

TRANSFORMING INTERCULTURAL CONFLICT THROUGH THE CONTEXT OF RELATIONSHIP

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The Dancing Monkeys

A PRINCE had some Monkeys trained to dance. Being naturally great mimics of men's actions, they showed themselves most apt pupils, and when arrayed in their rich clothes and masks, they danced as well as any of the courtiers. The spectacle was often repeated with great applause, till on one occasion a courtier, bent on mischief, took from his pocket a handful of nuts and threw them upon the stage. The Monkeys at the sight of the nuts forgot their dancing and became (as indeed they were) Monkeys instead of actors. Pulling off their masks and tearing their robes, they fought with one another for the nuts. The dancing spectacle thus came to an end amidst the laughter and ridicule of the audience.

—Not everything you see is what it appears to be.—

Communication is a complex phenomenon. It is an action and transaction; it is relational, develops relationships, and is within relationships; it is contextual and culturally influenced; it is dynamic; and it creates the social worlds within which we live. There are sets of assumptions we hold when we communicate and one is that the person with whom we are communicating will understand

us in the way we want to be understood. When we pause to consider what happens in the space between people communicating and how many twists and turns our communication can take, it is amazing we can communicate effectively at all.

It is in these twists and turns that conflict can emerge as our perceptions are interpreted through the filters of our worldviews and

frames of reference created and influenced by our cultural orientations, to make meaning. As humans, we are sense-making individuals, and when our interactions with others do not make sense according to our meaning making paradigms, we can become confused (Pearce, 2007). This internal dissonance affects our relationships and influences, or most likely hampers future communication, and conflict is perpetuated.

In this chapter, we explore some characteristics of communication, especially intercultural and the relationship between communication and conflict. If communication can create, perpetuate, and escalate conflict, then it can also be used as a way to transform conflict into something positive and even nurturing. Three critical concepts that will be explored throughout the chapter are ways in which to develop deeper understanding of *self*, *other*, and *context* and ways in which to constructively apply this information (Fisher-Yoshida, 2000). One way in which communication can become more effective is by using a frame that we name, *relationship*, and place it as the highest order of context within which we communicate. This framing suggests a dynamic that we act into, so that our focus and perspective shifts from being only about “me” on the individual level to being about “us” on the relationship level. This relational focus could lead to renaming the person or group we call “opponent,” to “partner,” which calls forth different relational behaviors and norms of communication. The relationship lens becomes stronger, and all understanding and meaning are made through this filter. Suggestions as to how to foster this more effective intercultural communication for better quality relationships and social worlds will be offered. Concepts and practical applications of the five paradoxes to understanding intercultural communication and conflict will be offered. Furthermore, coordinated management of meaning (CMM) and transformative

learning through reflective and reflexive processes will be explored.

ROLE OF CULTURE, COMMUNICATION, AND CONFLICT

Each person and group of people have their own social realities. There are different criteria to determine what constitutes importance, success, relevance, goodness, and so on. To live in the same environment, same social world, and have some semblance of order, we need to share these worlds or at least acknowledge and understand the differences in criteria that created them. Not all of these social realities have the same principles and values; and to live in harmony, we need to have empathy, which is a human connection to understand why people do what they do even if we do not behave the same way or agree with their choices.

Conflict may result when the real or perceived notion that another person or group of people is blocking us from being able to perform activities that we feel we need and deserve (Deutsch, 1973). The intercultural aspects of conflict are when the involved parties experience these differences and incompatibilities across cultures in that they represent different sets of cultural values and norms (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

Our experiences create our worldviews, and these socially constructed patterns are our unquestioned schemes of reference. There are different terms used to frame this concept. Väyrynen (2001) refers to these as our *stocks of knowledge*, and how we determine what is relevant to us and for us is based on these stocks of knowledge. Mezirow (2009) refers to this as *frames of reference* “which are structures of assumptions and expectations on which our thoughts, feelings, and habits are based” (p. 22). Our experiences guide how we act and react, so the more we know about ourselves and the outcomes we desire,

the more mindful and deliberate we can be in our interactions with others. Every action, every message has a consequence. If we more consciously choose our communication to more directly correspond to the outcomes for which we strive, we can achieve more rewarding results.

Another component to this equation is to know and understand the other with whom we are engaged. It serves us well to be aware that we all have different stocks of knowledge and frames of reference, because we all have our own unique sets of experiences and influences that shape our worldviews. These experiences create filters from which new encounters pass through in the process of interpretation and meaning making, which is an iterative process. Figure 30.1 depicts this interaction which is embedded in the influence of culture.

We make meaning in our lives as a way to understand our worlds, and this takes place in the intersection of self, other, and context. As humans, we are constantly looking to understand our situations, perhaps stemming from an instinctive need to survive. Our points of view and understanding are shaped by and open to the cultural influences we have had or currently have, and this is why self, other, and context are embedded in culture.

Worldviews that have compatible definitions of relevance and sets of values result in more effective communication (Schutz, 1967, as cited in Väyrynen, 2001). Opposing or seemingly opposing sets of values and systems of relevance can result in conflict. This can also mean the way in which conflict is framed and the format of how it should be handled including *conflict scripts*, which refer to who attends to the conflict, who speaks, the order and

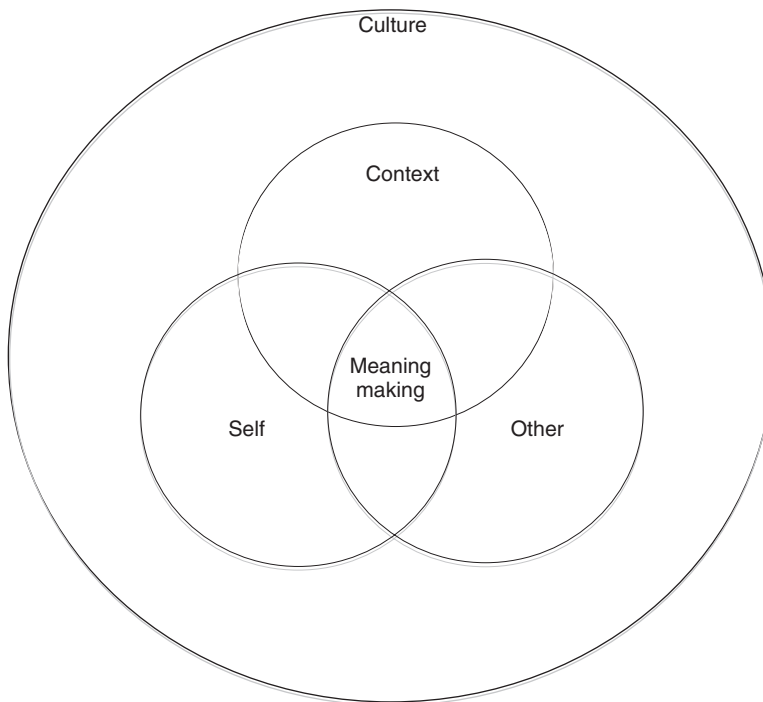


Figure 30.1 Intersection of Self, Other, and Context, Embedded in Culture in Meaning Making

manner in which they speak, and other defining procedures (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

In any conflict situation, there are sets of emotions that occur. Much of the emotional reactions we experience in these settings are not in our conscious minds, but we feel the impact of our emotions, and this brings them to consciousness. Damasio (1999) identifies two biological functions for emotions: One is to induce in us a reaction to a specific stimulus, such as running from danger; the second is to physically prepare our body to engage in this reaction, such as pumping more blood to our legs to enable us to run from danger. Siegel (2007) mentions that emotions can be defined as “a dynamic and central function that integrates behavior, meaning, thinking, perceiving, feeling, relating and remembering” (p. 211). Emotions have an impact on our communication from how we frame and express ourselves to how we interpret and understand others.

