers.

As a case in point, consider how male and female members of employment selection boards in the Netherlands interviewed applicants for high-level scientific and technical jobs (Van Vianen & Willemsen, 1992). They completed two questionnaires: One on which they rated the attributes of "ideal" candidates and another on which they rated the perceived qualities of each actual job applicant. Descriptions of ideal candidates included mainly traits present in the masculine gender stereotype. The candidates recommended for the job were rated as possessing more masculine attributes than the candidates they rejected. Finally, accepted female candidates were much closer to the description of the ideal candidate than rejected ones—that is, more masculine.

In another demonstration of the severity effect, Caucasian people were shown ambiguous pictures of African Americans and Caucasians interacting with one another (Allport & Postman, 1947). The observers were asked to make up a story about the pictures they had seen. Prejudiced individuals' stories often suggested that the Caucasians and African Americans were arguing or fighting with each other, and they usually blamed the African American for starting the dispute. When observers viewed a film depicting a staged argument between an African American and a Caucasian in which one person shoved the other, they described the push as "violent" when the perpetrator was African American, but "playing" or "dramatizing" when the perpetrator was Caucasian (Duncan, 1976).

Self-handicapping (also known as fear of success) is the tendency of people to sabotage their own likelihood of success, such as not getting enough sleep the night before an exam, watching TV instead of preparing for a report, and so on. Why would anyone want to sabotage their own performance? If they suspect that other, relevant superiors expect their behavior to be negatively affected by their own lack of innate ability, then they often attempt to justify poor performance as being caused by temporary factors. Consider the following situation: An African American female, who would like to be admitted to a competitive M.B.A. program, signs up to take a standardized test, the GMAT, because it is required for admission to all programs. On test day, she is asked to provide various demographic information about herself, including her racial identity. Then, she takes the test. Is her performance on the test better or worse than if she had not been asked to indicate her racial identity? (Before reading further, stop and indicate whether her performance is better, worse, or the same and specify your reasons for thinking so.)

In fact, her performance is worse (Steele, 1997). Certainly her aptitude has not changed in the flash of a moment. What has gone on in this situation? The test form itself has activated a latent stereotype—a cultural stereotype that this woman knows on

a cognitive, rational level to be false, but that nevertheless once called to mind interferes with her ability to perform. The test form in this situation has instigated a self-fulfilling prophecy. That is, because she was asked to indicate her racial identity, she assumes that racial identity plays a role in success on this test. This is a form of **self-stereotyping**, in which a person negatively internalizes aspects of a culturally held stereotype.

Performance Evaluation

Imagine the following scenario: A young, African American male is apprehended by security when he is caught removing a computer from an office. What does your first impression of this situation tell you? If you are like most people, you feel that more culpability is involved on the part of the African American male than you would if the person who left the building was a young woman. This simple example makes an important point: When members of an out-group (in this case, African American men) behave in what appears to be a suspicious fashion (removing equipment from private property), most people evaluate their behavior as a manifestation of their underlying personality or disposition—in this case, the black male is viewed as a criminal. In contrast, the same action taken by a member of the in-group is usually attributed to benign situational factors (e.g., “She was taking it to a store to get it repaired”).

In contrast, when the action in question is one that is positive (e.g., making a donation to charity, volunteering for an additional assignment, or completing the report a day early), the opposite phenomenon occurs. That is, commendable actions by in-group members are regarded as reflecting their impeccable character, whereas the same act by a member of a stereotyped group is brushed off as the result of temporary, fleeting circumstances.

Extremism

Inevitably, conflicts occur between groups, teams, and factions. Groups on opposite sides of a conflict tend to see the other, opposing side as being extremist. Members of teams exaggerate the degree of conflict they actually have with other teams and groups—opposing groups typically assume that the difference between the two sides’ attitudes is 1.5 to 4 times greater than the actual difference. This means, of course, that escalation of interteam conflict is often more illusion than reality. As an example, consider the Western Canon debate—a factious dispute over the choice of books in introductory civilization and literature courses that has divided faculty and students within many universities, such as Stanford, Michigan, and Berkeley. There are two sides in the debate: Traditionalists and revisionists. Traditionalists advocate preserving the prominence of the traditional canon; revisionists advocate teaching more works by female and minority authors.

