

Chapter 4

Leadership Strategies

Lesson 1

Celebrating Differences— Culture and Individual Diversity



Key Terms

culture
discrimination
ethnic
inclusionary
impartial
intimacy
minority
stereotypes
synergy

What You Will Learn to Do

- Employ strategies for neutralizing the impact of personal prejudices and stereotypes on your relationships with others

Linked Core Abilities

- Take responsibility for your actions and choices
- Treat self and others with respect

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Identify how people display prejudice toward others
- Identify reasons for discrimination and stereotyping
- Describe ways a leader can guide diverse groups to work together as a team
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Chapter 4

Introduction

Captain Kirk, Lieutenant Uhura, Lieutenant Sulu, Ensign Chekhov, Mr. Spock, Worf, Data, and Geordi La Forge—what a cast of characters! The crew members were international, interplanetary, half-human and half-vulcan, and humanoid and blind with a visor for seeing. Yes, *Star Trek* and *Star Trek: The Next Generation* raised some issues about diversity.

Synergy is when you and your team members cooperate together and create better results than they could get working alone. Each individual is unique and you must value that uniqueness, just like Captain Kirk and his crew did. Real synergy is celebrating differences, teamwork, open-mindedness, and finding new and better ways of doing things.

On July 26, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed Executive Order 9981. This order called for the integration of the armed forces and an end to discrimination against soldiers because of race, color, or creed. Although the Army completed its desegregation in the 1950s, the assignment of whites and members of **minority** groups to the same units did not ensure total equality, racial harmony, or a fully integrated Army. The Army, similar to society at large, began to address the questions and challenges of the race issue seriously in the 1960s. Today, every Army element is expected to have an active race relations and equal opportunity program. Laws and regulations provide guidelines to ensure the execution of these programs.

Employees of private organizations as well as members of the military come from all walks of life, different geographical areas, and numerous racial and **ethnic** backgrounds. They bring with them their own challenges and prejudices. The leader's challenge is to direct members of these diverse groups in a way that will cause them to work together as a team. It is not an easy task, but is one that can be accomplished through informed, fair, and impartial leadership and educational awareness.

Values and Attitudes

Values and attitudes are important to the daily functioning of our lives. They help form the basis of how you see yourself and those around you as individuals, how you see others, and how you interpret the world in general. As a leader, you will often be involved with individuals who have different values and attitudes from your own; you have probably already experienced many of these differences. Some may have been due to religious or cultural backgrounds; others may have stemmed from racial or ethnic backgrounds.

In your role as a leader, you will also be a counselor and a helper. To communicate well with others, it is necessary for you to understand the dynamics involved with the value and attitude differences that occur within each human being and that can come between people.

Key Note Terms

synergy – a joint action or force

minority – a racial, religious, or ethnic group different from the dominant group

Key Note Term

ethnic – of, pertaining to, or characteristic of the basic groups of people with a common history, language, culture, and identity

Note

Values affect daily interaction of individuals. A clear understanding of one's own value system is helpful when trying to understand others.

There are cultural differences and similarities in assigning levels of importance to values. In a study that evaluated the levels of importance 29 values in 5 cultures, none of them were shared by all five cultures as *primary values* (values that are most important to an individual and worth dying for, such as one's country, patriotism, freedom, or religion) or *secondary values* (values that are important but not worth dying for, such as money). Other values evaluated by the study were respect for youth, human dignity, hierarchy, authoritarianism, education, and frankness.

As a member of society, you are involved daily with attitudes and behavior and must understand how one affects the other. As you can see in the following, there is a continuous chain relationship between them:

- **My attitudes affect my behavior.**
- **My behavior affects your attitudes.**
- **Your attitudes affect your behavior.**
- **Your behavior affects my attitudes.**

Attitudes can have positive or negative implications. Although they can help make sense out of life experiences, individuals cannot change them easily. Furthermore, you may not always be aware of the extensive influences that your attitudes have on other people, jobs, and situations or how they can affect a person's learning, personality, prejudices, and productivity.

Self-Concept

As a leader, you will constantly be dealing with people. It will make your job a lot easier if you know and have an idea of who you are and how you relate to others. You need to know how you are perceived by others.