In the conflict resolution literature, there is mention of people seeking to satisfy their needs, both tangible and psychological, and when these needs are not met, conflict may result. There are different ways of conceptualizing these needs and their origins. Some believe that needs are sociobiological and that they are universal and all humans have them (Burton, 1990, as cited in Väyrynen, 2001). Others contend that needs are not universal and that they are socially constructed (Väyrynen, 2001). There are implications with how needs are framed because that influences how they are understood and satisfied and how they relate to creating and resolving conflict.

For those holding the *nontotalist* view that needs are socially constructed, their actions to satisfy these needs will be in ways that are culturally sanctified and morally acceptable (Väyrynen, 2001). Others follow the belief that needs are universal, and all people have the same basic needs to fulfill regardless of cultural differences or considerations

(Burton, 1990, as cited in Väyrynen, 2001). This framing is important to how we attempt to resolve conflict.

Goals are established directly relating to the types of needs being addressed. There is a focus on the *content* of the conflict when the substantive issues are of concern; on the *relational* aspects when concern is about the relationship; and on needs addressing issues of validation, rejection, and so on when *identity* is of concern (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). In addition to cultures having an influence on the values, norms, and needs of the people of that culture, it also has an influence on how conflict resolution should be handled. Giving or saving face is a society's way of showing respect and maintaining dignity. Ting-Toomey and Takai (2006) discuss Ting-Toomey's *conflict face negotiation theory* and that there are different ways of addressing concerns of face depending on the orientation of face of the involved parties. There can be *self-face* in which people try to protect their own image, *other-face* when people try to protect the image of the other party, and *mutual-face* in which both sides are concerned about protecting the image of the relationship.

Concerns about face are built on a set of assumptions: all communication in one way or another addresses issues of face; identity-based conflicts are especially sensitive to face concerns; and that all of this is culturally influenced (Ting-Toomey & Takai, 2006). Identities are culturally and socially constructed, and conflict happens when aspects of our identity are denied, which could emerge when we are not in a shared reality with others.

Two cultural dimensions facework pays particular attention to are individualism/collectivism and power distance continuums because these orientations influence the nature of the facework concerns and how they are addressed (Ting-Toomey & Takai, 2006). These dimensions can be thought of as running along a continuum with degrees

of variation influenced by the context (Ting-Toomey, 2010). The flexibility the continuum provides without forcing absolutes, allows for more possibilities in understanding and resolving conflict across cultures. What we pay attention to is culturally induced. Interpretations differ because our own unique worldviews developed from our social worlds create filters from which we perceive, interpret, and make meaning of our experiences.

We pay attention to certain aspects of conversations and interactions, which may be culturally induced. This means that the focal points that are heightened for us, that may lead us to frame our understanding differently than another, could lead to conflict situations. The following section elaborates on how we frame communication.

FRAMES TO UNDERSTAND CONFLICT

People operate from their own frames of reference. We expect the people with whom we interact to share these frames because we think they are universal. This may cause conflict, and to transform it, we need to transform the contradictory frames of reference to create a shared frame. This would make the common ground explicit and would lend itself for cooperative processes and outcomes (Deutsch, 2006).

It is easier to conceptually transform these frames than actually put them into practice. To make this attitudinal and behavioral shift, it is useful to develop empathy for the person with whom we are in conflict. Empathy is a complex phenomenon, and one way to define it is “the ability ‘imaginatively’ to enter into and participate in the world of Other cognitively, affectively, and behaviorally” (Calloway-Thomas, 2010, p. 8). The act of reframing our views of this person based on the terms of reference we currently hold is one way of addressing this relational dynamic.

Another way is to introduce new information to our already established set of criteria, so that we modify the frames of reference we hold, creating new filters from which to interpret and make meaning of this other person.

Martin Buber (1970) distinguished between “I/It” relationships and “I/Thou” relationships. In I/It relationships, the other is treated as object, it is indirect, and there is no mutuality in the relationship, whereas in the I/Thou dynamic, there is mutuality, openness, and understanding. Buber describes how we are made in relation to others. It is in the openness and being present to the other that allows us to *confirm* the other person, requiring empathy to be able to reframe how we understand ourselves, the other, and the situation, away from a conflict frame to that of mutuality. Gergen (2009) talks about this mutuality as reciprocity in relationships. The act of affirming someone can lead to reciprocation, and when both parties reciprocate, caring is generated.

As mentioned earlier, communication is complex, and one of the reasons for this complexity is that we communicate on different levels simultaneously, even if we are not aware of it. There are many contextual frames from which we can view, interpret, and make meaning of our interactions with others. Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, and Rinderle (2006) discuss the value of multilevel research because it provides information from different perspectives that add richness to observations and findings. They framed these levels as macro, exo, meso, and micro. In identifying the contexts within which these levels exist, they framed intercultural, institutional, community/organizational, and interpersonal. Each of these levels and contexts add another dimension of data that we can use in our interpretation and understanding of conflict general and conflict specific.

The challenge of addressing data from so many different perspectives can also be daunting. It begs us to address the hierarchy

of information, influence, and meaning in order to derive useful information to act on. Each participant may frame the conflict differently, and there may not be agreement on the hierarchy of relevance. Their framing reveals information about their worldviews.

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS FRAMING

Culture influences how we frame the experiences in our lives for interpretation and meaning making. There are many dimensions of culture that can be useful in understanding the nuances attributed to each cultural group. Hofstede (1984) conducted research in more than 40 countries in the context of one multinational organization to better understand the definition of culture that he uses as “collective programming of the mind.” The four dimensions that he deduced from his data refer to power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism/collectivism, and masculinity/femininity. Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) developed six dimensions of cultural diversity based on data collected from managers in more than 40 countries. These are universalism/particularism, individualism/communitarianism, specificity/diffusion, achieved status/ascribed status, inner direction/outer direction, and sequential time/synchronous time.

Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) look at cultural dimensions in terms of how they affect the manner in which conflict is addressed. They focus on the two dimensions of individualism/collectivism and power distance and further expound on this concept to highlight the contextual factors of the situation and our individual personality attributes. They developed a culture-based situational model that has four clusters of factors: (1) primary orientation factors (values, norms, and face concerns), (2) situational and relationship boundary features,

(3) conflict communication process factors (style, strategy, and emotional expression), and (4) conflict competence features.

