The Negotiation Within: The Impact of Internal Conflict Over Identity and Role on Across-The-Table Negotiations

Robert C. Bordone
Tobias C. Berkman
Sara E. del Nido

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarship.law.missouri.edu/jdr

Part of the Dispute Resolution and Arbitration Commons

Recommended Citation

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Law Journals at University of Missouri School of Law Scholarship Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Dispute Resolution by an authorized editor of University of Missouri School of Law Scholarship Repository. For more information, please contact bassettcw@missouri.edu.
The Negotiation Within: The Impact of Internal Conflict Over Identity and Role on Across-The-Table Negotiations

Robert C. Bordone, Tobias C. Berkman, Sara E. del Nido

Abstract

This article argues that negotiators’ experiences of internal conflict over their identity and role — what we term “the negotiation within” — has a significant impact on across-the-table negotiations in the legal profession and in business. This impact has been mostly overlooked by the literature on negotiation, which focuses on strategic, structural, and psychological barriers to negotiated agreements that are divorced from the real, internal experiences of most negotiators. The article analyzes the impact and suggests a typology for naming and understanding internal conflict. It concludes with a three-stage prescription on how to manage such conflicts described as Mirror work, Chair work, and Table work.

Imagine the following three short vignettes of failed negotiations.

- **Story 1:** Anne is a manager of a highly effective group within the treasury department of an energy company. Anne is worried that her group is be-
ing given increased responsibilities, but lacks sufficient resources to sustain its performance. In a meeting with the company Vice President and head of the treasury department, Anne requests more resources for her group. But when the VP points out that this would take resources away from other treasury department groups, Anne quickly backs away from her request. Without the extra resources, the morale within Anne’s group decreases and its performance stagnates over the next few months. Within a year, two of the group’s top performers have left the company.

- **Story 2:** Julia is a valued, dedicated employee at an online gaming company who works long hours developing a particular game. The game suffers a disappointing launch due to a number of predictable flaws in the design, and Julia’s manager approaches her to discuss what went wrong. Julia brushes off the feedback, blames issues outside of work, and promises to do better. Two months later, Julia has failed to get a handle on the design and her game is still performing poorly.

- **Story 3:** Richard is the elderly founder and CEO of a successful biotechnology company. Representatives from a larger pharmaceutical company approach Richard with an offer to buy his company, invest heavily in some of its most promising areas of research, and provide Richard with a generous retirement package. The negotiation begins smoothly and the parties make significant progress, but then Richard abruptly raises his asking price at the last minute and the deal falls through. Over the next few years, Richard loses interest in the company and its growth stalls. He agrees to sell the company to a different buyer shortly thereafter, but at much less attractive terms.

According to one prominent and well-regarded branch of the existing literature on negotiation and conflict resolution, there are three broad categories of “barriers to agreement” that might explain the failure of these negotiations. First, so-called “strategic” or “tactical” barriers — which result from one or both parties’ calculated attempts to increase their share of the value to be divided in the negotiation — may have prevented the parties from arriving at a mutually-advantageous deal. For example, in Story 1, the VP may have entered the negotiation intending to claim as much of Anne’s group resources as possible in order to please the CFO by cutting costs. In Story 2, Julia might have wanted to de-

---

1. We would describe these negotiations as “failures” because the parties could have reached agreements that would have served their interests better than the actual outcomes. ROBERT H. MNNOOKIN, ET AL., BARRIERS TO CONFLICT RESOLUTION 6 (1995). Negotiations might also fail if the parties come to a suboptimal agreement, or if they reach a deal when their interests would have been better served by one or more alternatives to a negotiated agreement. An agreement is suboptimal if a different negotiated deal could have made one or both parties better off. Economics literature describes this suboptimal state as Pareto efficiency, in which it is impossible to make one party in the distribution of resources better off without making another party worse off.


receive her boss about the cause of her performance failures in order to claim more value in their ongoing, long-term negotiation over salary and promotion.4 And in Story 3, Richard may have been using hardball negotiation tactics in an effort to increase his leverage.5

Second, “psychological” barriers — meaning the negotiators’ unconscious cognitive biases — may have prevented the parties from recognizing that an agreement was mutually advantageous to begin with.6 For example, in the first story it is possible that Anne suffered from “fixed pie” bias,7 and failed to see that more resources for her group would not necessarily mean fewer resources for other groups within the treasury department, especially over the long term. In the second story, Julia might have suffered from the “fundamental attribution bias,”8 attributing the game’s failure to circumstances outside of her control instead of her own shortcomings. In the third story, Richard might have asked for more money because, due to “the endowment effect,”9 he overestimated the market value of the company he owned, or, due to “loss aversion,”10 he overestimated the pain of losing it.

Third, structural barriers — meaning the context of the negotiation, including its setting and environment, and the involvement of parties other than the principal negotiators — may have prevented the negotiators from obtaining the information necessary to make sound decisions. For example, in each negotiation, the parties’ roles within the professional hierarchy might have prevented them from sharing information about their real interests.11 Or perhaps in Richard’s story, the negotiation involved attorneys whose interests differed in some way from those of the principal negotiators, and who provided self-interested advice.12

---

6. See generally Lee D. Ross & Andrew Ward, Psychological Barriers to Dispute Resolution, 27 ADVANCES IN EXPERIMENTAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 255 (1995); Mnookin, ET AL., supra note 1, at 6, 10.
12. Mnookin, PeppeT & Tulumello, infra note 25, at 74-76.
Although each of these explanations is possible, and in some cases highly likely, we argue that each fails to account for another important reason why these negotiations may have gotten stuck: internal conflict over identity and role. In each negotiation, the parties may have experienced internal tension or conflict among one or more of their identities, may have managed these tensions poorly or not at all, and therefore may have acted or reacted in ways that did not serve their broader interests. In Story 1, for example, Anne might have felt torn between her desire to be a leader and advocate for her team, and her desire to be a “team player” willing to sacrifice for the greater good of the company. In Story 2, Julia might have felt shame around her inability to address the game’s design flaws on her own, and might have clung too tightly to her own self-conception as a wholly independent, competent employee. And in Story 3, Richard might have experienced a deep-seated fear of losing his role as company leader and visionary combined with a worry that he might have no identity, value, or purpose after the company’s sale. In each case, these feelings of internal conflict over identity and role might have led the negotiator to act impulsively, less strategically, and without proper regard for his or her true interest, long-term interests, or both. Strikingly, the current cannon of negotiation literature virtually ignores this plausible explanation, focusing only on the strategic, structural, or psychological. We contend that failing to identify and explore this large domain of negotiation barrier has done a disservice to our field. In this article, we aim to provide a framework for thinking about and addressing this important barrier to negotiated agreement.

We call the process of managing internal conflict over identity and role the “negotiation within,” and suggest that the “negotiation within” should be recognized as a fourth category of barrier to successful negotiation. We argue that when “negotiations within” are handled ably, they may facilitate agreement, improve relationships, and ensure the long-term stability of any negotiation outcome. But when handled poorly, “negotiations within” can be among the most intransigent of barriers to negotiated agreement: they can prevent an individual from prioritizing or even identifying her own interests, and cause her to behave unskillfully and impulsively at the negotiating table. Thus, to improve negotiation practice, negotiation theory must address how the “negotiation within” impacts negotiations, how it can be accurately diagnosed, and how negotiators can helpfully manage their own “negotiations within.” The impact of the “negotiation within” on across-the-table negotiations, and strategies for managing it, are the subjects of this article.


14. Sometimes, an individual experiencing a “negotiation within” will be conscious that two or more of her identities or “selves” are in conflict. She may even engage in a conscious internal effort to manage the tensions among them and make sound choices. Other times, she will simply experience feelings of anxiety or a vague sense that something is wrong without being able to name the source of these feelings. Her internal conflicts may go unacknowledged. See ROGER FISHER & DANIEL SHAPIRO, BEYOND REASON: USING EMOTIONS AS YOU NEGOTIATE 154-55 (2005). In the latter types of situations, it is fair to say that there is no “negotiation within” occurring; on the contrary, the negotiation is being avoided. For convenience and clarity, we have decided to call all internal conflicts — whether addressed or ignored — “negotiations within.”
The paper is organized as follows: In Section I, we describe the origin and scope of the project, explain our research approach, and discuss how this approach represents a logical extension of certain works developed by the late Roger Fisher and his colleagues at the Harvard Negotiation Project (HNP). Section II presents a framework for understanding the “negotiation within.” We identify three main categories of “negotiations within” and argue that this taxonomy may prove helpful in categorizing and sorting the issues at stake in intrapersonal conflict. Section III identifies a number of typical strategies that individuals use for managing their “negotiations within,” and summarizes some of the benefits and drawbacks of each approach. In Section IV, we offer prescriptive advice for managing one’s own “negotiations within.” Specifically, we offer a three-phase approach to this management: Mirror Work, Chair Work, and Table Work. Section V presents ideas for further research and concludes.

I. ORIGIN AND SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

Prior to writing this paper, we shared a nagging sense that our theoretical understanding of negotiation — and its multiple dimensions and barriers — lagged behind our intuitive understanding of the negotiations we observed and experienced in the real world and in our teaching. Specifically, whereas we observed and experienced internal questions related to identity and role as critical and challenging elements of across-the-table negotiations, we lacked a usable framework for understanding and categorizing these experiences and observations within the field of negotiation.

This article begins addressing this gap in the literature. It introduces a framework for understanding the “negotiation within” that aims to help individuals better identify and assess when internal conflicts may be impeding progress in a negotiation and what might be done to address such situations. In attempting to delineate the contours of such a theory, we examine situations from negotiations we have studied or learned about in our role as conflict management consultants. Our methodology is primarily descriptive and observational, not experimental, though it draws on various aspects of research from multiple disciplines. It is based on more than a decade of intensive work helping students, lawyers, business professionals, government leaders, and others improve their ability to negotiate sustainable and integrative deals.¹⁵

The “negotiation within” is, of course, a metaphor. We believe it is a useful one: it suggests that within each individual, multiple identities or “selves” may exist simultaneously.¹⁶ By “identities” or “selves,” we mean those stories that individuals tell themselves — either explicitly, but more often implicitly — about

---

¹⁵. We have learned the most about the “negotiation within” through our teaching and participation in the “Interpersonal Skills Exercise” (IPS), an exercise for negotiation students at Harvard Law School. IPS provides a glimpse into the internal dynamics of negotiation, often through the use of techniques borrowed from psychodrama. See generally Robert Bordone, Teaching Interpersonal Skills for Negotiation and for Life, 4 NEGOTIATION JOURNAL 377 (2000). IPS is a uniquely appropriate tool for analyzing the “negotiation within,” and we have observed many stories of internal conflict through our role as facilitators of the exercise. We have adapted (and disguised) a few such stories to weave throughout this article.

¹⁶. In this paper we use the terms “identities” and “selves” interchangeably.
who they are. An identity might center on a particular adjective or quality of a person, like “competent,” “ambitious,” or “generous.” It might also center on a particular role, like “caring father,” or “admired entrepreneur.” It goes without saying that every individual tells a variety of different stories about him or herself. Within each person, some of these stories or identities may be mostly consistent with the others, but some may not. The salience of these multiple selves may wax and wane, but for a variety of reasons that we articulate later, certain negotiations may bring them into high relief, causing internal conflict.

The metaphor of multiple “selves” existing within a single person is not a new concept. Plato believed that every psyche consisted of three parts — rational, appetitive, and spirited — while Sigmund Freud famously named his parts of the multi-dimensional self the “id,” the “ego,” and the “superego.” Modern psychological theories like internal family systems theory (IFS) presume the existence of conflict among multiple selves or identities within an individual, some conscious, some not. The metaphor even has roots in our means of self-expression: phrases such as “I hate that about myself,” or “I am not myself today,” imply that we each consist of multiple identities in conversation.

We seek to build off these important works in the field of psychology and elsewhere, and apply them to negotiation theory. Our inquiry, by necessity, is very limited. We do not seek to address all kinds of internal conflicts over identity and role. Rather, we are interested in the role of internal conflict as it arises or

17. See DOUGLAS STONE, BRUCE M. PATTON & SHEILA HEEN, DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS: HOW TO DISCUSS WHAT MATTERS MOST 112 (2010); Kenneth J. Gergen & Mary M. Gergen, Narrative and the Self as Relationship, 21 ADVANCES IN EXPERIMENTAL SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 17, 17-56 (1988) (discussing the construction and development of “self-narratives”); Donald E. Polkinghorne, Narrative and Self-Concept, 1 J. NARRATIVE & LIFE HISTORY 135, 146 (1991) (suggesting that individuals’ self-identities are constructed by making meaning out of roles and experiences); Malgorzata Puchalska-Wasyl, Dialogue, Monologue, and Change of Perspective - Three Forms of Dialogicality, 4 INT’L J. FOR DIALOGICAL SCL 67, 68 (FALL 2010) (“[t]he voices function like interacting characters in a story, involved in a dialogical process of questions and answers, agreement and disagreement”); Richard Posner, Are We One Self or Multiple Selves?, 3 LEGAL THEORY 23 (1997). See also Sarah Crafter & Guida de Abreu, Constructing Identities in Multicultural Learning Contexts, 17 MIND, CULTURE, & ACTIVITY 102, 105 (2010) (arguing that identity is constructed through the three complementary processes of identifying the other, being identified, and self-identification).


19. Freud actually used the terms “das E,” “das Ich,” and “das Uber-Ich,” which translate from the German as “the I,” “the I,” and the “Over-I.” See, e.g., FREUD, THE INTERPRETATION OF DREAMS, supra note 18, and FREUD, THE EGO AND THE ID, supra note 18. Freud recognized that these selves did not reside solely in the conscious brain, but also operated in preconscious and unconscious realms, such that an individual would have to engage in some activity other than “thinking” to fully recall these selves. NEIL R. CARLSON, PSYCHOLOGY: THE SCIENCE OF BEHAVIOUR 453 (2009).


21. See also Posner, supra note 17, at 23.

22. For in-depth exploration of types of internal conflicts less covered in this paper, see Teresa LaFromboise, Hardin L. Coleman, & Jennifer Gerton, Psychological Impact of Biculturalism: Evidence and Theory, 114 PSYCHOLOGICAL BULLETIN 395 (1993) (conflict between two cultures); Susan Harter & Ani Monosour, Development Analysis of Conflict Caused by Opposing Attributes in the Adolescent Self-Portrait, 28 DEV. PSYCHOLOGY 251 (1992) (conflict between roles in adolescents and its implications for development); Harvey L. Selwartz, From Dissociation to Negotiation: A Relational
is activated either in preparation for or during negotiations with others. Nor do we seek to address all internal feelings of conflict or indecision that a negotiator might confront. Rather, we focus on internal conflict among “core identities,” meaning those qualities or roles that an individual believes define who they are.

A. “Frameworks” Approach

We approach our work on the “negotiation within” mindful of the groundbreaking work of our colleagues at the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School and elsewhere, and hopeful of adding something of value to that repository of knowledge. In so doing, we have attempted to embrace a scholarly approach pioneered at the Harvard Negotiation Project (HNP). The HNP approach is both pragmatic and parsimonious: it involves dividing the information at play in negotiations into simple categories in order to help practitioners manage complex interactions at the table, and to help researchers develop straightforward prescrip-

---

Psychoanalytic Perspective on Multiple Personality Disorder, 11 PSYCHOANALYTIC PSYCHOLOGY 189 (1994) (internal conflicts conceptualized as multiple personality disorder).