To measure the degree of conflict between traditionalists and revisionists, English teachers in California were asked to select 15 books from a list of 50 for their own course and to indicate which books they believed the “other side” would want. Traditionalists predicted that they would have no books in common. In actuality, traditionalists and revisionists had almost 50 percent—or seven books—in common! (Robinson & Keltner, 1996).

much less accurate than is a group that is not in power. Traditionalists predicted no overlap in book choices; whereas revisionists predicted a six-book overlap. Why is this?

Majority group members typically enjoy benefits of greater power. They are prone to exaggerate the views of their own and the other side. Minority group members are perceived by both sides to be more extremist than majority group members. For example, high-status social group members judge the personality and emotion of other members less accurately than do low-status group members (Gruenfeld, Keltner, & Anderson, 1998). In contrast, high-status members’ emotions are more accurately judged by both low- and high-status members.

Overt and Covert Racism

The reported racial attitudes of white Americans have changed dramatically in the past 50 years (Schuman, Steeh, & Bobo, 1985). For example, the percentage of whites willing to vote for a black presidential candidate rose from 37 percent in 1958 to 81 percent in 1983; and the percentage rejecting laws against cross-racial intermarriage rose from 38 percent in 1963 to 66 percent in 1982. Yet subtle indicators of prejudice remain intact (Crosby, Bromley, & Saxe, 1980). Given the opportunity to help a black person or a white person, whites give less help to a black person; in studies of “sanctioned aggression” (e.g., the white participant in the role of a “teacher” must punish the black student’s apparently wrong answer), whites are more aggressive toward blacks than whites (e.g., administer more intense shocks as punishment); furthermore, subtle, nonverbal behaviors, such as tone of voice, indicate less positive feelings of whites toward blacks. These unobtrusive measures suggest that the true attitudes of whites toward blacks remain quite negative.

Most people in the corporate world do not regard themselves to be racists or white supremacists. In the contemporary United States, most people know that it is wrong to be prejudiced. Consequently, they mask prejudice or negative behavior toward blacks, women, and other minorities. In short, people suppress their prejudiced tendencies.

Thus, there is a contradiction of sorts between people’s public attitudes and their more telling overt behaviors. Similar contradictions have been found in men’s attitudes toward women. The modern racist or sexist is not filled with hatred toward blacks and women, but rather is attached to the status quo and defends traditional, conventional values. Modern norms against overt racism make people’s own racist attitudes intolerable to them, so they find it difficult to admit this to themselves. Even well-intentioned people who do not think of themselves as racist may have rapid, automatic, racially biased associations that they would be averse to if they were consciously aware of them.

Most people regard the decline of overt or old-fashioned racism to be a positive aspect of modern organizational life. However, under the thin veneer of politically correct organizational actors lurks a more venomous racial monster. The type of racism that runs rampant through the modern corporation is much more insidious, and is known as **covert racism** (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986; Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).

Just what is covert racism? Consider the following examples:

- Attractive men and women are judged to be kinder, more interesting, more sociable, happier, stronger, of better character, and more likely to hold prestigious jobs than those who are less attractive (Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, 1972).
- A black Ivy League professor takes the bus every day to work while white professors

- A Jewish manager prepares an important report for his company; he only cites other Jewish people in the report as important contributors, even though he was at liberty to mention other non-Jewish contributors (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995).
- A group of executives judging the quality of written essays judge those allegedly written by males to be of higher quality than those written by females, even though the essays are identical (Goldberg, 1968).
- Essays attributed to female students are judged by male students to be of higher quality when accompanied by a photo that shows the author to be physically attractive, rather than unattractive (Landy & Sigall, 1974).
- Sports teams who wear black uniforms are judged to be more aggressive (Frank & Gilovich, 1988).