The most important single factor affecting people's communication with others is their self-concept, that is, how they see themselves and their situations. Although situations may change from moment-to-moment or place-to-place, people's beliefs about themselves are always determining factors in their communicative behavior. People have literally thousands of concepts about themselves: who they are, what they stand for, where they live, what they do and do not do, what they value, and what they believe.

Self-concept is the picture you have of yourself as seen through your own thoughts, development, perceptions, and feelings.

- **Development** is the way you feel about yourself, which has a direct relationship to your upbringing; it includes values and attitudes.
- **Perception** refers to the interpretation and the amount of “emotional charge” attributed to past events and present situations.
- **Feelings** refer to the positive or negative, good or bad, indifference or intensity, of emotions or interpretation of oneself.

Contrary to what you would like, you cannot buy self-concept/personality attributes from a store. Your personality is a combination of heredity and life experiences. To gain a better understanding of self-concept, where it comes from, and how it develops, look at the main ingredients: heritage and needs fulfillment/emotional development.

Heritage

As soon as you came into this world, society classified you in terms of the following:

- **Gender**, such as male, female
- **Race**, such as white, black, Hispanic, Asian
- **Nationality**, such as American, German, Irish, Swedish
- **Religion**, such as Catholic, Jewish, Muslim
- **Family status**, such as lower, middle, upper class
- **Legal status**, such as foreign or native citizen
- **Environment**, such as from country, suburbs, inner city
- **Physical status**, such as a cute or ugly baby
- **Parentage**, such as married, single, divorced

Needs Fulfillment/Emotional Development

Your personal, psychological, emotional, and physical needs define your self-concept. As you grow older, you define your own needs (what is important to you). How you feel about yourself has a direct relationship on others around you. Examine Table 4.1.1. If you do not have a positive self-image, how will you project yourself, especially if you are a leader?

Remember, how you view yourself impacts not only how you view others, but how they view you. Some differences exist because each person places a different importance on different needs. People would like to be better than they are. You can change if you want. The most important thing to consider is that no one else can make you change. You have the right to fight to remove inappropriate or incorrect perceptions, prejudices, and discriminatory attitudes and behavior.

Table 4.1.1: Positive vs. Negative Self-Image

Positive Self-Image	Negative Self-Image
Love of self and others	Hate of self and others
Excited about reaching out for the adventure of life	Hide from life and its miseries
Experience serenity, joy, hope, and trust	Experience anxiety, despair, distrust, and anger
Develop your intelligence	Blind to your potential
Decisive, assertive	Indecisive, defensive, aggressive
Enjoy your physical abilities	Deny or exaggerate physical abilities
Create	Destroy
Tolerant, accepting	Bigoted, prejudiced
Self-actualizing	Suicidal/homicidal
Open	Closed
Trusting	Hidden agendas
Assertive	Defensive

Prejudice and Discrimination

You live in America, the most democratic (and free) country in the world. Why, then, is there still prejudice and discrimination in this land of opportunity?

You might ask yourself, “Am I prejudiced?” It has often been said that everyone is prejudiced to a certain degree. Everyone operates on prejudgments and makes discriminating distinctions every day. For example, if you had good luck with one type of car, you can be expected to be prejudiced in favor of that model; when voting, many people discriminate between Republican, Democrat, or another party’s candidates.

These examples illustrate the frequency in everyday life that people make decisions based on their prejudices or discriminatory practices. However, the negative forms of prejudice and discrimination have adverse impacts on leadership and unit cohesion.

Key Note Term

stereotypes – an uncritical or formalized conception, notion, or attitude

Key Note Term

culture – the total of the learned behavior of a group of people considered the tradition of that people and transmitted from generation to generation

Prejudice

Prejudice is defined as a feeling, favorable or unfavorable, toward a person, object, or group that may or may not be based on actual experience(s). It is generally agreed that a racial prejudice is a negative attitude toward a racial or ethnic group that is maintained through **stereotypes**.

In looking at the norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes developed through socialization, you may have said to yourself that each of those concepts may impact positively or negatively on how you view the world around you. Indeed, these concepts are the sources of bias or prejudice that unquestionably can distort how you make “sense” of reality.

If you agree with the idea that norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes do exist within each of us (and that they do influence our ability to perceive, and that influence can also be called prejudice), it would seem then that all humans are capable of being prejudiced.