Fisher-Yoshida and Geller (2009) determined that framing these cultural dimensions as problems to solve can generate more problems as remedies swing from one end of the continuum to the other. Instead, they propose framing these cultural dimensions as paradoxes to manage, and the five paradoxes they highlight are the following: (1) paradox of knowing (knowing self and honoring others), (2) paradox of focus (I-centric and we-centric), (3) paradox of communication (communicating across difference—direct and indirect), (4) paradox of action (doing and reflecting), and (5) paradox of response (short-term and long-term). Ting-Toomey (2010) also supports the use of paradoxes because it is more useful to present criteria on a continuum because they coexist within the same culture.

Paradox Framing

I would like to elaborate here on the role of paradox in understanding the dimensions of intercultural communication and how it can lead to both conflict creation and conflict resolution. There are characteristics that stand out as typical of certain cultures or which are followed by the majority of that population. At the same time, with access to faster modes of transportation and the ever-increasing spread of communication through face-to-face and online encounters, there are more and more intercultural influences in every culture. It seems almost impossible to have a list of what to do and what not to do in any given culture since there are so many variables that can alter what is deemed appropriate and constructive. This is why there is value in framing situations as paradoxes to manage along a continuum with a range of possible actions rather than as problems with an approach that reflects one absolute response. It allows us to enter into

every encounter confidently with a mind-set of openness and curiosity and prepared with a set of frames from which to understand the self, the other, and the context.

The *paradox of knowing* is the core and foundational paradox to manage because it is about understanding self and other. We need to understand others and ourselves in order to know the potential impact we have on them. An example of this might be a manager considering staff career development who operates from a cultural orientation that providing for staff to take on responsibilities that allow for more autonomy is a good way to mentor and develop them. If there are staff members who consider being mentored in their roles differently, in that they do not take on more responsibilities until they are promoted into that role with the appropriate title, there can be intercultural conflict. Both parties may have good intentions but hold different assumptions about what it means to be a good manager, good staff member, and how career development should take place. One way of addressing this is during a performance review or career development conversation in which these viewpoints can be shared. If in a context where there is a stronger hierarchical structure, the manager is the more likely person to raise this concern, yet considering it affects both parties, either one can raise this.

The *paradox of focus*, which is the continuum reflecting I- and we-centric orientations, has been one of the more researched dimensions of intercultural communication as Ting-Toomey (2010) explores in her research. There are constant tensions in team or group settings, as for example, in an organizational context in which there is a predominance of team-based work, there are sets of assumptions that accompany how rewards and recognition should be assigned. We-centric cultural orientations may defer to the team being recognized and rewarded, whereas in I-centric cultures, the team and the leading individual

are rewarded. In both team situations, it is known among the team members how much and in what ways each individual contributed, yet it is unspoken in we-centric cultural orientations and explicitly acknowledged in I-centric cultural orientations. The goal is to develop sensitivity to how and when to reward so that more good performance can result. The manner in which rewards are given can be raised during a performance review.

The *paradox of communication* is probably one of the most complex paradoxes. There are so many nuances in communication; even when fluent in a second or third language, it is not always easy to master the sensitivity to appropriate language use that is culturally and contextually shaped. In a recent workshop I was conducting, which had participants from a variety of cultures, there was a long process in deciding how the group should address the task at hand. In fact, even the process about the process had a range of expectations from the facilitator should decide, to the leader should decide, to we collectively give voice and decide. The participants who spoke up about deferring to the leader or the facilitator to decide tended to be from cultures with a larger power distance structure, and the majority of participants who engaged in supporting a more democratic process of decision making were from lower power distance cultures. There were several participants who did not speak up in the larger group, and when pressed for an opinion, they gave voice in a small group. We eventually decided on how to address the task at hand, and for some, the process of deciding was not comfortable. How to engage in decision-making processes can be raised one-on-one or in small groups, so when the time to make decisions arises, the involved parties know and have agreed to the process.

The fourth, *paradox of action*, addresses the continuum of acting and reflecting. Cultures with an emphasis on reflecting find contradictions to the pace of business in the

global economy of today. This has an impact on the process of how teams come together, create action plans, and conduct after action reviews. There is a need for risk assessment, as there are some who have low adversity toward risk and want to plunge forward, while others want to spend more time in getting it right to minimize errors. The process of trial and error works more favorably in cultures such as the United States, while in Japan, the process leading up to a decision on a course of action is much longer in duration. This has been a source of contention with some U.S. and Japanese companies doing business together. The U.S. companies want to execute an action in a shorter time frame than their Japanese counterparts and both feel frustration, with one side being perceived as careless and the other overly cautious.

The fifth and final paradox is that of *paradox of response*, which refers to the dimension of time. This is an obvious source of intercultural conflict as the impact of difference in time is easily and frequently experienced. When meetings are scheduled for 2:00, there are various understandings of what this means. To some, being at the meeting by 1:55 is correct, while for others anytime between 2:00 and 2:20 is suitable because they expect the meeting will not start until 2:30. On the surface level, there is a difference in how much time is being allotted for the task, while on a deeper level, these behaviors are considered rude and disrespectful. For the persons kept waiting, they are irritated at the delay of the meeting. For the persons being berated, explicitly or implicitly, for coming late, they are irritated for being pressured about something seemingly insignificant. This does not bode well on subsequent work together.

We can see that there are many dimensions to consider in intercultural conflict, and while it adds to the richness of the diversity of how we think, feel, and act, it can also be overwhelming in trying to determine how

to intercede (Fisher-Yoshida, 2005). Using reflective processes as a way to review what worked well and to be mindful about how to engage in going forward is a useful activity in addressing these paradoxes. The more we prepare for these occurrences, the more comfortable and productive we can be, so we turn those moments of cultural awkwardness into moments of deep cultural sensitivity through being able to reflect while we are in the moment. (There is more on reflection later on in the Transforming Communication section.) Following is an approach that takes a particular communication perspective that may be useful in managing the five paradoxes as they are applied to intercultural communication and conflict.

COORDINATED MANAGEMENT OF MEANING

CMM is both a practice and a theory that takes a communication perspective (Cronen & Pearce, 1981). CMM has a point of view and models that can be useful in supporting the framing and contextualizing of the conflict. There are three principles in CMM, which are *coordination*, *coherence*, and *mystery* (Pearce, 2004). In interacting with others, we strive to *coordinate* our actions and communication, so that we foster mutual understanding. *Coherence* is our own sense making, in that our experiences fit with our expectations, and we understand what this means to us in our lives at that time. Dissonance is unsettling and may cause anxiety. The third principle, *mystery*, acknowledges the complexity of our world and relationships, and that situations and circumstances are not always what they appear to be. It is more comfortable and causes less anxiety if we view this complexity as something to be curious about rather than fearful of as we strive for coherence. Figure 30.2 depicts how coordination, coherence, and mystery are interconnected.