23. For a helpful, but broader inquiry into conflict among multiple selves — the “want” self and the “should” self — in negotiations, see Max H. Bazerman, Ann E. Tenbrunsel, & Kimberly Wade-Benzoni, Negotiating with Yourself and Losing: Making Decisions with Competing Internal Preferences, 23 ACAD. MGMT. REV. 225 (1998).

24. For example, if an individual were asked to complete the statement, “If I know anything about myself, I know that I am . . . ,” the resulting statements would reflect her core identities. See STONE, PATTON & HEEN, supra note 17, at 112. We contrast core identities with those low-stakes, transient needs and desires that have already been the subject of much writing on internal conflict and negotiation. See, e.g., Katherine L. Milkman, Todd Rogers, & Max H. Bazerman, Harnessing Our Inner Angels and Demons: What We Have Learned About Want/Should Conflicts and How That Knowledge Can Help Us Reduce Short-Sighted Decision Making, 3 PERSPECTIVES ON PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCE 324 (2008) [hereinafter Milkman et al, Harnessing Our Inner Angels and Demons]. The identities at issue in the “negotiation within” typically cut deeper than the internal conflicts around decision-making that have motivated these studies, such as the impulse to eat ice cream instead of vegetables, or the momentary desire to rent low-brow films instead of films with better artistic credentials. See Katherine L. Milkman, Todd Rogers, & Max H. Bazerman, I’ll Have the Ice Cream Soon and the Vegetables Later: A Study of Online Grocery Purchases and Order Lead Time, 21 MARKETING LETTERS 17 (2010). The identities at issue in the “negotiation within” are also more likely to get in the way of individuals or groups constructing beneficial agreements, and for some people the decisions at issue might implicate core identity issues and thus fall within the scope of our inquiry. Katherine L. Milkman, Todd Rogers, & Max H. Bazerman, Highbrow films gather dust: Time-inconsistent preferences and online DVD rental, 55 MGMT. SCI. 1047 (2009).

25. See generally ROGER FISHER, WILLIAM L. URY, AND BRUCE PATTON, GETTING TO YES: NEGOTIATING AGREEMENT WITHOUT GIVING IN (3rd ed. 2011) (discussing the method of principled negotiation as an all-purpose strategy for handling conflict during negotiations); ROGER FISHER & SCOTT BROWN, GETTING TOGETHER: BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP THAT GETS TO YES (1988) (offering prescriptions on how to strengthen a relationship in order to generate positive results during negotiations); STONE, PATTON & HEEN, supra note 17 (providing advice on how to engage with three difficult conversations — the “what happened” conversation, the identity conversation, and the feelings conversation — during negotiation); ROBERT H. MNOOKIN, SCOTT R. PEPPE & ANDREW S. TULUMELLO, BEYOND WINNING: NEGOTIATING TO CREATE VALUE IN DEALS AND DISPUTES (2000) (explaining why and how a problem-solving approach to negotiation is the most promising means of creating value); FISHER & SHAPIRO, supra note 14 (recommending approaches for handling emotions during negotiation); WILLIAM URY, GETTING PAST NO: NEGOTIATING WITH DIFFICULT PEOPLE (1991) (describing the five-step strategy for transacting with uncooperative people).
tive advice. In other words, the HNP approach involves creating “frameworks” for understanding and improving negotiations.

The “seven elements” framework derived from concepts in Getting to Yes is among the most well-known HNP contribution. Roger Fisher and others at HNP developed this framework after observing hundreds of negotiations and teaching thousands of students, and argued that each of the seven elements is part of every negotiation. The purpose was to help practitioners prepare for negotiations, react to events during negotiations, and review negotiations afterward to assess their level of success and areas for possible improvement.

After receiving feedback that the seven elements framework failed to account sufficiently for negotiation challenges related to issues of communication and relationship, action-theory scholars at HNP endeavored to offer more tailored advice. The result was Difficult Conversations: How to Discuss What Matters Most, a work that describes how most difficult negotiations can be understood as involving three simultaneous conversations: the “what happened?” conversation; the “feelings conversation”; and the “identity conversation.” The “difficult conversations” framework helps practitioners unpack, assess, and analyze each of these three simultaneous conversations, and offers practical advice for handling them.

Beyond Reason: Using Emotions as You Negotiate extends Difficult Conversations one step further. By identifying five “Core Concerns” that tend to invite strong emotional reactions in negotiation, it provides a more robust framework for the “feelings conversation.” Fisher and Shapiro argue that the Core Concerns framework is useful both as a diagnostic “lens” to help practitioners understand why they or their counterparts may be experiencing negative emotions in a negotiation, and as an action-oriented “lever” for stimulating positive emotions.

Despite the substantial contributions of these and other action-theory scholars, there is as yet no framework for categorizing the identity issues that lie beneath negotiators’ emotional reactions, and even less targeted advice for managing these identity issues effectively. Much as Beyond Reason disaggregated the

27. FISHER, URY, & PATTON, supra note 25.
29. STONE, PATTON & HEEN, supra note 17.
30. Id. at 7-8.
31. Id. at 16-20.
32. FISHER & SHAPIRO, supra note 14.
33. Id. at 15-18.
34. Id. at 18-21.
35. Others have also written about identity in negotiation, but with little effort to provide a framework or to offer prescriptive advice. See, e.g., Clark Freshman, Identity, Beliefs, Emotion, and Negotiation Success, THE HANDBOOK OF DISPUTE RESOLUTION 99, supra note 28. See also Ran Kuttner, From Adversity to Relationality: A Buddhist-Oriented Relational View of Integrative Negotiation and Mediation, 25 OHIO ST. J. ON DISP. RESOL. 931 (2010) (situating a conception of self-identity in broader Buddhist ideas of interconnectedness, interdependence, and dynamic and constantly changing forces); ERICA ARIEL FOX, WINNING FROM WITHIN: A BREAKTHROUGH METHOD FOR LEADING, LIVING, AND LASTING CHANGE (2013) (identifying multiple selves within an individual, each with different strengths and abilities); WILLIAM URY, GETTING TO YES WITH YOURSELF (AND OTHER WORTHY
“feelings conversation” and provided insights into core emotional interests, our work on the “negotiation within” disaggregates the “identity conversation” and provides further insights into central negotiation challenges related to parties’ senses of “self.” And just as Beyond Reason attributes its foundation to its HNP predecessors, our research owes a great deal to Difficult Conversations for providing invaluable advice on understanding and managing identity issues. With this background, we propose a framework to understand, diagnose problems with, and prescribe solutions for poorly managed identity issues in negotiation.

Opponents (2015) (exploring internal conflict through the lens of “Getting to Yes”). Conflict resolution scholar Leonard Riskin has analyzed how ideas from Internal Family Systems might be applied to a dispute resolution context. He discusses how an individual’s “sub-personalities” may add internal voices to external conflicts that make it difficult for an individual to decide how the whole “she” should behave. Thus, Riskin advises, a negotiator is greatly assisted if she understands her internal conversations as if they could be negotiations, mediations, or adjudications. We seek to extend Riskin’s important work by providing a more robust framework for understanding different types of “negotiations within,” and offering targeted advice for managing them. Leonard L. Riskin, Managing Inner and Outer Conflict: Selves, Subpersonalities and Internal Family Systems, 18 HARV. NEGOT. L. REV. 1, 5-6, 21-28 (2013). Because Riskin’s processes involve more than just negotiation, he calls the framework, “Conscious Internal Negotiation, Mediation or Adjudication” or “CINEMA.” Id. at 11.

36. Stone, Patton & Heen, supra note 17, at 116-28. For example, Difficult Conversations presents three “core identities issues” — “Am I competent?” “Am I a good person?” and “Am I worthy of love?” — and explains how an individual may suffer an “identity quake” when he or she feels challenged with respect to one or more of these questions. Id. at 113. Difficult Conversations advises individuals to try to avoid “all or nothing” thinking with respect to these identity issues, to “ground” their identity through self examination and recognition of their identity’s complexity, and, sometimes, to raise identity issues with another individual explicitly. Id. at 114-21, 126-27.
II. THE FRAMEWORK

Our experience suggests that there are three broad domains of identity conflict that impact across-the-table negotiations:

1. **Aspirational identity conflicts:** Conflict between two or more identities that the individual aspires to embody;

2. **Valenced identity conflicts:** Conflict between identities the individual experiences as having a positive or negative valence; in other words, one or more identities she perceives to be unwanted or shameful, and one or more identities that she perceives to be desirable; and

3. **Transformative identity conflicts:** Conflict between one or more stable, known, comfortable identities and a future, unknown, unexplored identity.

While these domains are far from comprehensive, our experience suggests that they capture the vast majority of identity-based internal conflicts that, if left unaddressed or mismanaged, could be detrimental to across-the-table negotiations. We address each in turn.

A. Aspirational Identity Conflicts

A “negotiation within” over aspirational identities occurs when an across-the-table negotiation implicates two or more identities that a person seeks to attain or preserve. The internal conflict arises because every potential outcome in the across-the-table negotiation seems to force the negotiator to choose or embody only one or some of her aspirational identities, while betraying or denying others. Faced with the prospect of abandoning or failing to honor one or more of her aspirational “selves,” the person may experience tension, anxiety, or discomfort. Sometimes such feelings manifest as indecisiveness or paralysis at the negotiation table; other times, they result in seemingly erratic behavior as the person attempts to harmonize the conflicting “selves.” Still other times, the negotiator may simply abandon one identity to maintain the others. In many such situations the result is a temporary but unstable agreement.

Recall Story 1, above, in which Anne asks for more resources for her group only to back down in the face of resistance from the VP. Anne might be experiencing a prototypical “negotiation within” over competing aspirational identities: on the one hand, it might be important to her to be a loyal advocate for her subordinates. She wants to be the kind of boss who sticks up for her employees, all of

37. We use the “across-the-table” negotiation broadly to refer to “any communications involving one or more parties with an intention to persuade, influence, resolve disputes or reach an agreement.” Kristen DeRemer, **SCR 1325 and Women’s Participation: Operational Guidelines for Conflict Resolution and Peace Processes,** INSTITUTE ON QUIET DIPLOMACY 32 (October 2010), http://www.iqdiplomacy.org/images/stories/handbook/pdf/scr1325_iqd.pdf.

38. See Hazel Markus & Paula Nurius, **Possible Selves,** 41 AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGIST 954 (1986); Herminia Ibarra, **Provisional Selves: Experimenting with Image and Identity in Professional Adaptation,** 44 ADMIN. SCI. QUARTERLY 764, 765 (1999).
whom Anne believes work hard, perform their jobs well, and rely on Anne to voice their concerns. On the other hand, Anne might also want to be someone who can sacrifice her own needs on behalf of the group — a cooperative, helpful member of the “team” of managers.

Typically, Anne has little trouble being both a “loyal advocate” for her group and a “team player” with management. These aspirational “selves” can usually coexist comfortably. Here, however, Anne is told that more resources for her group can only be pursued at the expense of the needs of the treasury department. Anne will therefore experience competition between her aspirational identities, which results in feelings of anxiety, helplessness, paralysis, frustration, and difficulties thinking clearly or creatively about the situation.39 Convinced that she needs to give up either one “self” or the other, her perception of the spectrum of available options narrows.

In the face of a dilemma about how to embody all of her aspirational identities, Anne is tempted to hurl headlong into any strategy that will relieve these unpleasant feelings. In this case, she thus opts for an easy, non-confrontational route out of the situation, letting her “team player” self take over by default. She declines to assert herself to the VP and loses the resources for her subordinates, all without thoughtful consideration or preparation for the long-term impact of this approach. The consequences for Anne and her group are profound: without resources, her group feels overworked and within a short amount of time, top talent leaves the group, posing high costs both on the treasury department and the company overall.

As the graphic below depicts, Anne has a number of seemingly consistent and positive stories of self that she tells herself most of the time.

Anne’s typical stories of self before the negotiation:

- “I am willing to go to battle for people in my group and advocate on their behalf.”
- “I take responsibility for those who rely on me.”
- “I reward hard work and strong performance.”
- “I am a team player.”
- “When I’m working with others, I sacrifice my own interests for those of the group.”
- “I always try to pursue the greater good.”

However, in the specific circumstances of this negotiation, Anne feels like only some of her stories of self can be represented or honored by any one option on the table. The following graphic shows her stories of self side-by-side, sepa-

rated by a line, to indicate that she perceives these identities as conflicting and mutually exclusive in the context of this negotiation.

Anne’s stories of self during the negotiation:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anne who stands up to the VP:</th>
<th>Anne who accedes to the VP:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am willing to go to battle for people in my department and advocate on their behalf.”</td>
<td>“I am a team player.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I take responsibility for those who rely on me.”</td>
<td>“When I’m working with others, I sacrifice my own interests for those of the group.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I reward hard work and strong performance.”</td>
<td>“I always try to pursue the greater good.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Internal conflicts over competing aspirational identities can occur in many contexts, but typically they involve situations in which an individual faces competing loyalties, both to herself and to others. The individual wants to be all things for all people, but believes the situation will not allow it. For example, situations that trigger such “negotiations within” might include a negotiation about whether one partner in a marriage will foreclose career options in order to move to a faraway place (the partner wants to be both “loyal spouse” and “successful professional”), or a negotiation about whether a subordinate will follow the dictates of a boss towards whom the subordinate feels affection and loyalty, but whom the subordinate believes has given faulty or unethical directives (the subordinate wants to be both “loyal protégé” and “ethical professional”). Often, individuals respond to such “negotiations within” with either paralysis or an extreme choice that fails to embrace aspects of the self that the individual considers vital.

As depicted in the graphic below, Anne’s story exemplifies a typical pattern for how the “negotiation within” acts as a barrier in across-the-table negotiations more generally. First, a situation causes the negotiator to experience internal conflict among her identities (in this case, competition among aspirational identities) and the negotiator fails to manage this internal conflict effectively. Second, the poorly managed internal conflict creates negative emotions, such as anxiety or helplessness. Third, these negative emotions inhibit the negotiator from acting skillfully at the table and from perceiving the full range of available options. Fourth and finally, these unhelpful behaviors and perceptions lead to unstable negotiation outcomes. This pattern will recur in our discussions below about the other two types of “negotiations within.”

---

40. The tug between competing loyalties is analogous to well-documented research on choices that trigger competing senses of morality. A feeling of moral quandary can be particularly acute when the choices involved present themselves as “non-negotiable” commitments, rather than simply preferences with pros and cons, resulting in a seemingly intractable dilemma. See Fiery Cushman & Joshua D. Greene, Finding Faults: How Moral Dilemmas Illuminate Cognitive Structure, 7 SOCIAL NEUROSCIENCE 269, 275-76 (2012).

