

# Cultural Barriers

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"Cultural differences can seriously impede productive negotiation. In part, this is because members of a culture tend to be *ethnocentric* – seeing their own group's values as universal and superior to those of other groups. (...) Diverse cultures also may have very different patterns of communication and decision-making.

It therefore is important to understand the cultural filters through which one's counterparts view the world. In doing this, recognize that national culture is just one layer of the onion. Negotiator's behavior may also be influenced by professional training and the culture it engenders.

Note that the ultimate goal is to ensure that you and your counterparts are able to create a process of dialogue that makes sense. It is not, however, necessary to understand every nuance of a culture to accomplish this."

Source: Michael D. Watkins, *Diagnosing and Overcoming Barriers to Agreement*, Harvard Business School, Note # 9-800-333, Rev. May 8, 2000