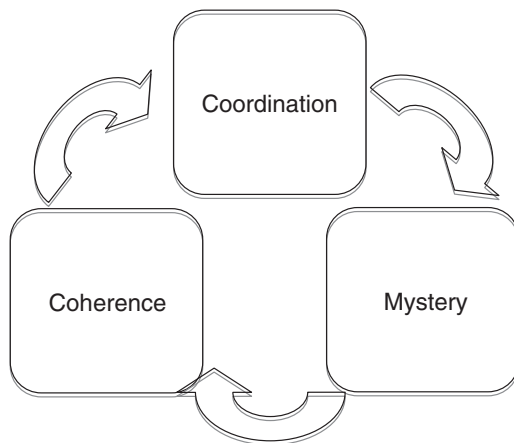


Figure 30.2 Interdependence Among Coordination, Coherence, and Mystery

Together these three principles interact and influence each other. For example, if our communication and interactions with another person are not smooth or clear, the confusion can cause us internal dissonance. We then seek understanding as we try to make sense of our surroundings, and we may accept an explanation that is not complete and perhaps not accurate, but it satisfies our need to know and feel secure. This premature rendering of an explanation will most probably be in alignment with our frames of reference or worldview and may not be considering fully the influence of our conversation partner's worldview frames. We may be omitting important pieces of information that could inform us, but in our haste to squelch the dissonance of not knowing, we jump at the first explanation.

This issue of dissonance, and therefore seeking internal coherence, may deter us from managing paradoxes when dealing with intercultural communication and instead seek an absolute response. To foster better coordination with others across cultures, we need to find ways to be comfortable with the mystery that managing a paradox brings. The danger of acting on biased or uninformed explanations is that we usually do not realize they are ill formed or biased. The five paradoxes to understanding cultural dimensions in combination

with CMM provide us with tools to use as a frame to enter into and more successfully manage intercultural interactions.

CMM uses a *Hierarchy of Meaning Model* (Fisher-Yoshida, 2012; Pearce, 2007) to highlight and differentiate the various contexts and draw attention to the varying levels of meta-communication present within and between these contexts. The meaning we extract from our communication is very much influenced by the context within which the actual words are spoken and actions taken. This specific example will illustrate the point.

Someone performs the *speech act* of moving to a different country and into an environment in which community involvement is core to the way of life. This and other speech acts can take place in the *episode* of the community coming together one Saturday a month to clean the local parks. If I interpret this act through the context of *self*, I may be trying to enjoy my day off from work and feel annoyed by what I consider an unfair imposition because this practice is not familiar. If I instead interpret this act through the context of being a member of the *group* because I now live in the same community, I may interpret this act as a good thing and join in the park cleaning. If I connect with the people calling on me Saturday morning to join their cleaning crew,

Self	Relationship
Episode	Episode
Speech act	Speech act

Figure 30.3 Context of Self and Relationship

I may be viewing it from the context of *relationship*, empathize, feel honored, and join them. Figure 30.3 shows the different hierarchies of how self and relationship may be configured.

The main point of talking through these different levels of context is to highlight that the contextual lens I am using to understand a behavior will directly influence the meaning I make of that behavior and the subsequent actions I take next in response to that speech act. Each context has filters that shape how I frame and understand the speech act because different elements in that context are heightened for me. Cultural influences play a significant role in creating some of those filters, and people involved may make different interpretations, resulting in conflict, which can be exacerbated when communicating across cultures.

RELATIONSHIP AS
HIGHER ORDER CONTEXT

There are many ways to name and frame contexts. If we name the context of *relationship* as the highest order from within which we act and make meaning, it will lend a particular frame to how we understand the communication. Inside the framing of relationship, we place the aspects of *self* and *other* because they

are both part of the dynamic of the interaction that takes place in relationship. The context of relationship with self and other relates directly to the paradox of knowing; the better we know and understand self and other, the better chances we have of being in coordination. Figure 30.4 shows the context of relationship.

Our sense of *self* is created from our cultural norms, values, and beliefs. We may have more than one social identity depending on the role we play in any particular interaction. Am I a student, CEO, father, religious observer, chef, or another role I take on within any given day? One or more of these roles are privileged in each of our interactions because it is from that social identity that we engage in this encounter with another. The *other* person with whom we are engaging also has myriad social identities and elevates one or more of these roles as well. We both may not be agreeing on which social identity role we are interacting with and that can cause serious miscommunication because we frame the communication with different lenses. You may call yourself a freedom fighter, and all your communication and behaviors are explained from that social identity. If I view you as a terrorist, then everything you do or say is going to come through that filter. I interpret, make meaning, and act from that interpretation.



Figure 30.4 Self and Other in Relationship

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There are different ways of defining relationship and the parameters that are used to categorize the different types that exist. For the purposes of assigning relevance to relationship as a context within which we live and interact, we will assume that there is interdependence between the involved parties (Deutsch, 2006). This means that the success or failure of one party directly influences the success or failure of the other; we sink or swim together is a positive interdependence; you sink I swim or vice versa is a negative interdependence. In relationships where we have interdependence, we can choose to be cooperative (positive interdependence) or competitive (negative interdependence), and each orientation has its own set of behaviors, assumptions, and processes (Deutsch, 2006).

Three elements characteristic of interdependence are *substitutability*, *attitudes*, and *inducibility* (Deutsch, 2006). *Substitutability* is a basic function of social life, and that is when we can substitute someone else's actions to satisfy our intentions or needs. We have division of labor, and this is why we can perform some tasks and depend on others to fulfill other tasks, such as farming, building, teaching, and governing. The flip side of this is negative substitutability when we reject or actively try to thwart or counter these actions. *Attitude* refers to our predisposition toward another; are we favorably or unfavorably inclined as this influences how we interpret and understand this other person. *Inducibility* refers to the level of readiness and openness we have in accepting someone else's influence, and the flip side of this is negative inducibility when we actively reject another person's influence.

Substitutability and inducibility are complementary, in that we are more favorable to those who help us and thus more willing to reciprocate, and those who we perceive as harmful to us we will reject and not help (Deutsch, 2006). Our attitude influences how we view the substitutability-inducibility

dynamic, and this dynamic also influences our attitudes. They are all interconnected within the context that we label as relationship. Differences may occur across cultures in how we recognize and respond to acts of substitutability and inducibility. We may look for certain behaviors to depict which people we find helpful, and in what ways and how we want to reciprocate. This reciprocation may or may not be recognized as such by someone viewing and interpreting these acts from different cultural lenses. So an act of "helping" may not be viewed as such and may in fact be viewed as the exact opposite.