41. Furthermore, unstable outcomes may increase the likelihood of perpetuating the “negotiation within” in future across-the-table negotiations, creating a self-reinforcing cycle.
Typical pattern of the “negotiation within” as a barrier to agreement

B. Valenced Identity Conflicts

A “negotiation within” over valenced identities occurs when the across-the-table negotiation implicates aspects of the self that a person considers shameful, selfish, or otherwise undesirable, and those traits come into conflict with aspects of the self that feel more positive or desirable to the negotiator. The internal conflict occurs because the individual feels forced to confront aspects of herself that she would rather not recognize — i.e., identities that the negotiator codes negatively or associates with a negative “valence” or moral judgment.42

An individual might view an identity with a negative valence for any number of reasons. Perhaps the identity is frowned upon within her family or culture. Perhaps, early in life, her parents told her that behaviors associated with the identity were morally wrong. Perhaps she experienced teasing or harassment as a result of the identity while growing up. Or perhaps she simply came to negative conclusions about the identity on her own.43 Regardless of the reason behind the view, this “self” remains constantly present even as it is deeply unwanted.

“Negotiations within” over valenced identities often occur when an individual experiences tension between what she wants or needs, and what she considers to be right or good.44 Typically, the individual will judge any expression of the desires or interests that flow from the negatively valenced identity as “unworthy” or “defective,” and may try to ignore or silence these desires or interests.45

---

42. The concept of managing negatively valenced identities has been identified in literature from the fields of psychology and social science. For discussion of negatively valenced identities in other psychological contexts, see Barbara E. Gibson, et al., Men on the Margin: A Bourdieusian Examination of Living into Adulthood with Muscular Dystrophy, 65 SOCIAL SCI. & MEDICINE 505 (2007) (disability and physical illness); Simon Biggs, Choosing Not to be Old? Masks, Bodies and Identity Management in Later Life, 17 AGEING AND SOCIETY 553 (1997) (the aging process); Douglas Noordsy, et al., Recovery from Severe Mental Illness: An Intrapersonal and Functional Outcome Definition, 14 INT’L REV. PSYCHIATRY 14, 318 (2002) (mental illness).


44. See Milkman et al., Harnessing our Inner Angels and Demons, supra note 24.

45. See generally Robert M. Schwartz, The Internal Dialogue: On the Symmetry of Positive and Negative Coping Thoughts, 10 COGNITIVE THERAPY & RESEARCH 591 (Dec. 1986) (describing the impact of negative thoughts and the potential for therapy to change these thoughts). Cf Geoffrey L. Cohen, Identity, Belief, and Bias, in IDEOLOGY, PSYCHOLOGY, AND LAW 385, 390-91 (Jon Hanson, ed., 2012) (discussing research suggesting that denial of intergroup difference leads to prejudice and a desire to “denounce or persecute” the different parties) (citation omitted).
failure to give “voice” to such identities in across-the-table negotiations can lead to failed negotiation outcomes.46

In Story 2, above — in which Julia, the online game developer, blames issues outside of work for her failure to address the design flaws in her game — Julia might have been experiencing a “negotiation within” involving a valenced identity. Specifically, Julia might have considered it right or good to be an independent and competent worker, and shameful or indicative of weakness to depend on and burden others with her work. In short, her identity as “an employee who asks for help” might be negatively valenced in her mind. For her, experiencing a need for help might create powerful feelings of guilt, inadequacy, incompetence, and humiliation, feelings that are hard to experience and manage.47

In many situations Julia’s independent mindset and determination to succeed serve her well, but in this situation it causes problems. She lacks both the time and expertise to fix the game’s flaws on her own, but finds it difficult to admit fault or ask for help because doing so would engage those aspects of her identity that she would prefer to deny or ignore.

In an effort to ensure that the negatively valenced identity is suppressed, Julia might react in any number of ways. She might become angry, defensive, consciously seek to deflect blame, or make unconscious excuses for herself.48 In this particular scenario, rather than recognizing and embracing her need for help, she silences the urge to ask for help, puts her head down, and tries to do the work all by herself. Both her job performance and her value to the company suffer as a result.

Julia might be experiencing the following valences — or value judgments — with respect to her identities.

**Julia’s identity valences:**

- “A competent person gets projects done on her own, doesn’t burden others with her problems, and shouldn’t need to ask for help.”
- “Someone who asks for help is needy, selfish, weak, disappointing and


47. Fiona Lee, *When the going gets tough, do the tough ask for help? Help seeking and power motivation in organizations*, 72 ORG. BEHAVIOR & HUMAN DECISION PROCESSES 336 (1997) (some individuals associated asking for help with incompetence, dependence, and powerlessness, particularly when the other party is “higher-status” in an organization).

Based on these background valences, Julia might experience differing stories of self during the across-the-table negotiation if, on the one hand, she deflects responsibility or if, on the other hand, she considers asking for help.

**Julia's stories of self during the across-the-table negotiation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Julia who does not ask for help:</th>
<th>Julia who asks for help:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I am a competent, capable employee, who does not need help completing projects effectively. If I just try harder, I can do better next time.”</td>
<td>“I am unable to do this on my own. I’m a failure.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Other “negotiations within” over negatively valenced identities might involve individuals struggling to make choices in pursuit of desires that they consider or have been told are “immoral” or “selfish,” like a college graduate choosing a career path that her parents disapprove of, or more dramatically, an individual “coming out” as a sexual minority or one spouse deciding to leave another. In all such cases, the identity conflict centers on a hidden “truth” about the individual that she codes as “shameful” and is afraid to reveal or express. An individual experiencing such a “negotiation within” might shut down emotionally, lash out, blame others, seek to withdraw from the situation, or experience emotional numbness and simply do nothing. In all cases, attaching some kind of moral approbation to a particular identity not only causes internal strife and shame, but also drives sub-optimal or unstable agreements across the table.

**C. Transformative Identity Conflicts**

A “negotiation within” over transformative identities occurs when a situation forces the negotiator to consider abandoning one or more stories of self that he considers to be long-standing or meaningful.49 Story 3, above, in which Richard the CEO abruptly raised the asking price for his biotechnology company, is a potential example of this type of “negotiation within.” Richard might have developed a strong identity around his role as the hardworking creator and builder of a successful company, perceiving himself above all as an ambitious and successful company leader, needed and valued by others through his work as CEO. Selling the company would therefore have required him to lose this “successful company leader” identity, and instead embrace a new and unfamiliar path.

---

49. See, e.g., Jeannie S. Kidwell, et al., Adolescent identity exploration: A test of Erikson’s theory of transitional crisis, 30 ADOLESCENCE 785 (1995) (finding that adolescents who explore new identities often experience confusion and self-doubt, as well as increased conflicts with parents and authorities). See also MARY FIELD BELENKY, ET AL., WOMEN’S WAYS OF KNOWING: THE DEVELOPMENT OF SELF, VOICE, AND MIND 83-84 (1997) (describing the loneliness, isolation, and even impulsive or belligerent behavior that can accompany an abrupt shift of identity). Identity transformation and/or loss can also occur on a smaller scale each day, with individuals experiencing similar dynamics of internal conflict. See, e.g., Crafter & de Abreu, supra note 17, at 106 (noting that children experience (re)constructions of identity when they move between home and school).
In reality, had Richard gone forward with the deal and dealt effectively with his fears over his changing role and subsequent self-concept, selling the company might have made him quite happy, but he was worried that if he ceased being a “successful company leader,” he would not know who he was.\(^{50}\) Whereas Richard associated a host of familiar, positive identities with holding onto his role as leader of the company, the identities he associated with selling the company were much more opaque. Perhaps he wanted to spend more time with his family and enter a comfortable retirement, but felt unsure that his family would accept him back after so many years of 80-hour weeks at the office. Perhaps Richard doubted that he would find retirement sufficiently active and fulfilling. Although he might have hoped to arrive successfully at a new set of positive identities as “family man” and “contented retiree,” he feared useless, spent, and inadequate, and ultimately developing an identity as a “has-been.” Although remaining a CEO might not have been ideal, at least it was known.

As a result of the unaddressed and unacknowledged “negotiation within,” Richard might have begun to feel fear, anxiety, and dread as the deal neared completion. To avoid the internal turmoil, he raised the price of the company at the last minute, sabotaging the across-the-table negotiation in order to avoid the harder internal negotiation around evolving roles and self-definitions. In the tables below, we show some of the positive stories of self that Richard might have associated with his identity as a CEO, and the absence of any known stories — or, perhaps, negative stories — associated with his life after retirement.

**Richard’s stories of self during the across-the-table negotiation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Richard who remains CEO:</th>
<th>Richard who sells the company:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• “I am hardworking.”</td>
<td>• “I could turn into a ‘has been.’”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “I am an ambitious leader.”</td>
<td>• “I could be seen as a failure.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “I am successful.”</td>
<td>• “I might become a nobody.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “I make important decisions.”</td>
<td>• “I don’t know who I’d become.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “People rely on me.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “I know who I am.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“Negotiations within” over transformative identities typically occur when an individual faces a choice that involves taking on a new or unfamiliar role.\(^{51}\) Of-

---

50. Roy F. Baumeister, *Identity, self-concept, and self-esteem: The self lost and found*, HANDBOOK OF PERSONALITY PSYCHOLOGY 681, 695-97 (Robert Hogan et al. eds., 1997) (defining and discussing identity crises); Catherine E. Amiot, et al., *Changes in social identities over time: The role of coping and adaptation processes*, BRITISH J. SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 803, 821-22 (2010) (suggesting that integration is difficult if an individual feels that one identity has been forcibly pushed aside); BELENKY, ET AL., supra note 49, at 81 (women who reject familiar contexts, places, and relationships may experience a “sense of loss of themselves” as they try to redefine their identity).

51. BLAKE ASHFORTH, *ROLE TRANSITIONS IN ORGANIZATIONAL LIFE: AN IDENTITY-BASED PERSPECTIVE* 10-11 (2001) (describing identity transformation as a process of “unfreezing” and “refreezing”). But see Catherine E. Amiot, et al., *Integration of Social Identities in the Self: Towards a Cognitive-Developmental Model*, 11 PERSONALITY & SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY REV. 364, 378 (2007) (noting that whether or not an identity change occurs by choice can make a significant difference to whether integration of the multiple identities is likely to occur). In addition, a “negotiation within” over transformative identities might occur when an individual begins to recognize and accept a particular “negatively valenced identity.” For example, a gay person in the process of “coming out” might come to recognize and accept his sexual orientation, but still worry about embracing a new, unknown
ten, the choice will involve a major life decision — like deciding to retire — but sometimes it might not. For example, a father might have this type of “negotiation within” during a conversation with his son about whether to attend a law school’s “admitted students’ weekend.” The father might fear losing his identity as a valued, admired, protective caregiver, and feel unsure about whether he will still be needed or valued in a new, more equal parent-child relationship. The father might make the case for attending the weekend with his son on the ground that having an extra opinion would help in decision-making or that if he is footing part of the bill, he should be equally welcome at the prospective student weekend. These arguments might wear on the son, damage the relationship, and ignore the real issue that needs addressing: how can the father find a satisfying and important role as father to a young adult instead of to a teenager?

Similarly, a young teacher fresh out of college might experience this category of “negotiation within” when discussing whether to enforce a particular student’s detention one afternoon. The teacher might be unsure that he can successfully take on the role of authority figure in a classroom with students close to his own age, and might fear giving up his identity as a young person. In this case, the teacher might simply cave to the student in order to preserve his congenial and friendly image, even though doing so might exert a long-term disservice to the student.

Such “negotiations within” often cause individuals to feel fearful, anxious, and insecure. These feelings may lead them to behave either very cautiously or very impulsively at the negotiation table, depending on whether they embrace their fears of the unknown or suppress them.52

III. TYPICAL STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING THE NEGOTIATION WITHIN

For each of the three categories of “negotiation within,” we have discussed how poor management of internal conflict may generate negative emotions that in turn may lead to suboptimal negotiation outcomes. But we have not described precisely what it means to manage internal conflict poorly. In truth, individuals use a variety of techniques and strategies to manage internal conflicts every day, some conscious, some not. And these various approaches may be more or less helpful depending on the circumstances.

In many instances, we learn certain approaches for managing internal conflict early in our lives as a result of our family histories and experiences, but fail to “unlearn” our “default” behaviors even when they become harmful or limiting role as a gay man. Whereas previously he might have identified as a “warm, sensitive straight man,” he does not know what it will be like to be a “warm, sensitive gay man.” The loss of one identity without knowing the full nature of the resulting identity is likely to be troubling to the individual. In short, in many cases a “negotiation within” over a negatively valenced identity can transition into a “negotiation within” over transformative identities, and the situation may be no less challenging.

52. See Carolyn Ellis, Sociological Introspection and Emotional Experience, 14 SYMBOLIC INTERACTION 23, 36 (Spring 1991) (stating that when faced with a volatile situation or set of realities, “emotions can change drastically, reverse themselves, and then change back”); Donna Chrobot-Mason, et al., The challenge of leading on unstable ground: Triggers that activate social identity faultlines, 62 HUMAN RELATIONS 1763, 1765 (2009) (suggesting that perception of a threat to an existing identity can prompt a strong emotional response); Baumeister, supra note 50, at 698 (handling an identity quake poorly may prompt inconsistent or uninhibited behavior).
later in life.\textsuperscript{53} For example, in Story 2, we can imagine that Julia might have attached negative valences to “dependency” and “neediness” — and ignored or suppressed those “selves” that might be capable of acknowledging a need for help — because this approach helped her to survive a difficult upbringing. Perhaps Julia was the youngest of four in a family where one of the older siblings had a serious drug problem and battled depression and, as a result, Julia learned to shut out chaos, be independent, and expect little of others. Perhaps these became her default approaches for dealing with internal conflict even as she grew older, wiser, and more capable of handling challenging “negotiations within” in a variety of ways.\textsuperscript{54} In Story 2, we saw how this strategy proved to be maladaptive in Julia’s workplace, where the primary task involved collaborating to create a best-selling online game, not surviving a difficult upbringing.

Below, we describe four typical approaches — denial, avoidance, suppression, and resignation — that individuals use to handle negotiations within and some of the most common problems that these approaches might engender in across-the-table negotiations. We also describe how and why each approach might emerge as a negotiator’s “default” behavior for managing internal conflict.

\textbf{A. Denial}

Often when individuals face a challenging internal conflict, they simply deny its existence altogether. On a conscious level, the individual might be unaware that a “negotiation within” is occurring, even though at some deeper, subconscious level she knows this to be the case.\textsuperscript{55} For example, Richard the CEO might argue strenuously that he is not afraid of life as a “family man” and that he is backing away from the pharmaceutical company deal purely on the merits. Even if a close friend were to suggest to Richard that he might be experiencing such fears, he still might deny it. Richard might even believe that he is telling the truth, at least on the surface or in that moment. Through denial, he has buried the needs of one or more of his true selves so that he won’t have to face the challenge of consciously managing a “negotiation within.”\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{53} Cf. Jane Elizabeth Pizzolato, \textit{Coping With Conflict: Self-Authorship, Coping, and Adaptation to College in First-Year, High-Risk Students}, 45 J. COLLEGE STUDENT DEV. 425, 427 (July/Aug. 2004) (“... maintenance of self-authorship may be difficult when students are immersed in marginalizing environments”); Jaspal & Cinnirella, \textit{supra} note 39, at 866 (awareness of conflicting identities may bring issues of internal conflict into relief and require coping strategies).

\textsuperscript{54} See Amiot et al., \textit{supra} note 51, at 379 (defining coping mechanisms as “strategies by which individuals meet the demands of their changing environment and concretely deal with them”); \textit{id.} at 382 (proposing that repeated encounters with one’s social environment will have an impact on the self-identity as well as the individual’s way of processing internal conflict); Ellis, \textit{supra} note 52, at 43 (coping techniques “that have worked in the past tend to be repeated”).

