Managing Conflict Across Cultures
Preparing Our Graduates for Global Diversity

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ROBERTSON CENTER FOR INTERCULTURAL LEADERSHIP
Mindful Engagement with the World
The Iceberg Model of Culture

Culture A

Food
Dress
Language
Behavior
Preferences
Assumptions
History
Beliefs
Categories
Values

Culture B

Food
Dress
Language
Behavior
Preferences
Assumptions
History
Beliefs
Categories
Values
Model for Intercultural Leadership

Cultural Self-Awareness

Cultural Other-Awareness

Bridging the gap
Everything is harder during conflict
1. Do you tend to expect others to read between the lines when you speak?

2. When communicating disagreement, do you prefer to rely on stories, ambiguity in language, analogies/metaphors, or saying one thing to hint at another?

3. Do you rely on nonverbal communication or third-party intermediaries to communicate disagreement?

1. Do you tend to say what you mean and mean what you say?

2. Do you prefer to express the exact content of the dispute in words?

3. Do you prefer face-to-face channels for resolving conflict/disagreements?
1. Do you tend to contain or hide more intense verbal and nonverbal expressions of emotion?

2. Do you tend to think that maintaining emotional composure is the mature way of handling conflict?

3. Do you value harmony and/or “saving face” above all?

1. Do you tend to display feelings overtly through animated facial expressions, body movement, gestures, and tears/laughing?

2. Do you value affective involvement in communicating with others?

3. Do you tend towards intense gesturing or variation in vocal patterns such as tone or volume?
ICS: Two Dimensions

Adapted from material by Stella Ting-Toomey and Mitchell Hammer
## Selected Cultural Patterns across Communication and Conflict Styles

### Discussion Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>North America</strong></td>
<td>United States (European American), Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Europe</strong></td>
<td>Great Britain, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asia Pacific</strong></td>
<td>Australia, New Zealand</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Engagement Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>North America</strong></td>
<td>United States (African American)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Europe</strong></td>
<td>France, Greece, Italy, Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Central &amp; Latin America</strong></td>
<td>Cuba, Puerto Rico</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asia</strong></td>
<td>Russia, Nepal, Indonesia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Middle East</strong></td>
<td>Israel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Accommodation Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>North America</strong></td>
<td>Native American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Latin America</strong></td>
<td>Mexico, Costa Rica, Peru</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asia</strong></td>
<td>China, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Dynamic Style

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Arab Middle East</strong></td>
<td>Kuwait, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Asia</strong></td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning to Identify Conflict Styles

- Look at the **actual behaviors** a person is engaging in: What is above the water
- Connect these behaviors to underlying values: What is under the water
Discussion (Direct / Restrained)

Behaviors

- Asks direct questions and provides direct answers
- Speaks in terms of facts and logic
- Minimal modulation of voice pitch and tone; minimal use of body language and facial expressions

Values

- Efficiency
- Transparency
- Accuracy
Engagement (Direct / Expressive)

Behaviors
- Asks direct questions and provides direct answers
- Speaks in terms of feelings, desires, etc.
- Modulates pitch and volume of voice; uses body language and facial expressions

Values
- Sincerity / Authenticity
- Transparency
- Shared Affect (i.e., sharing the same emotional experience)
Behaviors
- Speaks “around” the conflict: tells stories, make analogies, uses “hedges” (“I wonder,” “Could we perhaps,” etc.)
- Minimal modulation of voice pitch and tone
- May seek third-party intermediaries

Values
- Harmony
- Relationships
- Compromise
Dynamic (Indirect / Expressive)

Behaviors

• Uses ambiguous language
• Repeats the same statement over and over
• Modulates voice volume and tone; uses facial expressions and body language: rolling eyes, pursed lips, folded arms, etc.

Values

• Harmony
• Relationships
• Restraint
Stereotypes and Appreciation

• What stereotypes do you have about Chase’s and/or Juno’s behavior?
• What could you appreciate?
Appreciation and the Brain

Amygdala
Role Play #2
Stereotypes and Appreciation

- What stereotypes do you have about Amy’s and/or Raul’s behavior?
- What could you appreciate?
Adapting Behavior

Cultural Self-Awareness

Cultural Other-Awareness

Bridging the gap
Escalators:
- Overt displays of emotion
- Appearing unconcerned with facts and logic
- Not speaking directly to the content of the conflict

De-escalators:
- Minimize displays of emotion
- Speak in terms of facts and logic
- Address the content directly
Engagement (Direct / Expressive)

**Escalators:**

- Saying “calm down,” etc.
- Appearing unconcerned about one’s humanity
- Not speaking directly to the issue: both content and feeling

**De-escalators:**

- Acknowledge validity of feelings
- Show emotion through voice, gesture, etc.
- Allow to vent without interruption
Accommodation (Indirect / Restrained)

Escalators:

• Overt displays of emotion
• Directly critical remarks
• Anything that could embarrass someone

De-escalators:

• Minimize displays of emotion
• Show patience and active listening
• Say “perhaps,” etc. — even if you’re certain
• Find points of agreement
Dynamic Style (Indirect / Expressive)

Escalators:
- Saying “calm down,” etc.
- Not giving room for options (e.g., by demanding specific answers)
- Focusing on “logic” and “the facts”

De-escalators:
- Show emotion through non-verbal means (voice inflection, facial expressions, body language)
- Give options: “You don’t have to say right now…”
- Notice language that is repeated, and repeat it back to show you’ve heard.
Skill-building in the 21st Century

(From Mursion)
Summary of today

- Understand the values that drive each conflict style: behavior/speech
- Recognize stereotypes/misperceptions you have of other conflict styles
- Identify and appreciate strengths of each conflict style
- Manage conflict by bridging: employing the behaviors/statements that the “other” finds helpful
“Diversity” shows up in many, many ways, both globally and domestically. Conflict style merely scratches the surface. We can better prepare our students by engaging in affective and behavioral learning, to supplement cognitive learning.

“Shameless plug”: CTL offers many such workshops and courses. Contact us.
Questions?

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Deactivate the amygdala: take a breath; ask for space/time to process; find common points of interest; find at least one thing to appreciate about the other’s conflict style.

Practice deep listening (RASA)

Speak using intent vs impact: assume good intent.

Separate the person from their behavior / statements.

Speak to communicate your own experience, not to persuade others (use “I” statements).

Try to get down to your ultimate goal, instead of staying stuck in your position.

Make resolution the priority, rather than winning or being right.