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In “Know Thine Adversary: The Impact of Race on Styles of Dealing With Conflict,” Martin N. Davidson explores the management of interpersonal conflict, and particularly confrontations between those from racially diverse backgrounds.

The first step in this journey is an examination of how race is likely to affect conflict behavior. For example, emotional expression in African American culture is highly valued. Emotional authenticity conveys trust and respect among Blacks. However, in a tense situation, this behavior could be perceived by others as loud and forceful.

White culture is influenced by Northern European values, which include Protestantism. Control and moderation are some ways in which Whites maintain order in conflict situations. But remaining silent or ending a discussion can inhibit open communication in dealing with discord.

The author discusses social identity theory, which suggests that favoritism occurs toward members of one’s own group and negativity manifests toward those of a different group. He then builds a hypothesis stating that a person experiencing conflict will prefer less confrontational responses if the offender is of the same race rather than of a different race.

In two studies, Davidson tests these and other theories. In both studies, he found that Blacks were more expressive in their conflict response behavior and less likely than Whites to suppress their emotions.

Another finding was that Blacks were predisposed to be more suspicious of White offenders than Whites were toward Black offenders. This reaction may reflect the

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discomfort of someone from a dominant cultural group explicitly using that identification as an advantage.

Davidson acknowledges that understanding cultural influences on interactions among other groups beyond Blacks and Whites will be important as organizations become more diverse. And because his research was based primarily on what managers say they would do in conflicts, he suggests that even more fascinating phenomena may unfold when studying how managers actually behave in challenging situations.

To request a copy of the full journal article as posted in *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, please contact Martin at <http://www.leveragingdifference.com/contact/>