\textsuperscript{55} See Verónica Benet-Martinez & Jana Haritatos, \textit{Bicultural Identity Integration (BII): Components and Psychosocial Antecedents}, 73 J. PERSONALITY 1015, 1028 (finding that a bicultural individual can feel a dissociation of the two cultures without experiencing a salient internal identity conflict).

\textsuperscript{56} See generally Leonard L. Riskin, \textit{The Contemplative Lawyer: On the Potential Contributions of Mindfulness Meditation to Law Students, Lawyers, and their Clients}, 7 HARV. NEGOT. L. REV. 1, 27 (2002) (“In this manner, aversion to fear and anxiety can block us from fully experiencing certain ‘threatening’ thoughts and emotions, such as negative judgments about ourselves or others, about our work or family situations, or about a particular position we are taking on behalf of a client; it can obscure our awareness of our true intentions.”).
Denial may be an effective way of dealing with some internal conflicts in the short-term, since it allows the individual to avoid some of the inner turmoil that comes with recognizing such conflicts. Over time, however, these internal conflicts will tend to leak out in unhelpful ways and lead to suboptimal agreements.\textsuperscript{57} For example, Richard might eventually find himself stuck in a job that makes him profoundly unhappy. He might find himself resenting his coworkers, even — or perhaps, especially — when they express enthusiasm for their work. If he continues to deny his own internal conflict around his career, he will lack any perspective or explanation for these feelings. Perhaps most importantly, through blaming his failure to sell the company on everything but the real reason, his internal conflict, Richard fails to learn from his mistake. The next time he is offered a chance to leave his career behind and embrace a new role in his family, he may make the same mistake without ever recognizing the pattern.

In general, individuals in denial will find themselves consistently failing to come to agreements when they should, or coming to agreements when they should not. Because these individuals deny the existence of parts of themselves, they have limited insight into why they remain unhappy with their negotiation outcomes.

### B. Avoidance

Instead of denying that an internal conflict exists, an individual might acknowledge its existence and simply choose to avoid addressing or confronting it. Often, the hope is that the internal conflict will solve itself or disappear with time. Unlike individuals in denial, individuals who avoid their internal conflict are consciously aware of the conflict and its relevance to the situation at hand, but actively choose to think or talk about other issues instead.\textsuperscript{58} They may worry that the internal conflict is hopelessly intractable, or that addressing it might leave them too vulnerable and exposed. They therefore decide to push the conflict to one side and perhaps address it later, or not at all. For example, if Richard were engaged in avoidance, he might admit to himself that he has some concerns about what his life will look like after he sells his company, but choose instead to focus on the financial aspects of the deal. He might minimize his fears about family life as being just too complex to work through, or convince himself it is inappropriate to address his identity issues in a business negotiation.

Like denial, avoiding internal conflict can be an adaptive response. Sometimes, the time is simply not right for addressing internal conflict. Perhaps the individual is managing a high stress or emergency situation, and does not have the time or energy to engage in the reflection necessary to manage internal conflict effectively. Perhaps the individual will find herself in a more supportive situation at some point in the future, and it would be helpful to postpone managing the internal conflict until that time. Or perhaps the conflict is simply not important or

\textsuperscript{57} See Amiot et al., supra note 51, at 379 (drawing a distinction between helpful, “active” coping strategies to manage inner conflict, and “avoidance” coping strategies such as denial, which tend to lead to feelings of alienation and otherness).

\textsuperscript{58} See Ellis, supra note 52, at 39 (telling the story of an individual who uses internal “control mechanisms” to “rationalize” internal conflict and avoid engagement). Cf. Baumeister, supra note 50, at 698 (suggesting that in order to “deconstruct” one’s identity, an individual will engage in “escapist” behaviors to avoid focusing on the self).
salient enough to worry about at the present moment. Deciding when such a strategy is adaptive is a complex undertaking, and negotiators should consider carefully the pros and cons of avoidance before deciding to engage in it.\textsuperscript{59}

Problems with avoidance tend to emerge when, over the long term, the individual consistently avoids managing the internal conflict, or does so even in situations in which it would be helpful.\textsuperscript{60} For example, in the case of Anne, the manager in Story 1, avoidance might be problematic if she never faces her sense of conflicted loyalties even when making important choices for the company, and instead thoughtlessly favors one loyalty over the other on a consistent basis. Similarly, but more profoundly, avoidance might be a problem for the father who fears losing his identity as protective caregiver if he never chooses to be open and vulnerable to his children about his worries and, instead, always seeks a distraction in the moment. Over time, the father might find his relationship with his children growing ever more distant. Or a gay individual “in the closet” might embrace a busy, high-achieving lifestyle to make sure he does not have time to ponder too deeply any internal conflict over his sexual orientation.\textsuperscript{61} In such cases, consistent and habitual avoidance of internal conflict leads to many of the same problems as denial: internal conflict remains unaddressed; it fester; it leads, effectively, to the rejection of certain portions of the self; it poisons negotiation outcomes and becomes a barrier to agreement.\textsuperscript{62}

\textit{Avoidance in Practice: The Case of Emily and Her Mom}

Avoidance can be particularly detrimental when, as is often the case, both individuals in a long-term negotiation engage in it repeatedly. Consider Emily, an 18-year-old just entering college. Since she graduated from high school and moved away to school, Emily and her mom have been in a seemingly unending state of conflict. They fight over everything: whom Emily dates, when she will come home to visit, where she decides to live, etc. It seems like whenever Emily tries to assert her own opinion on these issues, her mom gets upset. In response, Emily often takes a different position from her mom simply to spite her. In one particularly difficult conversation, Emily and her mom get into an argument about whether Emily’s mom should stay with Emily or in a hotel when she comes to visit her at school. Emily insists that it would be “embarrassing” to have her mom stay with her in her apartment with her roommates around. Her mom argues that it is “impractical and expensive” to stay in a hotel “for no good reason.” They argue for an hour about the merits of their respective positions, during which time Emily calls her mom “a control freak,” and Emily’s mom calls her “ungrateful.” In the end, one of them gives in.

\textsuperscript{59}Keith Allred, \textit{Distinguishing Best and Strategic Practices: A Framework for Managing the Dilemma Between Creating and Claiming Value}, 16 \textit{NEGOTIATION J.} 387, 388-89 (2000) (noting the challenge of providing prescriptive advice when strategic practices will inherently “work well in terms of one or more dimensions of negotiation performance . . . but . . . diminish one’s performance on other dimensions”).

\textsuperscript{60}Cf. Ellis, \textit{supra} note 52, at 35 (stating that awareness and acknowledgment of negative emotions is necessary to move towards full realization of positive emotions and a forward-thinking mindset).

\textsuperscript{61}Daniel Mendelsohn, \textit{The Elusive Embrace: Desire and the Riddle of Identity} (1999).

\textsuperscript{62}Cf. Chrobot-Mason, \textit{supra} note 52, at 1774 (finding that unresolved internal identity tension among employees spills over into the overall workplace environment, including employee self-esteem and morale, and work outcomes and products).
This scenario represents a prototypical “negotiation within” over transformative identities that, in this case, Emily and her mom are handling through avoidance. At the root of the negative emotions and failed across-the-table negotiation is an identity conflict within Emily’s mother over losing her identity as caregiver, and within Emily over whether she will succeed in obtaining her emerging identity as an independent adult. The prospect of leaving behind known identities and embracing new ones is a source of anxiety. Yet neither individual explicitly addresses these identity issues and the negative emotions that they create. In fact, the high stress, blame-filled nature of the conversation helps both Emily and her mother avoid even thinking about the frightening and hurtful identity issues. By fixating on the immediate presenting issue, the mom’s visit, and by blaming the other person, each avoids confronting her own challenging “negotiation within.”

If asked, Emily’s mom could explain how hard it has been for her since Emily left, that she misses the feeling of being needed as a mother, and that she finds her new role confusing and unsatisfying. Similarly, Emily could explain that it is important for her to no longer be seen and treated as the child she once was. She might describe how anxious she is about succeeding in her new, more independent role through making friends and fitting in at school. She might even identify specific ways in which she would like to tap into her mom’s expertise about what it was like for her when she ventured out on her own for the first time. In so doing, she would in fact be offering her mom just the sort of role that the mom might need to let go of her earlier “mom-to-a-child” identity. Despite their awareness of these issues, Emily and her mother find it a lot safer to argue about the merits of where mom will stay when she visits. They engage in a communication ritual that takes place on a level far removed from the true source of their difficulties. At the very least they know how this conversation ends: in an argument about unimportant things, with both of them in an unsatisfactory and yet familiar place.

C. Suppression

Yet another limiting response to internal conflict involves suppressing one particular identity or “self.” As with avoidance, an individual engaged in suppression is consciously aware of the existence of internal conflict. The key difference between avoidance and suppression lies in the persistence of the negative identity. For whatever reason — perhaps because the internal conflict is too salient to ignore, or perhaps because the individual actively wants to silence one of her “selves” — avoidance is not a viable strategy. The individual finds herself unable simply to think about other issues and avoid confronting the internal conflict; it remains ever-present. Instead, she spends substantial time and energy attempting to silence one particular identity. Typically, such individuals perceive the identi-

---

63. Communication rituals with other parties that differ from one’s own internal emotions or identity have the potential to permanently impact an individual’s self-identity. See, e.g., ASHFORTH, supra note 51, at 46 (“[R]ecurrent short-term playacting may become long-term identification if one’s recurring actions gradually persuade one that the attachment to the role must be real”).

64. See, e.g., Hoffman, supra note 13, at 314-15 (analogizing negatively valenced identities to “exiles” associated with shame and pain, which “protector” identities, or positively valenced identities, attempt to suppress in order to avoid further psychological harm).
ties at the root of their internal conflict as mutually exclusive, and consistently choose one "self" over the others.

This approach is especially associated with the second domain of internal conflicts discussed above — that of "valenced identities" — in which a particular version of one’s self or desires or preferences gets coded negatively with moral judgment or condemnation. Often this “self” is identified as selfish, bad, or wrong such that the individual attempts to extinguish or destroy it. For example, if an individual attaches a negative valence to her “self” that has needs, as did Julia, the game developer in Story 2, she might consistently seek to silence this side of herself and refuse to ask for help even when help is readily available and asking for it would be a sign of mature management and competence. To such individuals, the “negotiation within” seems like a zero-sum game, in which giving voice to the “bad” self necessarily means losing the “good” self.

Suppression shares the negative side effects of denial and avoidance, with an added cost: active suppression consumes a considerable amount of emotional energy. Consciously suppressing a part of oneself for an extended period of time can be exhausting. In such circumstances, any situation that triggers the internal conflict becomes doubly frustrating: it means not only coming to an unsustainable deal or non-deal, but also expending enormous emotional energy pretending — both to oneself and to the outside world — that everything is okay.65 Expending this emotional energy can be a cause of low self-esteem and strained relationships.66

Suppression in Practice: The Case of John

The negative long-term consequences of suppression can be dramatic. Consider John, a 25-year-old man who knows that he is gay but who desperately does not want to be gay. John was raised in a conservative Christian household. His entire family believes it is wrong and selfish to be gay, that homosexuality is a lifestyle choice, and that it can be “cured” through prayer and therapy. For John, then, being gay necessarily means causing suffering among the people he loves the most: It is an intolerable defect that he must never let see the light of day.

John tries as hard as he can to act like his vision of a stereotypical straight man. He dates women, excels in athletics, and occasionally even uses derogatory language when talking about gay people with his male friends. To the outside world, John seems well adjusted, but inside he is profoundly unhappy. Despite all appearances, John knows, powerfully and fully, that he is gay, and that he always has been. He cannot simply ignore the fact that he is attracted to men.

John is engaged in suppression. He does not deny (to himself, at least) that he is gay; nor can he ignore it. Instead, he tells himself that his gay “self” does not matter: even if this self is always with him, he can live his life pretending that it isn’t both to himself and to others. He tells himself it is okay that he will

65. See Ellis, supra note 52, at 35 (arguing that negative emotions are often conceptualized as something to “get over”).
66. Cf. Amiot, et al., supra note 50, at 804-05 (noting that social support from other individuals is a key element of identity development and positive adjustment to changes in identity context).
never experience true romantic love and express only part of himself even to his family and closest friends.

John’s suppression not only causes him to miss out on opportunities that many straight individuals take for granted — an intimate, romantic partnership; an open and honest relationship with his parents, etc. — but it also causes him to spend much of his day worrying that he will be “found out” by those around him, that somehow his cover will be blown and others will discover the upsetting truth about who he really is. The effort of wearing an “identity mask,” and the constant worry that it will somehow slip, represent the high costs of suppression.67

D. Resignation

A fourth common and limiting response to internal conflict is resignation. An individual who is resigned to internal conflict acknowledges that internal conflict exists and accepts its presence in her life without wasting energy trying to fight it. But she does not actively address the conflict and may perceive it as emblematic of personal failure or dysfunction. The individual might wish that the conflict did not exist but believe that there is nothing she can do about it and she must therefore tolerate it. Instead of actively trying to manage the internal conflict, she passively lets it play out on its own over time, and perceives it as a regrettable if inevitable reality.68

For example, in Story 1, in which Anne negotiates with the VP over resources, Anne might be resigned to the fact that she cannot be all things to all people in this particular situation. She might acknowledge that her desire to be a “loyal advocate” and “team player” are in conflict, that she feels guilty and torn, and that she therefore has trouble thinking clearly about the situation and negotiating effectively. Nevertheless, she might decide that she can’t do anything about this conflict or these feelings even if they make her feel bad about herself. In other words, she recognizes the internal conflict and its impact, but tells herself, “That’s just the way things are.”

Compared with denial, avoidance, and suppression, handling internal conflict through resignation might seem like a step in the right direction.69 At the very least, the resigned individual is sufficiently self-aware to recognize that an identity conflict exists, and sufficiently accepting of her various selves such that she does not fight or suppress them. Moreover, resigning oneself to internal conflict helps the individual to avoid the heightened sense of distress that comes with attempting to resolve an intractable problem only to fail time and again.

The problem with resignation is that it involves a pejorative attitude towards internal conflict — a belief that conflict is symptomatic of something bad or re-

67. RALPH ELLISON, INVISIBLE MAN 6-8, 14, 16 (1952).
68. See Amiot, et al. supra note 51, at 374-75 (discussing the tendency to acknowledge but then “compartmentalize” different self-identities depending on context, without taking steps towards integration).
69. See Puchalska-Wasyl, supra note 17, at 76 (suggesting that even the acknowledgment of an inner conflict, without trying to actively engage with or manage multiple voices, may serve a supportive and helpful role).
grettable about oneself or the situation.  The resigned individual fails to see anything positive about her own multiplicity, which contributes to a negative self-image. Moreover, resignation fails to involve any conscious or active management of one’s multiple “selves,” which inhibits the opportunity for long-term growth. In negotiation parlance, the resigned individual fails to leverage the different preferences of her various “selves” and make value-creating “trades” among them to maximize joint gains. As a result, agreements remain suboptimal.

