The Editor's Desk

I would like to note that after the last issue—which was a special issue—this issue also is special in a number of ways, albeit without a panel of special editors. In this issue, we have a paper by the International Association for Conflict Management Lifetime Achievement Award winner, Evert Van de Vliert. Building on Van de Vliert's consistent contributions to our understanding of the relationships among climate, culture, and conflict, he and his colleagues have presented us with a thought provoking theoretical perspective and typology, with supportive empirical results. In addition, you will note that every paper in this issue has, in one way or another, a cultural perspective, representing a cross section of topics and underscoring its importance in understanding conflict.

The first paper is "Prosocial to Egoistic Enculturation of Our Children: A Climato-Economic Contextualization," by Van de Vliert, Van der Vegt, and Janssen. In this well-argued paper, the authors treat prosociality and unselfishness as orthogonal cobnstructs, building on prior work. The resulting typology delineates altruistic (simultaneous focus on prosociality and unselfishness), cooperative (a focus on prosociality without unselfishness), apathetic (a focus on unselfishness without prosociality), and egoistic (a focus on neither) characteristics in the assimilation of one's culture through enculturation in childhood. These authors extend previous perspectives by integrating their enculturation typology with thermal climate and collective wealth, two contextual factors that differentiate nation states and resulting national cultures. In their discussion, the authors argue that, "They have adapted their cultures in the direction of more cooperativeness to the extent that they possess wealth-based resources and homeostatic goods, but in the direction of more egoism to the extent that they lack wealth-based resources and homeostatic goods." I was particularly struck by the implications of their statement, not only in terms of how we see other cultures and for dealing with conflict across national and cultural boundaries, but by bringing to life the oft repeated statement that cultural values are neither right nor wrong, but have developed for survival reasons.

The second paper in this issue, "Starting Out on the Right Foot: Negotiation Schemas When Cultures Collide" (by Adair, Taylor, and Tinsley), addresses an issue that is important both theoretically and practically, helping us to better understand the underlying reasons why the outcomes of intercultural negotiations frequently do not measure up to those of intracultural negotiations. Intuitively compelling, the theoretical explanation for over adjusting cultural behaviors also is well argued. We have all encountered situations wherein we over adjusted, making things worse. This paper makes the somewhat counter intuitive argument that although we may be well informed and well intentioned, our mutual attempts to be accommodating may result in yet another mismatch—one of over adaptation.

Liu, Chi, Friedman, and Tsai's paper, ''Explaining Incivility in the Workplace: The Effects of Personality and Culture,'' also addresses cultural differences while exploring incivility in the workplace, a growing concern for managers from a pragmatic perspective. It is likely that incivility, although less intense and perhaps somewhat invisible in organizations, may, in the aggregate, do considerable damage to the organization, much like organizational citizenship behaviors—on the surface mundane—when aggregated across workers may enhance organizational functioning. This paper addresses the moderating influence of cultural values on dispositional factors in two different cultures. Its central focus is not on how to avoid incivility, but more generally to understand the role that cultural values play in suppressing or triggering incivility in the workplace.

Although prior research treats the focus on either team or individual performance as mutually exclusive, in ''Empowering Individuals for Team Innovation in China: Conflict Management and Problem Solving,'' Tjosvold, Yu, and Wu find that things are not quite so simple. They demonstrate that groups can perform more skillfully and be more innovative to the degree to which they help other team members address their individual obstacles. In other words, when it comes to groups versus individuals, it appears we might be able to both eat our cake and have it too. Further, as the authors observed, ''harmony motives in China can ... refer to the desire to strengthen relationships and solve interpersonal problems out of a genuine concern for harmony as a value in and of itself.''

The very different foci of the papers in this issue demonstrate the pervasiveness and importance of cultural differences in understanding conflict and conflict resolution. The papers in this issue all intrigued me and I hope that you will find them as interesting as I did.

Judi McLean Parks
Editor