We frame our understanding based on our attitude, the structure of the relationship, and the cultural and social lenses we bring. The history of our relationship also plays a key role in how we interpret subsequent conversations and interactions. In social interactions, especially conflict situations, we tend to get caught up in unwanted repetitive patterns (URPs), because we follow rules of communication that set certain dynamics in motion to elicit familiar behaviors and responses (Cronen, Pearce, & Snively, 1979). These rules are culturally created and socially endorsed. To move beyond these URPs toward more productive patterns of communication, we need to shift our perspectives, and one way of doing this is by reframing the context. Instead of my story or your story, we envision and live into "our" story.

Pearce and Littlejohn (1997) refer to this type of communication as *transcendent* in that it highlights a metastory that overarches the individual stories of the groups involved in the conflict. This is impactful, because as humans we are social beings, who are linguistically connected and use stories as a means of developing our individual and collective identities. New stories can be cocreated that are inclusive of different cultural values and behaviors and use this inclusiveness to build on the context of relationship in managing effective communication across cultures. Conflict will most

likely still occur, and it can be an opportunity for this transcendence as we consider ourselves as members of a larger expanded community (Briskin, Erickson, Ott, & Callanan, 2009). This concept of transcendence offers a different way of thinking about conflict, and the next section will discuss ways in which we can transform our communication to language of *we* in relationship.

TRANSFORMING COMMUNICATION

In shifting the focus of our actions and communication from dualistic us versus them to language of many possibilities encompassed in the concept of relationship, we have the potential to create better social worlds. We can do this by altering the language and nature of our communication and the types of patterns we develop by identifying common ground between and among us. Language and communication are culturally bound, as is conflict. Language constitutes our reality and since our social worlds are socially constructed, we have the ability to construct the type of world within which we want to live through our communication. We can build a sense of community in these social worlds we are creating.

True community does not come into being because people have feelings for each other (though that is required, too), but rather on two accounts: all of them have to stand in a living relationship to a single living center, and they have to stand in a living, reciprocal relationship to one another. (Buber, 1970, p. 94)

We need to collectively think through the social construction of meaning that we are cocreating and the coordination and management of this meaning, especially in the event we do not have shared goals, values, beliefs, and ways of behaving in our social worlds due to cultural orientation differences. In this section, I explore transforming communication with

consideration of the language and word choice we use, which is connected to our level of consciousness, readiness, and capacity to select more constructive language. We can further develop and raise our level of consciousness by becoming more aware of our worldview influences and reflective processes that lead to more mindful choices.

In conflict situations, our emotions shift from our normal state, and these heightened emotions influence the way we communicate. Some of us may become more direct, and this may have a negative impact on those who prefer more indirect styles of communication, especially as it relates to conflict; and for those wanting more direct communication, they may become frustrated with what they consider as vagueness and lack of clarity in an indirect style. Others may become more obviously emotional in the manner in which they communicate, and when communicating with those who operate on less emotional expressivity, it may shut them down, while the reverse of this would be someone expecting a heightened level of emotional expressiveness and when not seeing it displayed think the person is cold and indifferent. Keeping the paradox of communication in mind and carefully selecting our language may work to better balance our emotions as we strive to express our feelings in a way that is palatable to the other, while discerning the feelings of the other. When done well, we in fact may diffuse the conflict, and with more mindfulness, we can better determine the course of these interactions (Siegel, 2007). In elevating relationship as the highest order context, we create communities within which we live.

Our ability to be more mindful about the type of language we use in our communication is directly related to our level of consciousness. Kegan et al. (2001) identify levels of consciousness that influence how we think, what we pay attention to, and how we express ourselves including the ability to

make changes in our communication. These levels of consciousness are referred to as *ways of knowing*, and it is Levels 3, 4, and 5 that have particular relevance here. The developmental sequence before Level 3 includes Level 1 typical of infants in which they think objects in the world around them are extensions of themselves and Level 2 when they start to realize that they have some control over their reflexes. In Level 3, *Instrumental Knowing*, we are concrete learners and pay attention to what is tangible. We notice what is within our perspectives and do not have the capacity to take the view of another if their views differ from our own. Showing empathy may be challenging at this level and can affect communication and the social world or the communities we create, because we cannot take the leap into experiencing the perspective of another. This means that in communicating across cultures, we may learn about and adapt certain traditions and characteristics of the other culture but cannot manage paradoxes and ambiguity well. In situations where managing paradoxes is critical because of the ambiguity, but we are operating on Instrumental Knowing, we may shut down, become rigid, or blame the other for not cooperating.

Level 4, *Socializing Knowing*, allows us to in a more reflective way connect with others through relationship. We are in touch with our own values and beliefs as well as the other person's. This level of knowing allows us to move beyond our own frames of reference and expand to acknowledge and understand the world of the other, in the context of relationship, which is what makes building community possible. We tend to be nonjudgmental about our cultural differences and have the capacity to be curious and accepting. In Level 5, *Self-Authoring Knowing*, there is even greater control in how we frame our perspectives, what we consider to be relevant, and how we structure our relationships. In Level 4, we can focus on the relationship as it exists, and in Level 5, we

are able to reconstruct the parameters of the relationship. This means that in the context of relationship, we are able to not only acknowledge and respect each other's values and norms of behavior, but we can actually create new ones that fit this particular context we are creating in relationship. We need the ways of knowing characteristics of Levels 4 and 5 to be able to transcend from conflict to community in the process of building better social worlds, through connection and communication, especially when there are worldview differences that exist across and within cultures.

One way we might develop these higher levels of consciousness toward socializing and self-authoring ways of knowing is through reflective and reflexive processes. This can be achieved through reflective processes *on-action* and reflexive processes *in-action* (Schon, 1983). These processes require us to reflect on our assumptions and beliefs that we acquired through the experiences of our frames of reference that form our worldview, which have a strong grounding in our culture. When we reflect after an action, an interaction, or a communication has taken place, we *reflect-on-action*. It is retrospective in the sense that we think back over what transpired, the quality of our interactions and communication; and it is forward looking in that this mindfulness can lead toward a different type of preparation and interaction going forward.

Reflecting-in-action is what Fisher-Yoshida and Nagata (2002) refer to as being *reflexive* in that while we are experiencing an interaction or communication, we are at the same time engaging in a metalevel observation of ourselves being in the moment. Instead of waiting to reflect after a particular situation is finished, we have the chance to reflect and select a course of action or redirection of our action in the midst of the communication unfolding. Ideally, the more we perform reflection-on-action, the better we will develop our skills to be more reflexive in the moment.

Another aspect of reflective processes is to use *critical self-reflection* that frames reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action in a particular way. Taylor (2009) identifies three forms of critical self-reflection that take place in the process of transforming our perspectives and worldview. These are (1) reflecting on the *content*, which is what we see, feel, and perceive; (2) reflecting on how we perform the functions of perceiving, which is about the *process* of perception; and (3) reflecting on the *premise* of why we even perceive. When we reflect on the content of a conflict, we are focusing on the substantive issues. Content, process, and premise can be used as an organizing framework for reflection-on-action or reflection-in-action.