Resignation in Practice: The Case of Karen

In some cases, resignation can be just as maladaptive as denial, avoidance, or suppression, or even more so. Consider the case of Karen, a successful attorney and mother of three who has just been offered a position as managing partner at her law firm. The job represents both an enormous opportunity for Karen and a huge commitment. However, thoughts of talking either to her husband about taking the job (and therefore further burdening him with more household duties) or to the firm leadership about declining (and therefore failing to serve the institution and reach her professional potential) make her feel paralyzed. When Karen finally brings up the offer with her husband and they negotiate household roles, she finds herself plagued by doubts.

For Karen, there is nothing new about these kinds of feelings. She has long had a habit of trying to fulfill the expectations of others. Growing up, Karen’s parents — in particular, her mother — had high expectations for her. Karen’s sister graduated at the top of her class and was admitted to an Ivy League college; Karen’s mother was enormously proud and always expected Karen to do the same. Karen worked hard in school and managed to do well, but deep down she did it not for herself but for her mother, to become the “successful achiever” her mother wanted her to be. And when Karen got married, a similar dynamic emerged. She found herself cleaning up around the house, cooking meals, doing the dishes, and always putting the kids to bed in order to be the “good domestic partner” that she believed her husband wanted.

Often, Karen found it impossible to be both a “successful achiever” for her mother, and a “good domestic partner” for her husband. There were only so many hours in a day. In these moments — when Karen could not pick up the kids from soccer practice because of a meeting in the office, or when she had to tell her boss that she could not come in on the weekend because her kids were sick — Karen felt an inflated sense of personal failure.

Karen was self-aware enough to know the reasons why she felt like such a failure. She could tell you, clearly and articulately, that she always felt pressured by her mother to be “perfect” like her sister, and that whenever she found

70. Cf. Amiot, et al., supra note 51, at 375 (describing how different social identities can become “compartmentalized”). Our conception of resignation as a response to internal conflict is similar to the compartmentalization described by Amiot, et al., in that an individual resigned to internal conflict fails to see any interrelation between multiple identities and therefore acts in different ways according to context. We would add that along with this compartmentalization comes a negative view of the multiple identities themselves; an individual adopting this response is unlikely to see an interrelation between her identities because she views the very existence of these identities as problematic. In that sense, resignation “spar[es] one from conflicts over opposing self-attributes . . . or the difficulties associated with reconciling the demands of multiple, potentially incompatible personal and social identities.” Id. at 374.
herself unable to fulfill the expectations of someone close to her, she would find herself back in that place of imperfection and disappointment that she felt so vividly as a child. And yet she still felt profoundly unhappy in both her marriage and her work, and held out little hope that things would ever improve. In fact, her very self-awareness made Karen feel even more like a failure, because she still felt unable to do anything to improve the situation. “This is just the way I am,” she often told herself.

If we were to diagnose Karen according to our framework, we would most likely say that the negotiation with her husband over household roles had triggered a “negotiation within” over competing aspirational identities, and Karen was handling it through resignation. As in many of her prior negotiations, she found herself choosing between or among her various roles and identities, and fearing that she would let down one of her aspirational “selves” in the process. Most likely, she would continue to be plagued by a sense of personal failure regardless of the outcome of this particular negotiation.

The key distinction between resignation and the other typical management approaches is that Karen does not deny or even try to suppress the identity conflict at the root of her sense of failure. On the contrary, she recognizes the identity conflict for what it is with a consistent and enduring self-awareness, and yet does nothing to alter her behavior or her mindset. Karen’s problem is that she sees nothing positive about her desire to always please others, nor does she actively try to manage it. She has resigned herself to feeling unhappy and incomplete every time she has to let someone down. In fact, her very recognition of the problem leads only to more negative emotions.

To summarize, we have identified four typical ways that individuals manage internal conflict: denial, avoidance, suppression, and resignation. To clarify the differences between the different approaches, we list each management approach with the associated statement an individual might make to their self during the process.

Common Approaches for Managing Internal Conflict and Associated Statements to Self

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Management Approach</th>
<th>Associated Statements to Self</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denial</td>
<td>• “This isn’t an issue at all.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “No, that’s really not relevant here.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “That’s not the real reason I’m struggling.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>• “I don’t want to think about it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “I have so many other things to do... better to work on them for now.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “With time, this issue will go away by itself.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suppression</td>
<td>• “That side of me has no place in this negotiation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “If I express that part of myself, all hell will break lose. I won’t let it rear its ugly head.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• “This side of me is really awful. I need to root it out.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Resignation

- “I wish I didn’t feel this way, but I do.”
- “I’m stuck. There’s nothing I can do.”
- “I’m flawed, and it’s hopeless.”

IV. ADVICE FOR MANAGING YOUR OWN “NEGOTIATIONS WITHIN”: TOWARD INTEGRATION

We now offer some prescriptive advice for how to navigate “negotiations within” more effectively. We call our suggested approach “integration,” and suggest that it represents a fifth approach for managing internal conflict in addition to denial, avoidance, suppression, and resignation.

We use the term “integration” with a conscious nod towards the negotiation concept of “integrative bargaining.” Like integrative bargaining in across-the-table negotiations, integration in the context of a “negotiation within” involves using a problem-solving approach towards managing conflict. In other words, it involves a deep and thorough investigation of who the stakeholders are in a given conflict situation, what really matters to these stakeholders, and which among a universe of possible outcomes best fulfills the interests of these stakeholders. It involves moving beyond the perception of stakeholder conflict as an obstacle, or as something that one must tolerate, and sees it instead as a potential source of positive change and value creation. The key distinction, of course, is that the stakeholders in any given “negotiation within” represent identities within a single individual.

Like resignation, integration begins with acceptance of internal conflict, but it goes further. Integration involves:

- The full, authentic acknowledgement and acceptance of one’s multiple “selves,” and the variety of resources they can “bring to the table.”
- Recognition that internal conflict can be a source of value creation and is not symptomatic of personal failure.
- A thoughtful weighing of the interests and concerns of all the internal “selves” involved.
- An effort to generate creative options to meet the interests of these various “selves,” and a commitment to move forward in a way that best meets their short- and long-term interests.

---

73. See Kuttner, supra note 35, at 954 (proposing that the existence of an internal conflict itself can reveal new possibilities for understanding the complexities of the self and, therefore, options for the individual’s situation).
74. For a parallel discussion of similar concepts, see Amiot, et al., supra note 51, at 375 (“At this stage, individuals come to recognize that multiple and distinct social identities are simultaneously
Integration thus involves recognizing that as much as one’s multiple identities can be a source of internal conflict, they can also be a source of wisdom. Conflict within the self can be a source of meaningful, beneficial, personal growth and transformation over the long term if managed effectively. The individual who can experience and observe a negotiation from multiple perspectives and weigh each of these perspectives appropriately is likely to reach a better decision than one with a more myopic outlook. \(^{75}\) She is also better able to understand where others are coming from and empathize with them, a critical negotiation skill. \(^{76}\)

Integration is also an opportunity for creativity. An individual seeking to integrate her various selves can look for out-of-the-box ways to serve the interests of each, without sacrificing any one “self” wholly or permanently. Instead of denying, avoiding, or suppressing certain “selves,” or viewing them as pathologies, the individual embracing an integrative approach can see them for what they are: too complex to be simply labeled as “all good” or “all bad,” but rather parts of herself that exist and must be recognized, leveraged, and managed.

The goal of integrating one’s multiple selves in a negotiation certainly sounds appealing. In practice, it can be enormously difficult. Uncovering the complex confluence of identities within oneself and working for harmony among them is really a life’s work, not wholly achievable before, during, or after any single negotiation. Furthermore, integration will not always be the best approach for manag—

---

important to their self”); Jennifer D. Campbell, et al., *The Structure of the Self-Concept and its Relation to Psychological Adjustment*, 71 J. PERSONALITY 115, 126 (2003) (describing different measures of integration or “unity”); Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, supra note 55, at 1018 (defining integration as high levels of identification with both cultures in bicultural individuals).

75. Cf. Allen C. Amason & David M. Schwiger, *The Effects of Conflict on Strategic Decision Making Effectiveness and Organizational Performance*, USING CONFLICT IN ORGANIZATIONS 102 (Carsten K.W. De Dreu & Ever Van Der Vliet, eds., 1997) (stating that diverse teams make more innovative and higher quality decisions than less diverse teams); Chrobot-Mason, supra note 52, at 1789 (different actors may have widely divergent interpretations or accounts of the same event, all of which can be instructive).

76. Cf. ROBERT KEGAN, THE EVOLVING SELF: PROBLEM AND PROCESS IN HUMAN DEVELOPMENT 103-06 (1982) (arguing that a person’s highest stage of subject-order relations, or the inter-individual balance, enables him or her to relate to and see other people as “value-originating, system-generating, history-making individuals”). Take, for example, the experience of individuals who come out as gay, lesbian, or transgender. As will become more apparent through the discussion below, coming out is an archetypal form of integration: it is an act of embracing a previously unacknowledged or shameful part of the self. Not surprisingly, individuals who come out as gay, lesbian, or transgender typically report feelings of higher self-esteem. See, e.g., Karen M. Jordan & Robert H. Deluty, *Coming Out for Lesbian Women: Its Relation to Anxiety, Positive Affectivity, Self-Esteem, and Social Support*, 35 J. HOMOSEXUALITY 41 (1998) (finding a positive correlation between disclosure of sexual orientation and self-esteem); SKI HUNTER, COMING OUT AND DISCLOSURES: LGBT PERSONS ACROSS THE LIFE SPAN 126 (2007) (“Living a double life” and maintaining secrecy of one’s sexual orientation, particularly in a work context, can cause depression, low self-esteem, and other negative effects). Many such individuals also report that their “coming out” experience eventually helped them learn to observe, understand, and empathize with others’ feelings of shame and self-doubt more effectively, because they endured these feelings themselves and then came to terms with them. Of course, the value of embracing unacknowledged or shameful parts of the self applies to straight people as well: it deepens the wells of empathy and sharpens the skills of observation and listening. Such skills are not only valuable in their own right, but they are also critical for managing difficult moments during negotiations and achieving lasting, mutually beneficial agreements. Marvin Johnson, Stewart Levine & Lawrence Richard, *Emotionally Intelligent Mediation, BRINGING PEACE INTO THE ROOM* 151, 160-61 (Daniel Bowling & David Hoffman eds., 2003); Donald Saposnek, *Style and the Family Mediator*, id. at 245, 250-51.
ing a “negotiation within.” As we have discussed, denial, avoidance, suppression, and resignation may all have their time and place. However, our research and experience suggests that these more common behaviors are maladaptive in many negotiation scenarios. We hope that by introducing individuals to a new set of tools, we can expand their behavioral repertoire and increase their odds of success.

Our advice for integration occurs through careful attention to three different stages or modes: (1) Mirror Work, (2) Chair Work, and (3) Table Work. Our experience suggests that while these three sets of tools might seem unorthodox to some, and might not be necessary or helpful for every “negotiation within,” they have the potential to create negotiation breakthroughs. With practice and conscious effort, they can alter longstanding negotiation dynamics, transform relationships, and dramatically expand an individual’s understanding of her negotiation tendencies and her skill at managing them.

Mirror Work involves the honest and thorough examination of one’s internal conflicts. It is the task of accurate, truthful, and courageous self-discovery. One distinguishing feature of mirror work, as we conceive it, is that it is primarily an individual process. While some may find it helpful to partner with a trusted confidante to gain insight into internal conflict at this early stage, mirror work might also be a process that one engages in alone, reflecting on personal and perhaps deeply-rooted emotions and tendencies. Mirror work is hard work; but without it, integration is not possible.

Chair Work invites us to “sit in” — both literally and figuratively — the chairs of our various selves and give voice to each of them. Chair work helps disentangle the multiple selves involved in an internal conflict, allowing the individual to embrace an “and/both” stance with respect to these selves instead of an “either/or” or “decision paralysis” stance. A central goal of chair work is to reframe internal conflict and work towards non-judgmental acceptance of one’s multiple selves. Chair work is based on the premise that bringing each internal voice to the surface and giving it a “seat” at the table is a necessary prerequisite to a successful across-the-table negotiation. A trusted confidante may be a helpful ally during this stage, by helping the individual locate which identities might be triggered during an across-the-table negotiation, and how these identities might express themselves in response to a trigger.

Finally, Table Work involves the tactical moves one makes to manage the “negotiation within” during the across-the-table negotiation with the other side. This stage of integration calls upon a host of traditional behavioral negotiation skills related to framing, empathy, assertion and appropriate expression of emotion. In a sense, it involves a “re-joining” in an integrated way the many “selves” acknowledged in the mirror work stage and expressed in the chair work stage.

Below, we explore in more detail each of the three stages of integration.

77. See generally Roger Fisher & Wayne H. Davis, Six Basic Interpersonal Skills for a Negotiator’s Repertoire, 3 NEGOT. J. 117, 117 (1987) (on the importance of expanding the behavioral repertoire and extending skills “in all directions”).

78. See Amiot et al., supra note 51, at 375-76 ("[M]ore inclusive self-abstractions . . . bring meaning and legitimacy to what formerly appeared to be contradictions in the self"). The relationships between seemingly incongruent identities within the self give rise to what Amiot et al. calls “emergent attributes,” which help to move the individual towards integration. Id.: see also id. at 381 (linking an integrated self-identity to greater psychological well-being).
A. Mirror Work: Towards a Deeper Awareness of the “Negotiation Within”

The first step towards integrating a “negotiation within” involves increasing awareness of one’s own internal conflicts through self-reflection — what we call “mirror work.” By engaging in self-reflection after a challenging across-the-table negotiation involving a poorly managed “negotiation within,” one can greatly reduce the chances that a similar “negotiation within” will become a barrier during future across-the-table negotiations.

I. Increasing Awareness Through Systematic Review

A variety of reflective practices may facilitate awareness of internal conflicts. These include cultivating a mindfulness practice, engaging in open conversations with a trusted friend or partner, keeping a journal, or, for some, meeting with a therapist, counselor, or spiritual or religious leader. To improve one’s understanding of identity conflicts as they relate to across-the-table negotiations, however, we suggest a more systematic approach. Specifically, we suggest that after a difficult across-the-table negotiation or conversation, the skilled practitioner should engage in an organized self-assessment, and incorporate into this assessment a thoughtful consideration of emotional and identity issues. An appropriately robust review of such issues should include the following:

An identification of the emotions experienced both during and after the negotiation;

A consideration of whether the emotional responses fit within any particular default response pattern;

An identification of any conflicting identities that might have been at play;

If conflicting identities are at play, a diagnosis of the domain of “negotiation within” into which the internal conflict might fall: aspirational identities, valenced identities, or transformative identities;

79. See, e.g., Amiot et al., supra note 51, at 380 (suggesting that a close friend or colleague can provide social support crucial to the process of identity integration); Riskin, supra note 56, at 27 (explaining that a mindfulness practice can allow individuals to experience their full range of emotions and thereby prevent these emotions from exercising power over the individual).