Another factor that is closely related, if not interwoven, with the norms, values, beliefs, and attitudes is one’s culture. A **culture** is the total of the learned behaviors of a group of people that are generally considered to be the tradition of that people and are transmitted from generation to generation. These learned behaviors include language and nonverbal norms, such as body language, facial expressions, and color consciousness.

Many people confuse color with culture. You can share aspects of a culture, but not color. Color is genetic; culture is learned. In many cultures, skin color differences take on a measure of importance, status, or value. The color of one’s skin in certain cultures may dictate how that individual is treated within that culture. Color has a tremendous impact on perceptions in the United States because most Americans respond to color by making assumptions and treating people based on skin color.

Not convinced? Here is a question to ask yourself. *Do you behave differently around people who are of a different color?* You may not want to behave differently, but you may recognize that you do from time to time. Your behavior largely depends on the environment that you are in. If you are in control, or think you are, your behavior is pretty constant. After you become the minority, so to speak, you may become suspicious, feel threatened, distrust may set in, and your behavior may change.

The following highlights some of the explanations for prejudice:

- **A dominant group avoids the feelings of sympathy for “dominated people” through over-exaggerations of negative qualities. A dominant group is the one in control of the major positions in a society and that sets the standards for the whole society.**
- **The belief that one’s own family and society are unique and correct. You might feel that your group is the natural one and judge others based on this standard.**

Note

Every human group seems to do this, serving as a positive reinforcement within each society.

- Prejudice is a natural outgrowth of the “we-they” contrast. After an opponent is present, prejudice can be expected. Loosely scattered members of a group then come together to face a common opponent.
- The transfer of internal personal problems to external objects. People who have a distorted need to feel superior to others use scapegoats in this way.
- A particularly negative experience with a member of a particular racial or ethnic group in the past might bring up memories that can cloud your judgment in the present. You may also tend to judge the whole society by your own experiences. If you have not been a victim of prejudice, you may not see it in others.
- The “earned reputation” approach means that members of society shift the justification for prejudice to a target group: “if only they would mend their ways, prejudice would go away.”

Unfortunately, people with negative attitudes generally tend to express themselves with action, and they act out their prejudices in various ways. The most common ways are as follows:

- Openly talking about their prejudices with like-minded friends and expressing their dislikes freely.
- Avoiding members of the disliked group, even at the cost of considerable inconvenience.
- Actively making detrimental distinctions about a group, to the extent of excluding all members of that group from certain types of employment, educational opportunities, politics, and so on.
- Committing acts of violence, especially when under conditions of heightened emotions.

Now that you have explored prejudice and learned explanations for its existence, turn your attention to discrimination.

Discrimination

Discrimination is defined as the actions or practices carried out by members of dominant groups, or their representatives, that have a differential and harmful impact on members of subordinate groups. The actions may be open or hidden, direct or indirect, intentional or unintentional. The actors in these events may be individuals, groups, or organizations.

It is crucial to understand that there is a direct link between discrimination and power. Without power, discrimination is passive and ineffective. With power, discrimination maintains the dominance of one group over another. The term *power* in this context means the expenditure of energy to get things done. The groups in power are those that can effectively discriminate: they can pass laws, make rules, and decide who belongs in and who remains on the outside.

Causes for discrimination include the following:

- **Group size.** This may be the simplest explanation for discriminatory behavior among dominant group members. They fear they will be overwhelmed by the sheer number of the subordinated “masses.” Racial groups that continually increase in size have always been the targets for some form of control. On the other hand, the smaller the ethnic minority group, the less threatening it is.

Key Note Term

discrimination – to show preference for or prejudice against

Key Note Term

intimacy – familiarity;
closeness

- **Social distance.** The attempt by a dominant group to keep a distance between it and a subordinate group by limiting access and **intimacy**. For example, you cannot join a specific club unless you earn \$250,000 a year.
- **Competition.** It always serves the dominant group's best interests to limit competition with a subordinate group, from competing for scarce economic resources to other forms such as athletic competition.
- **Status consciousness.** Minority groups occupy a generally low status in American society. For example, status-conscious whites avoid lower-status people due to their prejudicial perceptions.