In each of the preceding examples, people are arguably acting on the basis of stereotypical beliefs—for example, bus riders regard black men to be dangerous, so they don't sit by them. However, none of the people in the examples broke any law with their actions. Furthermore, when questioned, each person vehemently denies the operation of any racial or discriminatory intentions. Yet each of the actions is undesirable, not only from the point of view of the person who is discriminated against, but from the approach to teamwork we have outlined here. The question for the manager is: Should we worry about unconscious racism and, if so, how should we address it?

Unconscious Discrimination at Work

Covert, or implicit, racism operates at an unconscious level of awareness. For this reason, covert racists do not regard themselves to be prejudiced. In some cases, people are aware of prejudiced thoughts and vow that they do not act on them. Just as it is (currently) perfectly all right to smoke in your own home, it is all right for people to harbor racist attitudes in the recesses of their unconscious.

However, there is disturbing evidence that unconscious racism does affect behavior in the corporation. To demonstrate how and why, consider the following evidence:

When white students are placed into an experimental situation that involves administering shock for the purpose of facilitating learning, white students administer less shock to African Americans than to whites. When white people provide performance evaluations to African Americans, they exhibit a clear positivity bias; they give more positive feedback (Harber, 1998). Presumably, whites consciously want to minimize aggression toward African Americans. However, these same people administer far more shock when angered by an African American student than when angered by a white person (Rogers & Prentice-Dunn, 1981). This **retaliation effect** is preconscious. That is, when white managers believe that their anger is justified, this triggers the inherent bias toward out-group members that is often masked or repressed in other circumstances (Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mowrer, & Sears, 1939). Although most organizational employees are not in the practice of administering shocks, they are in the practice of administering a number of equally painful organizational burdens, as well as attractive organizational benefits. To the extent that the manager feels that negative feelings are justified, unconscious prejudice may be turned loose. Covert racists experience a conflict between their feelings and beliefs associated with a sincerely egalitarian value system and unacknowledged negative feelings and beliefs about African Americans.

As a further illustration, consider what happens to people whose unconscious thought processes are “primed” with racist ideas. (A prime is an unconscious influence, such as the subliminal advertising messages that advertisers use to get consumers to buy their products.) In an organization, a prime might be pornographic material pasted on walls or a coworker's computer screen saver. (Although this is hardly subliminal, on a day-to-day basis—even when they are not gazing directly at the material—it can affect employees' behavior.) Suppose, for example, that people in an organization are exposed to racist (or sexist) ideas in a manner that they do not consciously notice. For example, many commuters are unaware of the messages they see on billboards. What do you suppose happens when words are flashed very quickly on a computer screen at so fast a rate that people are not aware that they even saw a word (rather, it just seems that a white flash appears)? When Caucasians are subliminally exposed to a series of words that are stereotypically associated with African Americans (e.g., *poor, jazz, slavery, Harlem, busing*), they judge a race-unspecified male to be more hostile than those who are not exposed to the words (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Devine, 1989).

A similar phenomenon happens with the female stereotype: People who are exposed to ideas that signify “dependence” subsequently judge a female to be more dependent than when they are not exposed to these unconscious ideas (Banaji, Hardin, & Rothman, 1993).

The key take-away message is that the mere activation of a gender or racial stereotype, whether people cognitively endorse it or not, causes them to act in a way that is consistent with the stereotype (Bargh et al., 1996). This means that managers will treat older people with less dignity, women as sexual objects, and black people as ignorant or lazy if cultural stereotypes are primed.

STRATEGIES FOR REDUCING PREJUDICE

We have made the point that prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping are pervasive in organizations today. It is a leader's job to deal effectively with these issues, which can seriously hinder individual, group, and organizational effectiveness. The responsible manager and team leader needs to scan the environment for factors that contribute to bias and try to put into place practices that will minimize discrimination. Once intergroup hostility becomes established, it is no simple matter to reduce it. Fortunately, many companies have dealt successfully with issues of discrimination on an organizational level. Companies that are equal opportunity employers make a public assertion that they wish to avoid bias. These are good things. However, eliminating bias from the organization is not easy. Some good faith efforts may even backfire. This section considers a number of strategies to effectively deal with discrimination and stereotyping.