80. FISHER, URY, & PATTON, supra note 28, at 175.

81. See Ellis, supra note 56, at 25-26 (noting that most sociologists who study external emotional reactions view them as separate from the internal experience, when in fact “how social actors process or appropriate the public into their personal autobiographies . . . to make sense of what is going on provides the private part of our emotion”) (citation omitted); see also Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, supra note 59, at 1022 (suggesting that identity integration is facilitated by traits associated with emotional stability, including flexibility and resilience).
A diagnosis of the strategy for managing the “negotiation within” that was employed (i.e., denial, avoidance, suppression, resignation, and/or integration);

A consideration of more effective alternative approaches and how to achieve them; and

A consideration of immediate action steps for achieving these alternative approaches in the future. 82

After considering potential action steps, the self-analysis might turn to a repeat of the review process, though there might now be new emotions to identify. For instance, whereas an intractable dilemma might create feelings of guilt, frustration, or helplessness, our hope is that the process of mirror work might transform these negative emotions into more positive feelings about the situation: for instance, empowerment, relief, and optimism. These emotions are worth acknowledging, as well.

The following graphic illustrates the basic process of mirror work. It is important to note that simply going through the process once — by reviewing one across-the-table negotiation or interaction — may not necessarily eliminate the negative emotions associated with the situation. As a result, there is a cyclical element to mirror work. With repeated and intentional self-review over time, it is possible to “break out” of the unhelpful cycle of negative emotions and begin to notice a change in mindset and perspective on the situation.

82. Readers of Roger Fisher will recognize this sequence of questions (and a number of the other diagnostic question sets presented in this article) as reflective of Fisher’s “circle chart.” The circle chart divides problem solving along two dimensions, descriptive/prescriptive and concrete/theoretical, that create four quadrants: data, diagnosis, prescription, and action steps. The circle chart framework can help facilitate thorough analysis of a problem and creative brainstorming of options. FISHER, URY, & PATTON, supra note 25, at 66-69.
Reflection on these issues should usually begin sequentially, starting with an inventory of emotions. This is because, typically, identifying emotions assists with recognizing default patterns, which in turn helps with identifying and diagnosing “negotiations within,” which then in turn helps with diagnosing the management approach and considering alternatives. An overly hasty attempt to address the issues later on the list could result in a misdiagnosis. For example, considering the strategy for managing the “negotiation within,” alternative approaches, and action steps before analyzing the domain of “negotiation within” could result in poorly targeted behaviors. That said, our experience suggests that it can also be helpful to cycle back to the issues earlier on the list after considering the later issues. The goal is to increase awareness, and insight often flows in both directions.

We have created a list of diagnostic questions that may aid in considering each of the above issues, presented in the box below. This list of questions is far from comprehensive, and we suggest practitioners may find it helpful to develop their own additional or alternative questions based on what works best for them.

2. Diagnostic Questions for Reviewing the “Negotiation Within”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1: Identify and probe emotions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>· What are these emotions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Are there any “quiet” or “hidden” emotions underneath the “louder” ones?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Where are these emotions coming from?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· Why am I feeling this way?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· When have I felt this way before?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>· What am I afraid will happen?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why is this so scary to me?

Step 2: Identify response patterns
- When else have I reacted this way?
- How was this experience similar to experiences I had with my family or friends growing up?
- What kinds of situations tend to trigger me in this way?
- What are the patterns in the ways I typically respond?
- What are the communication rituals that create this negative pattern of negotiations, and why do I engage in them?

Step 3: Identify conflicting identities
- What identity or role might be threatened?
- What are the conflicting voices or instincts I am experiencing internally?
- What is each voice saying?
- Does one or more voices speak louder to me than others?

Step 4: Diagnose the domain of “negotiation within”
- Am I trying to aspire to two or more identities that I see as positive, desirable, or worthy? (Associated with a conflict between aspirational identities).
- Do I feel shame, anger, or another negative emotion towards one or more of the identities? (Associated with valenced identities).
- Am I afraid to give up one or more of the identities with which I currently feel an affinity? Does the prospect of identifying with, or as, something different, cause anxiety or stress? (Associated with transformational identities).
- Is there another domain of internal conflict that I might be experiencing?

Step 5: Diagnose strategy for managing the “negotiation within”
- Have I been denying the existence of this internal conflict?
- Have I been avoiding it, or suppressing one of my identities?
- Have I become resigned to it? Do I feel hopeless about the prospect of finding alternative approaches?
- Why might I be using this approach?

Step 6: Consider alternative approaches
- What are some other ways I might manage this “negotiation within” in my upcoming across-the-table negotiations?
- What would that look like in practice? What are some things I might say or do differently?
- What are the pros and cons of these alternatives?
- What emotions might I feel if I tried one of these alternatives?
- How might alternative approaches engage or satisfy the different voices or “selves” that are present in this internal conflict?

Step 7: Consider immediate action steps
To understand what such a review might look like in practice, consider how Karen, the attorney and mother of three, might review her difficult conversation with her husband about whether to accept her potential promotion. Imagine that Karen has already had a conversation with her husband and it went poorly. They decided that she would turn down the promotion, but didn’t discuss any of Karen’s long-term professional goals or difficulties asking for more help with the housework. Karen is left feeling frustrated and resentful that her husband didn’t seem more concerned about the importance of her work at the firm.

During her self-review, Karen might first reflect on and list the emotions that she felt during the negotiation, such as anger, frustration, shame, sadness, conflictedness, etc. Then she might consider whether her response fit within a particular default response pattern or whether she ever felt similar emotions during other difficult experiences, perhaps from her childhood. If she probes deeply enough, she might connect her present experiences with the response pattern she learned as a young girl trying to please a demanding mother.

Next, if the negotiation created feelings of conflictedness or ambivalence, Karen might write out or voice the sentiments on both sides of the issue, teasing out potentially conflicting identities. She might then use our framework as a diagnostic tool, and consider which of the three domains of “negotiations within” identified above, if any, might best describe her internal conflict. In this case, she might recognize that her “negotiation within” is a conflict between aspirational identities, because she aspires to be both a “successful achiever” and “good domestic partner.” She might then consider which, if any, common strategy for managing this “negotiation within” she has been utilizing — such as resignation — and what a more integrative approach to her dilemma with the firm might look like, such as approaching firm leadership about revisiting the offer in a few years when Karen’s children are older and more independent. Her assessment of present action steps towards this integrative approach might include an explicit conversation with her husband about their respective feelings and identity concerns, and an in-depth discussion of other alternative options that might better serve each of Karen’s “selves.”

83. See Stone, Patton, & Heen, supra note 17, at 38 (“The process by which we construct our stories about the world often happens so fast, and so automatically, that we are not even aware of all that influences our views”); see also Ellis, supra note 52 (noting the importance of introspection focusing on the links between external stimuli and internal responses).
Karen is unlikely to find simple or concrete solutions to her broader and long-standing internal conflict between aspirational identities during any across-the-table negotiation or difficult conversation with her husband. Over time, however, systematic review of the identity issues present in Karen’s negotiations will help her identify patterns of responses to particular triggers.  

For example, she might realize that she tends to panic when she feels two commitments are pulling her in opposite directions, and that her typical response is to cave in to the demands of one of the commitments, particularly if she happens to be negotiating with a person or group associated with that commitment at the time.  

Systematic review can also help in preparation. Prior to her upcoming conversation with firm management, for example, Karen might consider how she fears or expects it will go if she were to experience the panic of this particular “negotiation within,” and how she will manage the feelings associated with the “negotiation within” in the moment. If she pursues the immediate action step of sharing her identity concerns with her husband, she might also work together with him to engage in “chair work,” which we will discuss in more detail in the next section.

**B. Chair Work**

The second step towards integrating a “negotiation within” involves preparing for challenging or fraught across-the-table negotiations through the use of reflec-
tive and thoughtful role-play exercises — what we call “chair work.” Chair work builds on the insights gained through mirror work to disentangle and then give life to the voices and identities at play in a “negotiation within.” While an individual in the mirror work stage might engage in an internal process of self-examination, reviewing her default tendencies and response patterns on her own, an individual in the chair work stage might role-play her multiple internal voices and identities with the help of a trusted friend or confidante. As discussed in more detail below, chair work involves intentionally triggering the “negotiation within” through the use of role-play in order to bring each inner voice or self to the surface. By allowing the individual to identify, explore, and vocalize the multiple interested “selves” at play in a given across-the-table negotiation, chair work helps the individual give her internal conflicts a more constructive frame and move towards non-judgmental acceptance of her own multiplicity.

To some readers, the use of role-play exercises as a form of negotiation preparation may seem strange or unfamiliar. The nuts and bolts of the chair work exercises as described below may seem difficult to implement in practice, at least without the assistance of an experienced facilitator or negotiation coach. To such readers we would suggest that the details of the exercises are less important than the broader point: effective preparation for managing a challenging “negotiation within” should involve actually speaking the “voices” of one’s different “selves” out loud. Our experience suggests that there are profound and lasting benefits to vocalizing one’s identity conflict through real life role-play — the negotiator is able to hear what her internal “selves” actually sound like; she is able to try them on, experience what it feels like to embody them, and “reality test” them by giving them a voice. 86

1. Using Chair Work to Reframe the “Negotiation Within”

In negotiation parlance, we call the choice of words used to describe or conceptualize a particular idea “framing.” 87 Negative or less helpful framings of internal conflicts are often the cause of a poorly-managed “negotiation within” — without a constructive understanding of the multiple internal voices at play, the individual is likely to find herself feeling frustrated and paralyzed. Developing “frames” that evoke an individual’s more secure identities — rather than her insecure or negatively valenced identities — is a key step in moving towards integration. 88 In addition, sometimes an identity perceived as negative must be reframed as a helpful strength; rather than avoiding an identity that is uncomfortable or unsettling, an individual can work towards viewing this identity from a position of empathy and understanding.

86. The “chair work” we discuss draws upon psychodrama, a psychotherapeutic technique in which individuals explore their lives through dramatization, often in a group. In group psychodrama, the actual acting out of different scenarios and roles can lead individuals to new levels of creativity and spontaneity, and often new understandings of themselves and how they can interact with others. Marcia Karp, Introduction to Psychodrama, THE HANDBOOK OF PSYCHODRAMA 6-7 (Marcia Karp, Paul Holmes, & Kate Bradshaw Tavon, eds., 1998).


Chair work can help to reframe internal conflicts by untangling the competing voices and impulses present in a “negotiation within.” A full and complete picture of an individual’s “negotiation within” is a necessary prerequisite to the process of reframing the internal conflict more constructively: before you come to the table, you must “set the chairs.” The conflicting identities uncovered in the mirror work stage are thus explored in more depth in the chair work stage, the goal being to “hear” what these voices are saying more clearly and to be able to respond or manage those voices in a more productive, self-affirming way.

An important starting point of chair work is to understand one’s own emotions, needs, and default tendencies. In this sense, chair work can help build on and make real the important self-reflective insights the individual has uncovered during mirror work. Chair work could be done individually, with the individual herself writing down or speaking aloud the multiple voices she identifies and exploring them on her own. To dig into chair work more deeply and powerfully, however, we suggest that the individual invite a trusted friend or confidante to join in the exercise. In either case, we believe that creating literal chairs that represent the different voices or “selves” at play can be a powerful tool in understanding, parsing, and eventually reframing the “negotiation within.”

Our advice for chair work is inspired by our experience in the Interpersonal Skills Exercise (IPS), a role-play activity we have used in the Harvard Law School Negotiation Workshop. The purpose of IPS is to help individuals practice and improve the interpersonal skills that often come into play during negotiations or difficult conversations. IPS is meant to help participants identify and diagnose the reasons why they might repeatedly behave in an unhelpful way in certain situations — similar to the “response patterns” that we discussed above.

In the context of the “negotiation within,” there are six particularly useful exercises from IPS that we feel are especially helpful.

- Establishing a baseline — the individual acts out what typically happens in a difficult across-the-table negotiation in which her “negotiation within” is triggered. The purpose of acting out the baseline is to get a sense of what ordinarily happens and how the individual ordinarily feels in the situation.
- Doubling — the individual articulates both what she normally says in the situation and what she is thinking internally. This could be done in con-

89. See, e.g., Heather Elliott, et al., Practices, Identification and Identity Change in the Transition to Motherhood, THEORIZING IDENTITIES AND SOCIAL ACTION 19, 33-34 (Margaret Wetherell, ed., 2009) (discussing how storytelling and literally giving voice to conflicting inner identities can “enact and signify” actual identity shifts). See also Kate Bradshaw Tauvon, PRINCIPLES OF PSYCHODRAMA, THE HANDBOOK OF PSYCHODRAMA 33 (Marcia Karp, Paul Holmes, & Kate Bradshaw Tauvon, eds., 1998) (noting that parts of the self “can be represented on the stage where a dialogue can be created, between such parts, inevitably changing the quality of the relationship (or tele) between these aspects of the self”).
90. Bordone, supra note 15.
91. Id. at 378.
92. Id.
93. This is by no means an exhaustive list; indeed, the number of different variations and iterations of exercises developed through IPS far exceeds six, and all could be powerful for chair work. See Scott Peppet & Bob Bordone, GUIDE TO LEADING THE INTERPERSONAL SKILLS EXERCISE (IPS), available from authors (1995). This manual contains a full explanation of each exercise or “take,” as well as tools and guidelines for coaching the individual to engage in the exercises.
The Negotiation Within

junction with establishing a baseline: the individual might “pause” her baseline take and check in with her internal voice to explore what she is thinking but not saying. By “doubling,” the individual can more clearly see the contrast between her outward actions and her inner monologue, which can help to highlight and deepen her understanding of her inner voices.

- Role reversal — the individual takes on the role of the other party in the negotiation — the person with whom she plans to have an across-the-table negotiation. While she is in the role of the other party, the individual is interviewed as that person. Role reversal can help provide insight into the other party’s perspective, and may help the individual to view herself or her situation differently.

- Two chairs — the individual sets up two (or more) chairs, one representing each voice at play in her internal conflict. By literally sitting in each chair and then articulating each voice’s “thoughts,” the individual can separate the voices or even act out a dialogue between them. A variation is having the chairs represent two specific “selves” that exist within the individual that make it difficult to resolve the situation, such as the “short-term self” and “long-term self.”

- Inner voice — the individual takes on the role of one of her inner voices, and speaks directly to another inner voice. This exercise can be useful when there exists a voice that is “loud” or dominant within the individual’s mind, and feels the need to be heard. Allowing that voice to speak unfiltered and uninterrupted can provide an emotional release.

- Stating ambivalence — the individual speaks her conflictedness aloud, articulating how and why she feels torn. The purpose is to articulate the different preferences and concerns that simultaneously exist within the individual.

An important moment in mirror work is the self-diagnosis of the domain of “negotiation within” into which an individual’s internal conflict falls. This self-diagnosis plays an important role in chair work, too — namely, it empowers the individual to tailor her reframing to the needs and challenges posed by her internal conflict. 94 Below, we provide examples of both constructive and less helpful framing for the three different domains of “negotiation within,” and how the individual might use specific chair work exercises to help her develop more constructive frames. Of course, each of these exercises is useful in countless ways other than the ones we articulate below, and individuals should feel free to be creative with the ways in which they engage in chair work based on what is most suited to their situation and needs.