Stereotyping

Stereotyping is related to just about all of the factors discussed above. A stereotype, whether favorable or unfavorable, is an exaggerated belief associated with a category. Its function is to justify (or rationalize) our conduct in relation to that category. People naturally seek to understand or make sense of their environment. Because you cannot possibly analyze or respond to all of the information that you receive, you may tend to narrow your focus on subsets of that information. You will usually select the subset that you believe to be most important. People then categorize (stereotype) this information to serve a useful function, depending on their group (religious, racial, ethnic, cultural, and so on) affiliation.

- **Categorization simplifies your environment. It enables you to generate expectations and guides your behavior toward a person or an object based on those expectations.**
- **When you categorize a person as a member of a group, you may assume that he or she has a variety of characteristics that you believe members of that category have. You then look at people as a group based on a variety of factors (such as age, religion, gender, race) and whether they are part of the in-group (most like you) or the out-group (most different from you). The people that you tend to categorize (stereotype) most are the out-group.**
- **Stereotypes are fixed, rigid ideas associated with a category. They are not identical with the category, but are overgeneralizations or oversimplifications about a category.**
- **Because stereotypes can be either favorable or unfavorable, they can lead to love-prejudice or hate-prejudice relationships.**
- **Stereotypes are the rationalizers that allow you to justify behavior to categorically accept or reject a group and to selectively maintain your perception and thinking about a group.**
- **There may be examples of behavior by members of a group that support the belief offered in an expressed stereotype of a given group. For example, one can find a few people in groups who are dishonest, but those examples do not warrant that all within the group are dishonest.**

There are also a number of sources that not only develop but support and sustain stereotypes. In fact, there is very little chance of anyone not being exposed to at least one of these sources of stereotypes.

The very socialization process discussed earlier in this lesson is a powerful source in the development of stereotypes.

- Hearing and/or telling ethnic, racist, or sexist jokes.
- Reading the literature of a culture or society, whether fact or fiction, has a powerful influence on our thinking and behavioral processes.
- The coverage of news on radio and television plus movies all carry powerful messages that create and support stereotyping.

Racial Tension

Racial tension within an organization is often the result of poor leadership. The major reasons for racial tension include the following:

- **Insensitive leadership. Leaders must realize the effect that their actions and comments have on subordinates and on their attitudes, behaviors, and perceptions.**
- **Racial prejudice and discrimination.**
- **Unfair administration of rewards and punishment, promotions, and duties.**
- **Limited recognition and awareness of minorities.**

Up to this point, you have looked at some of the factors that impact on perceptions and attitudes and their relation to prejudicial and discriminatory behavior. You saw that when you judge a person's worth based on a perception or an attitude, your effectiveness as a leader is degraded. You will not communicate as well and trust will not be nourished to its fullest potential within an organization.

Strategies for Creating Change

So, now that you have some awareness about factors and causes that impact negatively on race relations and equal opportunity, what can you do about it? How can you remove or change some of the negative attitudes, behaviors, perceptions, or stereotypes? This section offers some strategies for change that will require lots of work and some risk on your part.

Leaders Can Create Change

As a leader, you need to be aware of discrimination and prejudices before they can begin to impact on minority groups, and more important, on people's feelings within those groups. Failure to take these strategies for change to heart can severely hamper a unit's mission accomplishment, cohesion, and trust.

- **Overcome prejudices by learning the facts and applying sound reasoning processes.**
- **Be prepared to detect and evaluate warning signs of possible unrest that may stem from racial issues in units and take immediate action to eliminate the causes.**
- **Know all you can about your subordinates—their values, attitudes, how they came to be the way they are, and what they want to be. This means knowing more about subordinates than just their names. Do not base this knowledge on unfounded opinions about the race or ethnic origin of a subordinate but on the facts about each individual.**

Key Note Term

impartial – fair, equal, and consistent

- **Promote mutual understanding through effective communication.** Realize that there will always be difficulties in the communication process and deal with the filters, barriers, and breakdowns as they occur. Although the difficulties may be complicated, when minorities lose trust in their leaders, the situation is out of control. Make communication effective by fostering an understanding that reduces racial tensions.
- **Give fair and impartial treatment to all.**

Lessening Prejudice, Adverse Perceptions, and Stereotyping

It has been suggested that if members of society can accomplish the following conditions, the causes and effects of prejudice will be lessened:

- **Make contacts with people on an equal status and under a spirit of cooperation.**
- **Share goals.**
- **Encourage people to work on common problems.**
- **Create appropriate educational activities.**
- **Sanction contacts by law.**
- **Accept differences.** Disagreement is okay, but rather than using statements such as “you are wrong” or “that’s your opinion,” do not deny others their experiences. Be willing to explore other’s experiences as you explore your own thoughts, feelings, and experiences that brought you to your conclusion.
- **Listen actively.** Listen for understanding instead of agreement. Paraphrase back to the speaker the message you received. Listen with the same intensity to everyone.
- **Provide feedback.** Be behavior specific. Let others know what impact they have on you. Learn to separate intent and effect. Avoid using labels.
- **Share behaviors/feelings.** Honestly share with the group where you stand on subjects, and be willing to explore how you got there.
- **Encourage feedback.** Do not defend or rationalize your behavior; accept what others have to say. This is where active listening is imperative. Remember, agreement is not necessary.
- **Use inclusionary language.** Use terms such as “we” and “us”; do not use “they,” “he,” or “she.”
- **Avoid stereotypes.** Learn to distinguish between characteristics based on factual evidence and characteristics based on overgeneralizations.

Key Note Term

inclusionary – to invite or include

Recognize that thinking in terms of categories is a normal human function and be aware when you are doing it. Recognize also that people consciously and unconsciously hold stereotypes as a result of their social conditioning. Because people distinguish by recognizing their existence and by gathering factual information about different individuals, learn to look at people as individuals rather than not groups. Interacting with people who are different than you can help you to see people as they really are.

Creating Change from a Personal Level

There are three ways that you personally can create change. The most readily available tactic for change is *dialogue*. This tactic is particularly effective to change people who are on the fence, who need support for new thought, or who are seriously



Figure 4.1.1: Accepting others' ideas is a positive step toward ending stereotypes.

Courtesy of Digital Vision, Ltd.

trying to make sense out of their deepest commitments. It is less effective for those whose minds are strongly made up in an opposite direction. Dialogue has available to it various methods for effectively presenting information: conversation, debates, and panel discussions are all common.

Another tactic designed to be stronger than dialogue is *confrontation*. This involves using the skills of effective feedback and active listening in a nonthreatening way. For example, consider the following response to a statement “you” made to a group of people:

When you made that statement, I perceived it as being racist and it made me feel uncomfortable because I sense a feeling of superiority on your part.

At this point, renegotiation is in order. Confrontation involves no longer being silent. The silent majority of Americans—those who have never committed themselves either to overt racism or to active involvement in the cause of civil rights—will now have to stand up and be counted.

The final tactic is *education*, from which comes understanding. Educate other people. Do not close your ears when you hear bigoted remarks. Racism becomes more respectable when it goes unchallenged. Most people are simply ignorant of the facts.

The education necessary to change existing perceptions will never work if it consists mainly of the same people lecturing to others. It must involve active participation by all types of people at all levels. Advice from well-informed members of other groups also helps.

Everyone must work to perform—or at least process information—on three levels at once (if need be). These levels are as follows:

- **Understand yourself and how you see the situation around you.**
- **Understand others because they will not be like you in many cases. Use intercultural communication.**
- **Understand your environment, where it is coming from, and the direction it is headed.**

Conclusion

Although all minorities and other groups are interwoven throughout every fiber of our society, racist, prejudiced, and discriminatory attitudes and behaviors still exist. Unless you have a firm grip on some of the “whys” behind these challenges, you may be prone to repeat them. It is illegal to discriminate or tolerate discrimination in any form. As a leader, it is important to promote trust, respect, and cooperation to accomplish assigned missions. As a leader, you set the tone by your own example. Understand the causes of discrimination, be alert to its presence, and actively work to eliminate it wherever it’s found.

The following lesson discusses the performance indicators of leadership and developmental skills as well as mentoring. You will learn mentoring and counseling skills, such as active listening, responding, and questioning. These are all skills crucial to becoming a good leader.

Lesson Review

1. What did Executive Order 9981 accomplish?
2. How can your self-concept influence the way you see others?
3. What would cause you to behave differently around individuals of another color, culture, or religion?
4. Define the term *stereotype*.