When we consciously focus on applying the five paradoxes to understanding our intercultural interactions better, and if we are using them in the moments of interaction, we are reflecting-in-action. This metaperspective allows us to be more mindful of where on the paradox continuums we want to be in communication with others. Having this metaperspective allows us to make wiser choices toward more effective outcomes.

When we are in conflict situations, we are experiencing different realities, because our worldviews shape what we experience, and no two sets of worldview experiences are the same. To move past these differences and incommensurate sets of values, we reach critical moments or bifurcation points in which we need to make critical decisions (Pearce, 2007). First, we need to realize that these are critical moments and that we have these choice points from which to decide our course of action. Reflecting on the five paradoxes in these moments is one strategy to use to better understand some of these choices. We need to consider how to create a shared reality with the other party from which we create community. This is done by being open, flexible, reflective, and reflexive, as we live into

relationship as the highest order of context. According to Kegan et al. (2001), it calls for a fourth or fifth level of consciousness and the creation of new norms that are mutually created in relationship.

Prioritizing relationship as the highest order of context is in alignment with the collaborative quadrant of the dual concern model, in which a high level of importance is given to both our own needs and degree of assertiveness, while at the same time being very focused on satisfying the needs of the other through cooperation (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). We become more mindful of our approaches to conflict and can use these models as a guide about the choices we make when we reach critical moments.

Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) expand the dual concern model to an eight-style conflict grid that considers an intercultural approach. The Pruitt and Rubin model (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993) has the styles of inaction or avoiding; contending, dominating, or competing; obliging, yielding, or accommodating; integrating, collaborating, or problem solving; and compromising. Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) add *emotional expression*, *third party help*, and *neglect* as three additional approaches used by some cultures as tactical conflict behaviors.

This eight-style conflict grid later developed into the cultural values dimension grid (Ting-Toomey & Takai, 2006) in which four approaches to intercultural conflict were identified. These four quadrants are based on the two dimensions of individualism/collectivism and small and large power distance, and they are (1) impartial conflict approach (individualism and small power distance); (2) status achievement conflict approach (individualism and large power distance); (3) benevolent conflict approach (collectivism and large power distance); and (4) communal conflict approach (collectivism and small power distance).

Now that we have reviewed some ways in which we can transform our communication, the underlying concepts, and levels of readiness needed, I will present a case study to further illustrate these points. The case study helps bring these concepts to life. First will be the background of the case study, followed by some discussion points, and then a look at the case from the viewpoints of context and sequence using the lens of CMM. CMM will provide alternative ways of framing the case as a vivid example of how we can transform communication through framing relationship as the highest order context.

“LIVING WELL” CASE STUDY

This case study of a real-life context brings a tangible and practical aspect to these concepts. The following description is of a global organization that has its headquarters in Canada and operates in a substantial number of countries around the world.

“Living Well” is a multinational organization in the pharmaceutical industry. They have business centers in more than 40 locations in the world in which they operate. Not all business centers have the same areas of focus, yet they fully represent the organization. This can be from research collaboration amongst scientists in the different laboratories, to conducting seminars with universities on the latest pharmaceutical developments, to partnering in joint ventures with other related organizations. In another five locations, in countries where one of the 40 Business Centers is not located, there are Field Offices set up in which a narrower range of the specific services needed in those locations are offered. Over the years these Field Offices have increased the number of services they have been offering on a regular or on an as needed basis, yet they have not reached the full service offering of a Business Center.

The organization represents more than 70 countries in their staff and management levels. The heads of most of the Business Centers and Field Offices are of the country in which the center or office is located. English is the main language of business communication across the organization, and in each location, the local languages are also used. The heads of these Business Centers and Field Offices are well connected in their communities in political and industry circles. They tend to understand the cultural nuances, including who holds the power and how to “get things done” appropriately in each context. Headquarters and other locations do not always see the value in how other locations operate because their practices differ.

There have been occasions over the past few years when members of the organization have conducted business in one of the five countries in which these Field Offices are located, without involving the field office. These members have had direct contacts on the ground in those countries and either did not see the necessity or relevance of reaching out through the Field Offices, especially if these visits were a “one off” arrangement and not a fuller commitment. The staff in the Field Offices have found out about these visits and business arrangements either as they are about to happen or after they have taken place and they have felt slighted, not significant and somewhat marginalized by their own organization. These individual meetings and business opportunities that happen outside of the Field Offices are usually successful and the Field Offices think the organization doesn’t find the need to be inclusive. However, when there is a situation in which the help of the Field Office is needed the organization does not hesitate to seek Field Office support. The representatives in those countries feel they can add value that is not being recognized by the organization or their colleagues.

The individual Field Office leaders have voiced concerns to their manager overseeing all Field Offices about these scenarios. In turn, the manager of the field offices has gone

to her vice president (VP) to discuss ways in which the field offices are being marginalized by these actions and that she would like the VP's office to declare to the rest of the organization that it is critical to involve the Field Offices in their overseas endeavors in those five countries. The VP has been reluctant to do so. The Field Office manager thinks it is because of their interpersonal dynamic and that he doesn't see the value in involving the Field Offices as long as these transactions are successful without their involvement. The VP has stated that when the Field Offices need to be involved they will be and that since they are not fully functioning Business Centers there is no organizational mandate that forces their involvement. If and when they develop into fuller Business Centers, then there will be a different set of protocol, and of course at that time, they will more fully represent the organization.

They are stuck in this dynamic and thus far no resolution has been reached. There is information that is explicit and then a wealth of additional information that is not as obvious. Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) use the ODIS (Observe, Describe, Interpret, and Suspend Evaluation) model to foster more mindful observation of the individual players and dynamic interactions between and among them. CMM models can map out what has been taking place and the underlying assumptions and cultural influences that have been felt but not named. This mapping process can facilitate moving from identifying these issues to surfacing what is underneath and fueling them to move this toward constructive resolution. The worldview perspectives these participants hold based on their frames of reference and cultural influences are influencing how they understand and act into these circumstances. There seems to be a lack of awareness of these differing worldviews causing some of the disagreements and misplaced emotional reactions and hurt feelings (Mezirow, 2000). Working on the

paradox of knowing for a deeper understanding of self and other can support cocreating a healthier and more productive context of relationship.

UNDERSTANDING CONTEXT

The ordering of these layers of context is important because each layer influences how communication is understood. The higher the level of context, the more impactful it is, so that the highest order of context influences how everything else is understood and acted on from that perspective because everything else takes place within it.

In taking a communication perspective, each speech act is understood based on the episodes within which they occur, and these episodes happen within different levels of context. In the case study, "Living Well," we can identify several speech acts, episodes, and contexts. We look at the different contextual mappings from the viewpoints of both the Field Offices' and Headquarters' perspectives.

The Field Offices view themselves as representatives of the organization in the countries within which they are located. They expect that when the organization conducts any business in that location, the Field Office will be directly involved in one way or another, from actively organizing and participating in the event to being notified as a courtesy that an event will be taking place without their participation. The Field Office places *Self* as the highest order of context, and it influences how they understand this dynamic. This is depicted in Table 30.1.