---

94. It is possible that some “frames” that may be helpful or productive for a certain type of “negotiation within” may be actively harmful for others. See, e.g., Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, supra note 55, at 1018 (noting that bicultural individuals sometimes engage in “cultural frame switching” in order to manage multiple identities depending on context and situation).
a. Framing for Aspirational Identities

If you are facing a “negotiation within” around competing aspirational identities, a useful “frame” will often attempt to name and validate both sides of the internal negotiation. This is because the central identity tension in such “negotiations within” revolves around the perceived destruction of one “self” or the other. A recognition that both selves exist no matter what will thus likely have a prophylactic or palliative effect.95

For example, if Anne, in Story 1, were engaging in chair work around her internal conflict, a friend might interview Anne to ask her why she feels strongly about both being a team player and standing up for her employees, and might acknowledge and explore Anne’s experience in trying to choose between the two.96 The friend (playing himself) might even interview Anne playing the role of her boss, in order to help Anne put her dilemma in perspective. This “role reversal” exercise might go something like this:

Anne’s friend: How would you describe Anne as an employee?

Anne (as her boss): She’s incredibly hardworking. Definitely always tries to do the right thing.

Anne’s friend: What do you mean by, “do the right thing?”

Anne (as her boss): She just wants the best for everyone — the company, her team . . . she takes this work very seriously and as a result, people really rely on her.

Sometimes this type of “role reversal” exercise can yield insights that are surprising to the individual.97 The “interview” between Anne’s friend and Anne’s “boss” might continue:

Anne’s friend: Has Anne ever spoken to you about the way people rely on her?

Anne (as her boss): No, never. Anne would never say anything. She’s a very private person. I’ve never heard so much as a word from her about how much responsibility she takes on.

Anne’s friend: It seems like Anne likes to manage all of her responsibilities on her own.

---

95. See id. at 1040-41 (noting that individuals may dissociate two aspirational cultural identities in order to affirm them both); see also Campbell et al., supra note 74, at 136 (suggesting that individuals who struggle with competing positively valenced identities may find it easier to integrate these identities than individuals who struggle with both positively and negatively valenced identities).

96. Tauvon, supra note 89, at 41 (“The act of reversing roles involves physically changing places and stance with another, who changes places with you and each goes into and explores the other’s role.”).

97. Karp, supra note 86, at 7 (“Often people are more spontaneous in the role of someone else than in their own role.”).
Anne (as her boss): Yes, she does. I worry about it sometimes.

Anne’s friend: Why do you worry about it?

Anne (as her boss): She would never complain, but recently she’s seemed a bit overwhelmed. And her employees care about her, too. I get that she’s in a tough spot, and I’d like to help her out — we all would — but it seems like she’s afraid she’d be “rocking the boat.”

Allowing an individual struggling with competing aspirational identities to view their “negotiation within” as another person can serve numerous purposes. It can make clear to the person what her consistent default tendency is, and allow her to consciously become aware of and articulate dynamics that she may not have noticed before. One of Anne’s default tendencies, it seems, is not to communicate about her difficulties to anyone. Reframing this tendency from a default to a choice can provide Anne with agency and facilitate creative thinking about alternative approaches and solutions.

A “negotiation within” between aspirational identities can be particularly fraught because the individual feels she must satisfy both identities or ideals — that she must be all things to all people, at all times. The central challenge of such negotiations within is that they seem purely distributive: what is good for one “self” might seem by necessity to be bad for the other. Another focus of chair work in this domain should therefore be finding nuance within each aspirational identity. For instance, Anne might believe that to be a “team player” with the other managers, she must not complain or ask for what she sees as “too much” for her employees. This is where a “role reversal” exercise could be powerful. While normally Anne might feel anxiety and pressure to stand up for her team of employees, Anne will likely have a much easier time remembering that, as her boss, she would appreciate an employee who speaks up to share information on potential organizational shortcomings, as this not only helps the employees but also benefits the business as a whole. Anne might realize that asking for more resources would not make her a poor “team player,” and deciding to work with the resources she currently has would not make her a poor advocate for her employees. Rather, both of her identities will continue to exist no matter what choice she makes in the moment.

Finally, engaging in chair work could unlock an individual’s ability to think beyond the seemingly static choices presented by her aspirational identities. In particular, by expanding the timeframe and the scope of the issues on the table, it is possible to find a way to serve the interests of both competing “selves” over the long-term. Anne might choose to be a “team player” in the immediate term by declining new resources for her group, but she might pledge to advocate zealously for resources as soon as revenue picks up. Or she might bring new issues into the negotiation and find some other way to demonstrate loyalty to her group, perhaps by suggesting a staff appreciation day or by holding a collaborative planning

98. Anne and her friend could also engage in this exercise with Anne playing herself and her friend playing Anne’s boss.
99. See Kuttner, supra note 35, at 959 (describing the positional mindset with which parties usually approach situations that they see as purely distributive).
meeting to work out a reasonable schedule for her team’s new responsibilities. Engaging additional variables will lower the identity stakes of the negotiation and encourage a more productive exchange. Practitioners should be aware, however, that while time preferences can be a source of value, they can also serve as an avoidance mechanism. If a pattern developed in which one self never gets effectively represented, this in itself could replicate the same unhelpful dynamics that produced this “negotiation within.”

b. Framing for Valenced Identities

For a “negotiation within” involving valenced identities, the central challenge is empathy towards the negatively valenced self. In some cases, there may in fact be a need for celebration of that self. This paradigm shift may lead to the rejection of negative valencing and an embracing, perhaps even a feeding, of that identity. Thus, engaging in forms of personal reflection that encourage self-acceptance may over the long-term prove helpful.

To be clear, by self-acceptance we do not mean the thoughtless or impulsive pursuit of desires in the moment. On the contrary, the goal is enlightened or thoughtful self-compasion, which means accurately calibrating moments when it is appropriate to pursue one’s own needs, and when it is appropriate to pursue commitment to others. This can best be done in consultation with trusted friends and family who can provide perspective and encourage giving life and voice to one’s multiple identities without overindulging any one of them.

The potentially painful first step in this process is the articulation, plainly and honestly, of why an identity holds a negative valence in the individual’s eyes — that is, what it is that the individual finds so abhorrent, shameful, or unworthy about that part of herself. Here, what could be useful to the individual is the inner voice exercise described above in which she speaks directly to one of her inner voices, in this case the negatively valenced inner voice that she hopes to silence. If Julia, from Story 2 above, were engaged in chair work to untangle her dilemma of whether to ask her supervisor for help, she might ask a friend to “play” the part of her that wants to ask for help. She might say to her friend:

100. See generally Kristin Neff, Self-Compassion: An Alternative Conceptualization of a Healthy Attitude Toward Oneself, 2 SELF & IDENTITY 85 (2003) (identifying three major elements of self-compassion as self-kindness: common humanity, interconnectedness, and mindfulness); see also Riskin, supra note 56, at 26 (“Self-understanding and equanimity . . . can produce compassion for ourselves and an understanding of and compassion for others”); Cf. Kuttner, supra note 35, at 961 (“A negotiation managed through positions often creates a, statice, inflexible, and formal process, avoiding mutual cooperation and a free flow of information”).

101. See, e.g., BELENKY, ET AL., supra note 49.

102. See, e.g., Riskin, supra note 56, at 48 (proposing that mindfulness can help individuals to observe and become aware of their mindsets, habits, and beliefs, without necessarily becoming attached or committed to them).


104. Some psychodrama practitioners call this role that of the “auxiliary ego” (“ . . . the characters they play are in fact aspects of the protagonist’s psyche (even if normally considered as ‘other’ rather than as part of ‘self’).”). Paul Holmes, The Auxiliary Ego, THE HANDBOOK OF PSYCHODRAMA 140 (Marcia Karp, Paul Holmes, & Kate Bradshaw Tauvon, eds., 1998).
“You’re everything I don’t want to be — needy, whiny, a burden on everyone else. You make excuses for all my failures. I keep trying to work harder and feel more capable, but you just keep coming back and it drives me crazy. I feel bad every time I hear you, and I wish you would just go away.”

This exercise is difficult because it may be emotionally overwhelming for Julia both to admit aloud that this voice exists within her and to speak harshly towards what is in fact an indispensable part of herself. However, the benefits of this exercise are a fuller and more complete understanding of all of her emotions; she may be surprised or even a bit alarmed by the strength of her anger or frustration with this identity, prompting her to rethink her approach and treatment of herself.

The second crucial component of reframing negatively valenced identities is moving towards evoking positive or aspirational identities and legitimizing negatively valenced ones. This “normalization” could take multiple forms, but the goal is always to reframe these negatively valenced identities as valid. One technique that can prompt a shift in framing is an exercise involving, literally, “two chairs” that signify the individual’s two approaches to her “negotiation within.” In Julia’s case, one chair would represent why she might want to ask for help with her project (associated with the negatively valenced identity she views as weak or incompetent); the other chair would represent why she might want to deflect responsibility and manage the project on her own (associated with a positively valenced identity she sees as competent and responsible). Julia could have a conversation with “herself,” actually moving back and forth between the chairs, about what might happen if she were to follow either approach. Here is what that conversation might look like:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Julia, sitting in the “I don’t need help” chair</th>
<th>Julia, sitting in the “ask for help” chair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>This project is a lot to take on, but I know I can do it myself. I just have to put my head down and keep working harder.</td>
<td>But I’m really worried that I need some help. I’ve been working hard already, and it just seems like this is something bigger than what I can do on my own.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

105. Cf. Susan Stainback, A Commentary on Inclusion and the Development of a Positive Self-Identity by People with Disabilities, 60 EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN 486 (May 1994) (proposing that children with disabilities will benefit from “accessing,” or being reminded of, their positive identity); Blake E. Ashforth & Glen E. Kreiner, “How Can You Do It?” Dirty Work and the Challenge of Constructing a Positive Identity, 24 ACAD. MGMT. REV. 413 (finding that workers engaged in stigmatized “dirty work” develop a positive sense of self by collective reframing of their identities and de-emphasizing the stigma of outside social actors). Cf. Cohen, supra note 45, at 394-95 (affirming alternative identities in individuals helps to overcome prejudice or bias stemming from their political beliefs).

106. See Ellis, supra note 52, at 38 (finding that rather than seeking to get an individual to “admit to the one emotion they think we are supposed to be feeling,” “tapping one’s private experience that would be negatively sanctioned if admitted publicly” is more helpful in understanding the complexity of an inner conflict).
You’re wasting your time by thinking about this. Do you want your boss not to trust you? Do you want him to think that you’re incompetent?

Of course not. And I’ve tried to pass it off like it’s just difficult for the moment because things outside work have been crazy. But I’m worried I’m going to go back to my boss in three months and things are going to be just as lousy, even worse.

You hate asking for help.

Yes, I do. It makes me feel like a failure. And trust me; it doesn’t make me feel good to need to ask for help. But the fact remains that I do need help. And trying to brush it off when my boss confronts me about it hasn’t been working.

If your work gets better by the next time you talk to your boss about it, he’ll forget about this blip and so will you.

Even if I do pull it off this time, it will just mean that I’ll get even more work next time. And they won’t know the sacrifice and toll it took on me. I need to ask for help so they stop piling more on me.

This exercise tends to be effective in separating the two identities at play, and also in highlighting the value, legitimacy, and even usefulness of the identity the individual sees as negative. In Julia’s case, it becomes clear that the part of her identity that she is so ashamed of — the “self” that feels overwhelmed — has a real need to ask for help that Julia cannot wish away. As we can see, even when the other part of her identity tries to convince her that she will “solve” the problem by working harder and then “forgetting” about this period of difficulty, Julia is skeptical. She knows, at a deep level, that the voice telling her to ask for help will be insistent, thereby signaling that to “integrate” all of her internal selves, she must acknowledge this voice and in some way incorporate it into her course of action going forward. Armed with this awareness, it will be easier for Julia to come to a new understanding of this part of her identity: she may come to see it as an important part of herself that can help her embrace more complete, longer-term, and holistic approaches to these familiar dilemmas.

c. Framing for Transformative Identities

For “negotiations within” over identity transformation, a helpful “frame” will tend to emphasize the individual’s deep sense of self-worth, and the continuity of this self-worth despite (or, perhaps, because of) the individual’s evolving role. The identity “story” at the root of such harmful “negotiations within” is that the particular role embodied by the individual prior to the negotiation is the true source of her value to the world. If the individual gives up this role, so the story goes, she also gives up her self-worth.
The helpful "frame" will therefore emphasize how the individual’s self-worth exists independent of her old role, and is also connected with her new role. In short, the individual needs to be reassured that even if she loses a particular identity through reaching a deal, she is still needed, she can still do good, and she still matters. In practical terms, this means acknowledging her inherent value and worth that exists independent of the lost identity, and the opportunity for reinvention and cultivation of "selves" that may have been ignored or passed over for a long time.107

Take our example of Richard, the departing CEO. Already troubled by the state of flux he finds himself in, Richard will not be helped by reframing his potential retirement as an opportunity for rest and relaxation. Similarly, an emphasis in his mind on his past accomplishments might only reinforce his feeling that his best days are behind him.

A more helpful reframing could come about through exploration of the two dominant dimensions of Richard’s internal conflict. The chair work in this stage could look something like the “two chairs” exercise discussed above: one chair could represent the self within Richard that thinks he can’t make the move to retirement, and the second could represent the self that knows he can. While sitting in the “self that thinks he can’t retire” chair, Richard might say that he is afraid to jump into the unknown, especially when he has spent his entire career building up the company and making it a success. He might admit being unable to think of ways he could spend his time that would be meaningful to him. He also might see a sharp contrast between the risk-taking, pioneering identity he developed as a CEO, and a more “safe” role as a retiree.

Sitting in the “self that knows he can” chair, however, he might more easily bring to mind a happy relationship with his daughters and a new role in his family — for whom he has worked hard over the years and is now leaving something that matters. He might express a desire to remain involved in the company in an advisory capacity, so that he would not have to divorce himself entirely from the work that he so loved. He might even say that he hoped that his legacy would be a strong corporate philosophy that will last for years. A new framing of his retirement as an exciting next step could bridge some of the distance he feels between his CEO identity and his retiree identity; in a sense, he would be taking a different kind of risk, in a different setting. His familiar identity — as a “pioneering risk-taker” — might therefore be preserved. If this exercise is a success, Richard will have a more accurate reading of his own capacity to find happiness in a new role, and the capacity of others to embrace him in that new role.

Given that Richard is of two minds about his decision to sell the company, what might also be effective for him in the chair work stage is stating his ambivalence. If working with a friend, Richard might say to the friend, “I honestly feel really torn about this decision. On the one hand, this is a fantastic offer and the buyer seems bright and energetic — someone who would grow the company and make it even better. On the other hand, I can’t even imagine what I would do if I didn’t come in to work here every day. What would I do with my days? My family basically hasn’t seen me for years — I doubt they’d want me just hanging around all the time. People would just see me as a washed-up retiree.” Richard’s

107. FISHER & SHAPIRO, supra note 14, at 50-51.
friend could ask probing questions to explore further the opposition Richard sees and the conflictedness he feels.

Stating ambivalence can be powerful for those who have a more difficult time asserting at the negotiation table. In Richard’s case, in his failed negotiation to sell his company, he did not bring up his internal conflict to the other party, perhaps because he felt it was not the time nor the place to share such a personal set of emotions. But while personal, Richard’s emotions clearly had a decisive effect on his negotiation outcome: they caused erratic behavior at the table, and, later, a deal he was unhappy with. Chair work that helps the individual practice stating what is really going through his mind can not only help to reframe the internal conflict, it can also be a powerful tool in the next stage of preparation: table work.