Blinding

Blinding denies a decision maker access to potentially biasing information. For example, in several major consulting firms, applicants are requested *not* to enclose a picture. In principle, blinding would seem to be a foolproof method of avoiding unintended discrimination. However, because almost any socially stigmatizing attribute tends to be correlated with other characteristics that cannot be removed by blinding, effective blinding is often not achievable. For example, stereotypes can be triggered by surnames,

present (Wegner & Bargh, 1998). The biggest disadvantage with blinding is that it can result in the reestablishment of ethnic segregation (Schofield, 1986). For example, disadvantaged groups can be excluded from career opportunities (Blanchard & Crosby, 1989; Glasser, 1988). Denial of categorical information in connection with performance evaluations can result in less favorable judgments of minority group members. For example, consider a situation in which a videotape of a Hispanic manager is presented to non-Hispanic managers (Ferdman, 1989). Managers evaluating the Hispanic manager give him higher performance evaluations when he comments on the importance of his ethnicity to himself and his organization.

Consciousness-Raising ("Don't Be Prejudiced")

Consciousness-raising is the opposite of blinding; it encourages the decision maker to have a heightened awareness of the potential cues that could elicit discrimination. The idea of consciousness-raising is to educate people about the tendency to be biased and that employees of the corporation have a responsibility to guard their own behavior carefully. Consciousness-raising, however, may have some negative, unintended boomerang effects.

As a case in point, consider the following actual empirical demonstration (Bodenhausen, Macrae, & Milne, 1998). People were informed about the dangers and limitations of stereotyping and prejudice. In short, they were told that unless people actively work against it, prejudice can bias human judgment and result in unfair discrimination. People who were given this seemingly sage advice would seem to be the most likely to monitor their own behavior and actions in a way that would minimize discriminatory reactions. However, these people expressed even more intergroup bias than did those who were not told to avoid stereotyping. Even more disturbing, the prejudiced people were unaware that their actions were biased.

Why does this seemingly good faith effort to reduce prejudice backfire? The ironic situation arises because of fundamental properties of human control, or how people try to control how they think (Wegner, 1994). To avoid stereotypical reactions, people must monitor their thoughts and behavioral intentions to make sure that they are free of unwanted bias. The problem is that to make sure there is no stereotypical content in one's reactions, people must keep in mind what such reactions would be; thus, in searching for unwanted stereotypes, one must necessarily be aware of them. This heightened accessibility of stereotypical concepts can ironically produce greater discrimination, especially if the person is mentally preoccupied or the motivation to avoid bias dissipates over time (see Bodenhausen et al., 1998).

Similarly, when people are asked to suppress their stereotypical thoughts in imagining the life of a target person belonging to a stereotyped group (e.g., a "skinhead") and later write down their impressions of this group, they form more stereotypical impressions than those who are exposed to the same information but are not told to suppress their stereotypical thoughts (Macrae, Bodenhausen, Milne, & Jetten, 1994). Furthermore, when people are told to suppress stereotypical thoughts about a certain person, they subsequently choose to sit a greater distance from that person (Macrae et al., 1994)! Similar phenomena happen with the mental control of sexism (Erber, Wegner, & Bowman, 1996). The boomerang effect tends to be worse when people are fatigued and tired. Presumably, consciousness-raising has the effect of activating suppressed stereotypes.

stereotypical thoughts pop up to the surface. Thus, consciousness-raising often operates as a prime for activating negative beliefs.

Obviously, companies and programs that advocate consciousness-raising have the best of intentions. This evidence could potentially be used as an excuse for companies to not caution their employees about the dangers of discrimination. We do not advocate silence on these issues. A more effective approach is to also use affirmative action.

Contact

The "mere contact" strategy is based on the principle that greater contact among members of diverse groups increases cooperation between group members. Unfortunately, contact in and of itself does not lead to better intergroup relations, and in some cases may even exacerbate negative relations between groups. For example, contact between African Americans and Caucasians in desegregated schools does not reduce racial prejudice (Gerard, 1983; Schofield, 1986); there is little relationship between interdepartmental contact and conflict in organizations (Brown, Condor, Mathew, Wade, & Williams, 1986); and college students studying in foreign countries become increasingly negative toward their host countries the longer they remain in them (Stroebe, Lenkert, & Jonas, 1988).