On the other hand, Headquarters sees this scenario differently because they have placed Episode as the highest order of context. For them, represented in this particular scenario by scientists from their R&D (Research and Development) department, the opportunity to participate in a meeting with peers to advance

Table 30.1 Contextual Mapping From Field Office Perspective

Self	The Field Office feels slighted, is insulted, and this reinforces their feelings of being viewed as less competent and relevant members of the organization
Episode	Representatives in the Field Office hear from important industry representatives in their location about a delegation from the organization that will visit them, but they didn't notify the Field Office that they will be coming
Relationship	Field Offices think they are part of the same organization, but they do not feel valued by the Headquarters
Speech act	Organization representatives come to the place where the Field Office is located and do not notify the Field Office

Table 30.2 Contextual Mapping From Headquarters Perspective

Episode	Being invited to attend a meeting with potential partnering laboratories to further develop our R&D capacities
Relationship	We connect directly with other accomplished scientists for R&D; this is not a Business Center location, so they do not offer the R&D support we need
Self	We are accomplished scientists advancing the R&D capabilities of this organization
Speech act	Attending a meeting with potential partnering laboratories in a location where there is a Field Office

NOTE: R&D = research and development.

their pharmaceutical capabilities is the highest order of context on which every decision and action is based. To fulfill this action, they reviewed what steps were needed to be taken, and engaging with the Field Office was not a priority because they did not see the value or necessity of it, which is shown in Table 30.2.

The scientists from the R&D department in the organization connect directly with their counterparts in the location they will be visiting. This level of relationship is more meaningful to them because of the differentiation they make in their minds about Business Centers and Field Offices. From their perspective, they have no obligation to be involved with the Field Office because company regulations does not state that they should.

Sequence of Events

Our responses to others within a relationship context are influenced by a number of

factors. In each situation we experience, there are critical moments or choice points at which we can make conscious decisions about how we will respond. This depends on the level of consciousness from which we operate (e.g., instrumental, socializing, and self-authoring levels), how self- and other-aware we are, and the skills we have to carry forth our intentions. The degree of self- and other-awareness we have developed in the paradox of knowing is significant in determining the outcomes.

We can refer back to our case study to use it as an example. When the Field Office found out about the R&D group's visit, they could have acknowledged their feelings of being excluded among themselves and bracketed those feelings for the time being, so that they wouldn't cloud the next stages of the communication. They could have invited the R&D group into a conversation inquiring about the purpose of their visit and seeking to identify ways in which they could be of help. The

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R&D group may not have been cognizant of the ways in which the Field Office could support them, so we cannot assume that they did know and that this was a deliberate omission. Going forward, they could gather information in advance of any visits to determine the potential needs of their colleagues, continue to build interpersonal relationships so they can build their self-worth and informally learn about pending visits, and perhaps have a larger-scale strategic conversation with others in the organization to fully explore the vision and function of the Field Offices. Another point of consideration is that the Field Offices may not have the capacity to support the R&D initiative, so they may need to discriminate between what they can realistically support and what they have to let Headquarters manage directly.

An example of this transaction can be as follows:

- Field Office:

We heard you are coming to our location, and we wondered why we were not notified of your impending visit.
- R&D Team:

Well, we are meeting with our R&D counterparts, and since you are not a Business Center and probably don't offer services to support us, we didn't think it necessary to involve you.
- Field Office:

(critical moment of how to respond) Well, perhaps this is an opportunity for us to understand more about what you need and for you to know more

about our capabilities. If we can support you, we would like very much to be involved in ways that makes sense to both of us. If not, then perhaps through our contacts, we can point you in the direction of others who can support you.

This can potentially be a difficult conversation for both parties, especially the Field Office, because of their emotional investment in wanting to be acknowledged and valued. By recognizing and bracketing their emotions to be able to lead with an invitation for an exploratory conversation, the R&D team feels welcomed and not defensive about their past actions. Even if there is not a role for the Field Office to play in this particular event, they set the tone of collaboration and receptivity for others in the organization, and this will be a good foundation from which to grow future relationships.

This places *relationship* as the highest order of context instead of *self* for the Field Office and *episode* for Headquarters. The Hierarchy Model for this interaction could be transformed into this instead, as shown in Figure 30.5.

An important note to consider is that before transforming the individual structuring of context into a shared context, there will be need for recognition and respect placed on the context that each party brings. This is a critical step in the process of building relationship, transforming communication, and thereby changing the nature of our relationships. There may be instances in which a shared context cannot be achieved, and at least knowing

Relationship	Self and Other
Episode	
Speech act	

Figure 30.5 Transformed Hierarchy of Context for “Living Well”

and understanding why we name and place the order of context the way we do as well as why our counterparts select their level of context to act into is a first step toward any type of conflict transformation and potential reconciliation.

STRATEGIES FOR TRANSFORMING CONVERSATIONS

The strategies and techniques mentioned throughout the chapter can be aligned within three main areas: context, self, and other, which are shown in Figure 30.1. Using these three areas to frame how we focus our attention provides us with an organizing mechanism to address the many levels of complexity inherent in communication. This more focused view will aid in transforming our understanding because we have shifted our attention. It also serves as a framework from within which to select the tools that will provide us with the most useful insights to use for developing more constructive relationships.

Addressing Context Through Episode Work

The level of context that we place as the highest order has the most influence over how we understand, make meaning, and then act into our communication and interactions with others. We advocate that if we place *relationship* as the highest order of context, it will more constructively influence how we interface with others. If we hold our own interests and needs as the highest order, we will not pay the appropriate amount of attention to the interests and needs of others, and this will lead to a more competitive stance and deteriorate our relationship.

Within relationship is concern for self and other, so our needs and the needs of our communication partner will both be considered. Of

course, to frame our communication with relationship as the overarching context, we need to realize the value of the relationship, both short and long term. This requires energy and determination to pursue because it can be challenging considering our worldview differences and degrees of emotional investment. The short- and long-term perspectives can be explored well through the use of the paradox of response in which time factors are considered.

To move toward this contextualization of relationship as the highest order of context, we want to do “episode work” to create certain episodes that will allow this shift in context to happen (Pearce, 2007). There are many ways to foster these episodes, and two broad categories of activities can be either *planned* or *emergent* (Pearce, 2007). In planned episode work, we are consciously intentional on how we will generate communication and how we will respond to others, so that we elicit what will lead to constructive relationship building. We recognize that we have choice, and we identify in advance the choices that will create the episode we desire to make better social worlds. This can be done in preparation through reflection-on-action and while it is occurring through reflection-in-action. In emergent episode work, we are focused on both the content, as in planned episode work, and on the process as well, looking for opportunities to constructively act into relationship as the highest order context. This is putting reflection-in-action into practice as we view the episode from a metaperspective.