2. Accepting Internal Conflict: Moving Beyond Resignation

When an individual identifies internal conflicts that might be serving as a barrier in across-the-table negotiations and increases her awareness of where such conflict is coming from, she has, at a minimum, moved beyond the coping mechanisms of denial and avoidance. She now knows an internal conflict exists, and has thought deep and hard about it. Indeed, one important purpose of mirror work and chair work is to build an individual’s awareness of her own voices and selves.

By itself, building awareness is not enough to achieve integration. Particularly if the internal conflict involves valenced identities, the individual might still try to suppress one or more of her identities and suffer negative consequences. Or she might accept her internal conflict but perceive it as hopelessly painful, damaging, or emblematic of personal failure, and thus resign herself to continued suffering. In this sense, she could easily make great strides in mirror and chair work, and still end up feeling resigned and stuck.

The move to integration, then, requires one to steadfastly resist the tendency to view internal conflict through the distorted lens of evaluation and self-condemnation, and to learn to accept the presence of conflict itself with enlightened self-compassion. The goal here is to reject the notion that experiencing a difficult internal conflict is an indictment of an individual’s character, strength, or worthiness. Instead, internal conflict — and a resulting “negotiation within” — should be emblematic of the individual’s multiplicity and complexity, a benefit rather than a flaw.

There is no magic bullet for resisting this tendency to evaluate oneself for experiencing internal conflict, or for dealing with sense of hopelessness that it often engenders. However, the techniques for self-reflection discussed above, like mindfulness practice, a spiritual or religious practice, therapy, journaling, and conversations with confidantes, as well as the six exercises identified in the previous section for engaging in thought experiments and perspective-taking during chair work, may help. Mindfulness training, for example, puts us more in touch with our feelings and needs, allowing us to see and understand moments of challenging “negotiations within” as part of a broader context. Over the long-term, it

108. See Kuttaer, supra note 35, at 961-62 (lack of faith in an integrative outcome contributes to both avoidance of engagement with the internal conflict and further re-entrenchment into a positional, distributive approach to one’s own identity).
No. 2]  

The Negotiation Within  

219

can foster feelings of kindness and acceptance towards one’s self and others.109 Regardless of the exact approach, the goal is to approach one’s “negotiations within” with an attitude of curiosity, not judgment.

C. Table Work: Encountering a “Negotiation Within”

Notwithstanding the importance of engaging in effective mirror work and chair work prior to engaging in across-the-table negotiations, managing a “negotiation within” the moment it is triggered involves a separate and equally important set of skills. A number of behaviors can facilitate an integrative approach towards managing a “negotiation within” both before and during an across-the-table negotiation.

Some of this advice mirrors the advice given for problem-solving negotiation more generally, as put forward by Fisher, Ury, and Patton in Getting to Yes.110 Looking at this advice through the lens of the “negotiation within” only highlights its importance. In addition to this more traditional advice, the purpose of this section is to create a process that can help individuals be intentional about how they handle triggers of their internal conflict, rather than falling into their default roles. Even with careful mirror work and chair work, a moment of being triggered can still feel overwhelming and jarring; having a plan for managing the trigger moment is what can help the individual stay on a constructive track.

Moving towards integration does not mean that difficult “negotiations within” will never occur. Indeed, just as internal conflict is an inevitable dynamic within complex individuals, so, too, will complex individuals at some point feel their “negotiations within” triggered during a conversation or an across-the-table nego-

109. See generally THICH NHAT HANH, THE MIRACLE OF MINDFULNESS: AN INTRODUCTION TO THE PRACTICE OF MEDITATION (1999). Literature on mindfulness meditation emphasizes the importance of taking a non-judgmental stance towards oneself and one’s situation. See, e.g., Riskin, supra note 56, at 23-24. Cf. Amiot, et al., supra note 51, at 378 (describing the ways in which different levels of “status and power” aligned with various identities can inhibit the process of integration by assigning value to these identities).

110. Fisher, Ury, & Patton supra note 25, at 18-21, 40-50, 60-65, 82-84. One domain of this more traditional advice is considering the setup of the negotiation. If the individual is concerned that internal conflict may serve as a barrier in a negotiation, she should think carefully about where she chooses to negotiate and find a space that is conducive to problem-solving and open communication. See DAVID LAX & JAMES SEBENIUS, 3-D NEGOTIATION: POWERFUL TOOLS TO CHANGE THE GAME IN YOUR MOST IMPORTANT DEALS 212 (2006) (physical setup of the negotiating space can influence the conversation itself). For example, if Anne from Story 1 finds it difficult to communicate openly with the VP in the office, or if this has been a site of difficult conversations between the two of them in the past, she might suggest discussing the issue of resources in a different space. Perhaps they could grab a meal together and discuss it after work, get coffee, or go for a walk outside the office. See JEFFREY RUBIN & BERT BROWN, THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF BARGAINING AND NEGOTIATION 82, 85-86 (1975). Another domain of traditional negotiation advice involves creating a process conducive to trust and to encourage parties to share their interests more openly. See LAX & SEBENIUS, supra note 3. It can seem, and in fact be, very risky to share feelings of ambivalence and identity conflict with a party across the table, even though sharing these feelings can give the parties a chance to work through them and fashion agreements that honor them. As a result, it is important to set up a process that maximizes opportunities to build trust. This means establishing norms of good communication, laying out the key issues of the negotiation at the beginning, discussing interests prior to generating options, using brainstorming to come up with options together without evaluating them, and then evaluating options through legitimate standards external to the parties themselves. See MNOOKIN, PEFFET & TULUMELLO, supra note 25, at 28-32, 35-39, 207-09; FISHER, URY, & PATTON, supra note 25, at 50-55, 60-63, 82-87.
tiation. In such situations, table work provides a process for managing that trigger, drawing on insights and important work done during mirror work and chair work. We suggest the following: 1) slow down; 2) bring your internal conflict “chairs” to the table by identifying your “negotiation within” and being aware of internal “stakeholders;” 3) consider your trust in the other party; 4) if appropriate, voice your “negotiation within” out loud; 5) consider the interests of your various “selves” and generate options that might serve these interests.

This process is not necessarily linear or formulaic. Being aware both of what is going on across the table and also within oneself — all while staying in the moment — is difficult. Yet we believe that having these steps and options in mind when a “negotiation within” is triggered, coupled with strong mirror work and chair work in the preparatory phases, can help to prevent unhelpful ways of handling “negotiations within,” and instead facilitating creative thinking and an integrative mindset in action.

- Slow down

In the event you experience a difficult “negotiation within” during an across-the-table negotiation, you should, first, consider slowing down, breathing, and getting your bearings.111 Research on mindfulness in negotiation has shown that when individuals are in an excited emotional state, or have very “loud” internal voices, it is harder for them to be fully aware of the range of available behaviors.112 By slowing the pace and taking deep breaths, you can increase your understanding of the internal conflict and what’s happening in the moment. The goal is to avoid making important decisions in the moment when you are experiencing an identity conflict or trigger.

- Bring your internal conflict to the table

After recovering your bearings, you should think carefully about how to proceed. If you can do so in the moment, you should try to identify the type of “negotiation within” you are experiencing and, metaphorically speaking, try to bring all your internal stakeholders “to the table.”113 For Anne, the manager from Story 1, this would mean acknowledging the existence of both her “loyal advocate” self and her “team player” self, and committing herself to representing the concerns of both these stakeholders for the duration of the across-the-table negotiation. For Julia, the game developer from Story 2, it would mean deciding to actually listen

111. See Riskin, supra note 56, at 26.
112. See Ellis, supra note 52, at 42 (suggesting that “too much input” from internal voices creates a feeling of being overwhelmed and clouds problem-solving skills).
113. LAWRENCE SUSSKIND, THE CONSENSUS BUILDING HANDBOOK 5-7, 185-87 (Lawrence Susskind et. al., eds., 1999); FISHER & SHAPIRO, supra note 14, at 96-102.
to her “negatively valenced” self — the self that is willing to acknowledge a need for help — even though she might prefer to silence it. And for Richard, the CEO from Story 3, it would require Richard to remind himself that his self-worth is independent from his current professional role and will remain intact even if he transitions to something new, and to commit himself to negotiate with this reminder at the forefront of his mind. Just as across-the-table negotiation outcomes are flawed if an important party is absent, so, too, the outcomes of a “negotiation within” are flawed if an interested “self” is left unrepresented.

➢ Consider trust

Next, consider the amount of trust you have in your relationship with the other party, and how the other party is likely to react to a more intimate expression of interests, emotions, ambivalence, or conflictedness. Sharing difficult feelings and identity issues carries an emotional risk. If the other party does not respond positively and empathically, the individual might experience even more negative emotions, and the negotiation might further deteriorate. Similarly, exposing her emotional and identity-based vulnerabilities may leave her open to exploitation.114

For these reasons, we recommend open discussion of “negotiations within” among parties that have strong relationships and high trust. If there is low trust or a bad relationship, you might try to postpone the negotiation until you have had time to further process your internal conflict, or simply recalibrate your expectations of what the negotiation can accomplish. If you decide to proceed in the negotiation without sharing your internal conflict, you should still do your best to remain cognizant of the needs of all your various “selves” when, for example, explaining your interests, generating options, and committing to a deal. It is still possible to manage a “negotiation within” well through integration without literally voicing the internal conflict to the other party.

It is important to note that it is common to make assumptions about whether our fellow negotiators or conversation partners can be trusted enough for us to confide in them about our “negotiations within.” Such assumptions are often incorrect. In fact, misplaced assumptions can be the cause of poorly-handled “negotiations within”: assuming that the other party would not accept or be open to a discussion about all of an individual’s internal voices can lead to that individual self-silencing or suppressing parts of herself. To test assumptions about trust, it can be helpful to imagine oneself in the shoes of the other party and consider the motivations for their behavior from their perspective. If there are alternative, reasonable, and innocent or non-malevolent explanations for their behaviors, then perhaps there has been a rush to judgment. Yet even if this is not the case and trust is truly absent, it is still worthwhile to consider what possible actions, over an extended period of time, could build trust going forward.

➢ Share your “negotiation within” with the other party, if appropriate

If trust is high, the relationship is good, and the other party is likely to react well to sharing, then you should consider voicing your “negotiation within” openly and trying to enlist the other party in helping meet as many of your interests as possible.

114. MNOOKIN, PEPPET & TULUMELLO, supra note 25, at 21-23.
possible. This very likely means articulating your internal conflict: sharing both emotions and the identity concerns that underlie your “negotiation within.”\textsuperscript{115} It also means giving voice to all your “selves,” not just some of them.\textsuperscript{116}

By giving “voice” to your multiple identities, we sometimes mean, quite literally, actually giving voice to these identities — essentially, speaking your “negotiation within” out loud by separating the two selves, speaking from both perspectives, and voicing ambivalence to the other party. Individuals often make the mistake of assuming that they need to work such issues out internally before speaking. In practice, however, voicing one’s ambivalence creates a space for real dialogue to occur — it gives the other party greater insight into the true nature of your interests and allows for genuine problem solving.\textsuperscript{117}

For example, during his negotiation over the sale of his business, Richard the CEO might say something like the following:

I’m feeling torn and more than a little frightened at the prospect of moving forward with this deal. Part of me looks at this deal and recognizes that you are offering a fair price and that it would be in my interests to sell. Another part of me is pretty frightened about moving forward, because I’m not sure what I would do with myself if I were no longer CEO. I’m not sure what to do here. What do you think?\textsuperscript{118}

This approach opens up the conversation, provides an explanation for Richard’s hesitancy to sign the deal, and gives the other side an opportunity to help address Richard’s concerns. To be sure, Richard is extremely vulnerable in this moment: the other side could use his openness as an excuse to lower their offering price or, perhaps worse, simply ignore Richard’s implicit request for a deeper and more authentic conversation. This is why considering trust before voicing one’s “negotiation within” is so important. On the other hand, if Richard has correctly deduced that he is dealing with trustworthy, emotionally intelligent negotiating partners, then they are likely to respond in kind and accept Richard’s invitation to engage in joint problem solving. The risks are all too real, but so is the potential upside.

➢ Consider interests and generate options

After giving “voice” to the “negotiation within” at the table, it might even be possible for the parties to work together in creative brainstorming and looking for

\textsuperscript{115} STONE, PATTON & HEEN, supra note 17, at 91-94, 102-06.
\textsuperscript{116} Id. at 126-27, 168-71, 186-91.
\textsuperscript{117} Bordone, supra note 15, at 378-79. See also Puchalska-Wasyl, supra note 17, at 69 (describing the ways in which “perspective-taking” with regard to inner voices can be a tool to help individuals understand a given situation); id. at 75 (proposing that engaging in inner dialogue serves a “creative function”); Nira Yuval-Davis & Erene Kaptari, Performing Identities: Participatory Theatre Among Refugees, THEORIZING IDENTITIES AND SOCIAL ACTION 64 (Margaret Wetherell, ed., 2009) (“Narrating identity constructions which are continually being authorized and/or contested by individual and collective ‘us’ and/or ‘the other’ is in itself part of ongoing dialogical social action”).
\textsuperscript{118} Interestingly, a scene at the table like this might look identical to what the individual practiced during chair work. In this way, chair work can be a useful “dress rehearsal” for table work — not only by helping the individual to self-diagnose around her challenges, but also, then, to allow her to literally practice articulating them in a way she is comfortable with, making the eventual across-the-table negotiation easier.
sources of value to create a better “deal” among the various “selves.” It might be worth considering what each identity or “self” really cares about, and search for shared and non-competing interests among these “selves” to create value. Or the parties might look for differences in time preferences among the “selves,” and create a “deal” that serves one “self” in the short term but another in the long-term. As with traditional across-the-table negotiations, expanding the time horizon and number of issues in play can often allow for deals that better serve interests of the multiple “selves.” For example, the buyers in Richard’s story might suggest some kind of continued role for Richard in the company.

V. CONCLUSION

In this article, we have proposed a framework for understanding complex “negotiations within” over identity and role. We argue that poor management of the “negotiation within” can be a barrier to negotiated agreements but that, managed well, the “negotiation within” has the potential to be a constructive force in across-the-table negotiations. We suggest various ways to engage in the internal work needed to understand and reframe the “negotiation within,” which we call “mirror work,” “chair work,” and “table work.” Our prescriptions are based on experience demonstrating that this internal work can help individuals break through impasses in their across-the-table negotiations and come to better and more lasting agreements.

Our framework represents the beginning of an analysis of internal conflicts, rather than an end. This new area of interest in negotiation leaves open many questions for future exploration. For instance, what other variables might affect the way a person understands her own internal conflict (e.g., gender, race, religious beliefs, etc.)? How might these variables either provide the “negotiation within” with clarity or make it more complex? In addition, how might a negotiator detect that the other party in the negotiation is experiencing a difficult internal conflict? What are some ways she might respond?

One main purpose of this article is to throw open the doors to this new and exciting domain of research for negotiation scholars. Given the interdisciplinary nature of the work, we hope that thinkers from across the spectrum of psychology, sociology, philosophy, conflict theory, and other fields contribute to an ongoing conversation about how internal conflicts and “negotiations within” play a role in our daily experience, and how we might reframe these conflicts into opportunities for growth and collaboration.

120. Id. at 15.
121. See FISHER, URY, & PATTON, supra note 25, at 65-80 (on broadening options and expanding the scope of negotiations).