Several conditions need to be in place before contact can have its desired effects of reducing prejudice:

- **Social and institutional support:** For contact to work, there should be a framework of social and institutional support. That is, people in positions of authority should be unambiguous in their endorsement of the goals of the integration policies. This fosters the development of a new social climate in which more tolerant norms can emerge.
- **Acquaintance potential:** A second condition for successful contact is that it be of sufficient frequency, duration, and closeness to permit the development of meaningful relationships between members of the groups concerned. Infrequent, short, and casual interaction will do little to foster more favorable attitudes and may even make them worse (Brewer & Brown, 1998). This type of close interaction will lead to the discovery of similarities and disconfirm negative stereotypes.
- **Equal status:** The third condition necessary for contact to be successful is that participants have equal status. Many stereotypes of out-groups comprise beliefs about the inferior ability of out-group members to perform various tasks. If the contact situation involves an unequal-status relationship between men and women, for example, with women in the subordinate role (e.g., taking notes, acting as secretaries), stereotypes are likely to be reinforced rather than weakened (Bradford & Cohen, 1984). If, however, the group members work on equal footing, prejudiced beliefs become hard to sustain in the face of repeated experience of task competence by the out-group member.
- **Shared goal:** When members of different groups depend on each other for the achievement of a jointly desired objective, they have instrumental reasons to develop better relationships. The importance of an overriding, clear, shared group goal is a key determinant of intergroup relations. Sometimes a common enemy is

a war against cancer," members of different medical groups and laboratories can work together.

- **Cross-group friendships:** Sometimes it is not necessary for groups to have real contact with one another to improve intergroup relations. If group members know that another member of their own group has a friendship or relationship with a member of the out-group, or a cross-group friendship, in-group members have less negative attitudes toward the out-group (Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997). It is not necessary that all members of a group have cross-group friendships; merely knowing that one member of the group does can go a long way toward reducing negative out-group attitudes.

Many of these strategies are preventative in their approach warding off unhealthy, destructive, type A competition between groups. What steps can a manager take to deal with conflict after it has erupted?

GRIT and Bear It

The GRIT model, or Graduated and Reciprocal Initiative in Tension Reduction, is a model of conflict reduction for warring groups. Originally developed as a program for international disarmament negotiations, it can be used to deescalate intergroup problems on a smaller, domestic scale as well (Osgood, 1979). The goals of this strategy are to increase communication and reciprocity between groups while reducing mistrust, thereby allowing for deescalation of hostility and creation of a greater array of possible outcomes. The model prescribes a series of steps that call for specific communication between groups in the hope of establishing the "rules of the game." Other stages are designed to increase trust between the two groups as the consistency in each group's responses demonstrates credibility and honesty. Some steps are necessary only in extremely intense conflict situations in which the breakdown of intergroup relations implies a danger for the group members.

Mikhail Gorbachev's decisions in the period from 1986 to 1989 closely resemble the GRIT model (Barron, Kerr, & Miller, 1992). Gorbachev made a number of unilateral concessions that resulted in serious deescalation of world tensions in this period. On two occasions, the Soviets stalled resumption of atmospheric nuclear testing despite their inability to extend the prior treaty with the Reagan administration. They then agreed twice to summit meetings despite the Reagan administration's refusal to discuss the Star Wars defense system. They then agreed to the Intermediate and Strategic Range Nuclear Missile (INF) Treaty (exceeding the United States' requests for verification) with continued refusal by the United States to bargain about Star Wars. Next came agreements on the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany. Eventually, even the staunchly anti-Communist/anti-Soviet Reagan-Bush regime had to take notice. This led to a period of mellowing tensions between these two superpowers (see Table 11-1).

Although the GRIT model may seem overly elaborate and therefore inapplicable to most organizational conflicts, the model clarifies the difficulties inherent in establishing mutual trust between parties that have been involved in prolonged conflict. Although some of the stages are not applicable to all conflicts, the importance of clearly announcing intentions, making promised concessions, and matching reciprocation are relevant to all but the most transitory conflicts.