One useful way of being able to engage in this effort is by better understanding who we are and what we bring to our interactions with others. Transformative learning can support this effort through the exploration of identifying our worldview, values, assumptions, and ways of seeing the world that may be implicitly influencing our choices, characteristic of paradox of knowing.

Addressing Self Through Transformative Learning

As adults, we reason and make judgments based on our frames of reference, which influence how we perceive, interpret, and make meaning of our social worlds. These frames of reference are formed by our life experiences from a variety of contexts and relationships and constitute our beliefs, values, assumptions, and feelings (Mezirow, 2009). Typically, we are not aware of these factors that influence our choices unless something happens to alert us to these implicit processes we follow. The more aware we are of these tacit belief systems, the more we can understand and shape them toward future decisions and actions. This is especially useful in being more deliberate in the way we interact with others to develop our relationships and frame relationship as the highest order context. We need to know as much as possible about ourselves, so that we can better align our intent with the impact we have on others. This supports why the paradox of knowing is foundational to developing better quality relationships.

Mezirow (2000) identifies 10 phases of learning that are part of the transformative process, and they are as follows: (1) have a disorienting dilemma; (2) self-examine; (3) assess assumptions critically; (4) recognize connection between discontent and transformation process; (5) explore options or new roles, relationships, and actions; (6) plan course of action; (7) acquire knowledge and skills for plan; (8) try new roles; (9) build competence and self-confidence; and (10) reintegrate new perspective into life. A disorienting dilemma can come about as a result of realizing that there are different interpretations in an action or communication and that not everyone views the world the way we do. We learn it by the impact it has on us, which is typically unexpected. These transformations

can be epochal, in which they happen all at once, or incremental when the change creeps up on us more slowly and is not as immediately obvious.

There are certain elements that foster transformative learning to take place. This in turn can lead toward more developed self-awareness. Taylor (2009) draws attention to being aware of the personal and sociocultural factors in the context of these interactions as they play a role in influencing our perceptions and behavior. Intercultural interactions when viewed from a learning stance are prime examples of when transformative learning can take place. Brookfield (1987) stresses the importance of critical reflection, so that we uncover the assumptions that guide us toward having certain reactions, feelings, and judgments. From critically reflecting on our assumptions, we can see where on the continuums within the five paradoxes we are placing our interactions and why, so that we can learn more about ourselves and others.

This all works toward increasing our self-awareness, which is a precursor for more developed interpersonal relationships with others. The connection here is that the more we know ourselves, the better able we will be to gauge our impact on others. This is especially important as we communicate across cultures. The more self- and other-aware we are and the more we work toward living into relationship as the framing for the higher order context, the better we will be at bridging across different cultural perceptions and values.

Addressing Other Through Intercultural Competence

There are different frameworks to consider in developing awareness of how we understand cultural similarities and differences. As mentioned earlier, Fisher-Yoshida and Geller (2009) identify the five paradoxes

of communicating transnationally, such as paradox of knowing, which is knowing self and honoring others as the core awareness that underlies all other types of cultural dimensions. This echoes the emphasis on addressing self and other through transformative learning and intercultural competence. In this transition from knowing self to knowing other, we focus on the cultural influences that shape who we are, how we understand and make meaning of the world around us, and how we act on this knowledge. This is core to us being able to elevate and live into the context of relationship constructively.

Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) identify four criteria of what they term *intercultural conflict competence* and that is appropriateness and effectiveness paired with satisfaction and productivity. The core of successfully acting on these criteria is mindfulness of communication through paraphrasing what you hear your conversation partner say; of reframing to create alternatives to understand the behavior in different and novel ways; of being reflexive in identifying our own assumptions we bring with us and that affect our interactions with others. In addition, it is important to continually validate our own identities and the identities of others because so much conflict is caused by intentionally or unintentionally violating identity boundaries; doing facework to manage the giving and receiving of face so as not to lose face; and balancing the power dynamics as much as possible.

Some of this work can be done on our own and in direct relations with others. There are times when we are not ready or able to do this work without the support of a third-party facilitator. In addition, there are many cultural orientations that require the use of a third-party intervener, because it is inappropriate to be face-to-face with the party with whom

we are in conflict. There are different ways of assessing the role of this third-party person or the qualifications they bring. Following are some suggestions as to how this can work in action. This is not a comprehensive list, so specific cultural differences will need to be taken into consideration as context is an important influencing factor.

ROLE OF FACILITATOR

Many of the processes we have discussed thus far in this chapter rely on a particular mind-set and set of skills that not everyone possesses. Even if we do have the skills requisite to shift or transform the nature of our communication and relationships, we may not have access to that positive and collaborative mind-set necessary to employ them. This is where the third-party facilitator role can play a useful part in changing the communication patterns to form these new social worlds. The person in this role can help the involved parties shift the context within which they are communicating to relationship as the highest order of context.

A third-party intervener in the role of participant observer can surface insights not immediately known to participants, and they can do this by noticing and redirecting destructive communication patterns. They can make these patterns explicit and then bring this to the attention of the participants. For example, when using the continuums of the five paradoxes, they can notice and draw attention to where on the continuums the parties are engaging. They can then explore with the parties alternative ways of communicating that will elicit different types of responses more conducive to collaborative dialogue and better quality relationships. The more the facilitator can model these skills, the better able the parties will be to see how they are used in action.

This can also help earn more credibility for the third-party intervener.

In essence, new forms of communication may need to be learned, modeled, and integrated into the communication dynamics. It is up to the facilitator to determine the level of readiness to learn these new skills, and part of that is determined by the mind-set of the involved parties. Together they can cocreate the mutually acceptable norms for the context of relationship.

CONCLUSION

More research is needed to further explore these ideas and their impact, so that they can be refined in ways that are practical and useful. Developing self-awareness needs to be foundational in any work we do in practice. It is a cornerstone in moving forward to create better relationships and social worlds. In addition to this would be developing a broader and deeper understanding of others. More scholarly applied research can be conducted to see the impact of these ideas and practices on people and their relationships. Capturing narratives and case studies that explore the support and challenges experienced when applying these methods can be useful. For larger-scale theoretical generalizations, perhaps implementing these practices and concepts into wide-scale organizational learning and development, to measure the systemic impact. These concepts and practices can be integrated into the human resource systems in organizations, so that recruiting, talent management, and career development impacts are also considered. The increase in multinational and multicultural organizations calls for this type of learning.

Conflict across cultures is frequent and often unpleasant. There are ways to address this phenomenon and that begins with the mind-set to want to make a difference by doing something different. The three broad categories

under which many approaches and techniques were explored in this chapter are developing a deeper understanding of self, other, and context. The involved parties will need to make this effort, so that they improve their skills, develop higher capacity of consciousness, and elevate relationship as the overarching context. Useful tools through considering the five paradoxes toward deeper intercultural understanding, a communication perspective with the use of CMM, and reflective practices to transform perspectives and relationships were shared. This could be the beginning of transforming intercultural communication into better quality conversations, better quality relationships, and better social worlds.

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