TABLE 11-1 GRIT Strategy

1. Announce your general intentions to deescalate tensions and your specific intention to make an initial concession.
2. Execute the initial concession unilaterally, completely, and, of course, publicly. Provide as much verification as possible.
3. Invite reciprocity from the out-group. Expect the out-group to react to these steps with mistrust and skepticism. To overcome this, continued concessions should be made.
4. Match any reciprocal concessions made by the out-group and invite more.
5. Diversify the nature of your concessions.
6. Maintain your ability to retaliate if the out-group escalates tension. Any such retaliation should be carefully calibrated to match the intensity of the out-group's transgression.

Source: Barron, R. S., Kerr, N. L., & Miller, N. 1992. *Group Process, Group Decision, Group Action* (p. 151). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Stress and Fatigue Reduction

When people are under stress and feel fatigued, they are more likely to be biased than when they are not stressed. In a dramatic illustration of this, people were asked to classify themselves as either "morning people" or "night people" (most people claim to be at their best early in the morning or late at night; Bodenhausen, 1990). Theoretically, people are more stressed and fatigued when they operate in that part of the day in which they do not excel—that is, morning people are more fatigued in the evening; night people do not function properly in the morning. Most people display more prejudice and stereotyping during the part of the day in which they are least productive (Bodenhausen, 1990).

When people are distracted and are under lots of pressure, it is more difficult for them to monitor their own thoughts and behaviors. In a telling demonstration of this, people were asked to make judgments of people of obvious racial and gender identity. Some people making the judgments were somewhat distracted by having to simultaneously count numbers and do multiplication tables at the same time. When people were distracted in this fashion, their judgments were more racially biased than when they were not under cognitive load.

When people are emotionally aroused, such as with fear or embarrassment, they are more likely to judge others primarily on the basis of stereotypical information (category memberships) rather than on the basis of their actual behavior. For example, a smart juror embedded in an unintelligent jury is more likely to be labeled as unintelligent by emotionally aroused observers than by calm people (Wilder & Shapiro, 1989).

Affirmative Action

Affirmative action involves a deliberate compensatory component; an attribute that is known to be responsible for adverse discrimination is treated instead as if it were a positive qualification for the decision in question. The controversy surrounding affirmative action is noted by its common denotation as "reverse discrimination." Even members of disadvantaged groups may abhor affirmative action. Yet unintended discrimination may only be avoided through deliberate compensation strategies. Consider the case of

American symphony orchestras (Allmendinger & Hackman, 1993). American symphony orchestras have a long tradition of predominantly male membership. Alerted to the possibility of discrimination, orchestras routinely have candidates for vacant positions perform from behind a partition, removing all cues other than the sound of the performance (as an example of blinding). However, if past experience has benefited the performers, the men will maintain relative success.

Affirmative action programs are controversial. Minority group scholars argue that the very presence of affirmative action reinforces the perception that minority groups are inferior and, thus, require special assistance to succeed. Some research evidence indicates that the existence of affirmative action for a group can cause less favorable perception of, and attitudes toward, the group (Maio & Esses, 1998). However, many groups will not achieve fair representation in valuable positions in organizations without affirmative action; eliminating affirmative action guarantees that certain groups will remain unequal. The existence of affirmative action provides a mechanism, at least, to improve the status of these groups.

CONCLUSIONS

People in organizations have a fundamental need to categorize people into groups. This categorization process is automatic and nonconscious. The mere act of categorization creates in-groups and out-groups. Partly for these reasons, conflict between groups and teams in organizations is an inevitable aspect of organizational existence. Not surprisingly, people treat members of in-groups better than members of out-groups, even when the basis for group categorization is completely arbitrary and when the person does not stand to gain from discriminatory behavior. Thus, contrary to popular belief, conflicts among groups in organizations are not always rooted in competition for scarce resources; groups can be in conflict over values—what we call symbolic conflict. All organizational members—leaders, managers, and teams—have a responsibility to work against prejudice and discrimination. Blinding, consciousness-raising, egalitarian contact, tension reduction, and affirmative action are important tools. None is perfect, but used with care and knowledge, they can be effective.