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SOLVING PROBLEMS AND RESOLVING CONFLICT USING THE INTERCULTURAL CONFLICT STYLE MODEL AND INVENTORY

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♦ *A Conflict Brewing*

It's 7:00 p.m. on a Friday night—and you're still at the office.[1] It's been a tough day, you think, as you plant your tired feet on the edge of your well-worn, mahogany desk. As manager for project development for an international aid organization, it is your responsibility to oversee a half-dozen international projects that range from basic infrastructure development (e.g., roads, purification of water supplies) to community development efforts (e.g., family planning programs, literacy development).

Two weeks ago, you selected four key employees in your organization to begin to plan and develop a more effective emergency-response effort when natural disasters (e.g., typhoons) occur in remote areas in India and Indonesia. The team is culturally diverse, with two European American members from the United States (Jim and Mary), one member from India (Geetha), and one member from Indonesia (Slamet). Once assembled, you reminded everyone that "time is of the essence," and you need an identified

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set of goals, responsibilities, and a task timeline in 1 week. It is now the end of the second week of the project, and the team has not submitted any plan at all! Further, there is increasing tension—even conflict—emerging among the team. You are very concerned. This is an important project, and the staff to complete the effort is not getting along. You are surprised at their inability to effectively establish the core goals and identify key tasks needed to be undertaken. Further, you have heard confusing reports in one-on-one discussions with each of the project members.

The two Americans comment that neither Geetha nor Slamet are truly interested in moving forward on this project. They complain that Geetha and Slamet seem unprepared and rarely contribute during a number of brainstorming meetings. Further, they feel Geetha and Slamet are deceptive and feel that it is much too early to formulate goals and tasks.

However, you have heard a very different story from Geetha and Slamet. From their perspective, the Americans are becoming too "pushy" in meetings and are unwilling to really listen. After all, they commented, we are from these countries—the Americans need to respect our experience! Interestingly, the two Americans and Slamet also commented that Geetha is trying to dominate the meeting and has shown her frustration and anger with the group in inappropriate ways. One situation recently occurred where Geetha "yelled" at the other team members about their lack of commitment—yet she did not propose any solutions!

You know you need to do something—but you are not sure what actions you can take to deescalate the growing tensions and problems among the team members. You know you selected very competent people for this particular project. They all have a strong background in delivering humanitarian aid and services in conflict zones as well as during times of emergencies. Further, Geetha is from India, Slamet from Indonesia, Mary has lived 3 years in India, and Jim has lived 2 years in Indonesia. It seems the problems among the team members have already compromised the development of their plan. What should you do? What insights might you bring to the group to help them work more effectively in solving problems and dealing with an increasing conflict situation?

♦ *Introduction*

The purpose of this chapter is to outline a powerful model and assessment tool that can be used in these types of situations to help individuals and groups solve problems and resolve conflicts. In this chapter, I describe the Intercultural Conflict Style (ICS) model and ICS Inventory. I conclude the chapter by showing how the ICS model and Inventory can be used to help this multicultural project team meet its important mission in India and Indonesia.

♦ *NASA and Cultural Conflicts*

I had the opportunity to consult with two important organizations in the United States: the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH). With NASA, I worked with the Behavior and Performance Laboratory to address the question, "Do cultural differences affect mission success and astronaut and ground crew relations?" We designed a critical incident protocol and interviewed selected astronauts and ground crew members from different cultures who flew on multicultural space flights (including early space station MIR deployments). What we discovered is that the extensive technical training astronauts and ground crews received over many years was effective

in preparing these space explorers to achieve mission objectives in a variety of space flight scenarios. This was especially true concerning routine, less complex flight tasks and responsibilities. In these situations, the space and ground crews were able to work effectively with one another across cultural boundaries. In these more mundane, less demanding activities, cultural differences did not emerge as particularly troublesome or problematic.

However, we found that in situations where uncertainty increased, conflicts erupted, emergencies arose, and interpersonal relations were stressed—cultural differences did arise and powerfully affected the ability of the space and ground crews to accomplish mission goals. In short, under conditions of stress and conflict, people reverted to their cultural programming rather than relying on the training protocols developed over years of effort (NASA Behavior and Performance Laboratory, 1989).

This was a surprising finding for NASA in view of the fact that the organization maintained some pride in its ability to properly prepare these crews to effectively relate and work with one another. I continued to work with the Behavior and Performance Laboratory in developing protocols for offering intercultural training, with an important element focusing on conflict and culture, for all astronauts and ground crews involved in multinational space endeavors. This training is continuing with the multicultural crews assigned to the construction and manning of the International Space Station.

SCIENTIFIC CONFLICT

The National Cancer Institute (NCI) of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) undertook over a 4-year period in the mid-1990s Phase II clinical trials of A10 and AS2–1 (antineoplastons) infusion therapy developed by Dr. Stanislow Burzynski in patients with primary malignant brain tumors. At the end of the 4 years, the research was terminated before it was determined whether the antineoplaston therapy was effective. Both the NCI and Dr. Burzynski asserted that the "other party" deliberately undermined the study.

Dr. Wayne Jonas, then director of the Office of Alternative Medicine of the NIH, commissioned me to conduct a study addressing the conflicts that arose that led to the ending of this promising line of cancer research. My team and I reviewed hundreds of documents and memoranda and conducted interviews with key researchers involved in this 4-year research program (see Hammer & Jonas, 2004, for a full analysis of this case). We identified 10 areas of contention between NCI and Dr. Burzynski (e.g., production, quality and delivery of antineoplastons, role of Dr. Burzynski in the clinical trial, need for communication, and criteria for patient selection). These 10 areas of substantive disagreements were all located within the canons of science—of which the NCI researchers and Dr. Burzynski were well trained. Each of these disagreements could—and probably should—have been easily resolved by focusing on identification of socially agreed-upon research protocols for conducting Phase II clinical trials. Yet this did not happen. These disagreements were "scientific" only so far as the substantive issues were largely concerned with research methodology. The actual conflict communication and interaction between the NCI researchers and Dr. Burzynski reflected conflict in attunement—issues of trust, power, and affiliation between Dr. Burzynski and the NCI that accounted for the lack of progress in completing this important research (Hammer & Jonas, 2004). This lack of attunement created conditions of frustration and at times anger, which permeated the research effort.

In both the NASA and NIH assessments, the failure to effectively manage and resolve disagreements and conflict had life-and-death consequences. It was clear that the way

individuals communicated with one another in their attempts to solve problems or resolve conflicts, differences in the approach or style the parties used to address the substantive disagreements, and the level of emotional upset present in these kinds of stressful interactions contributed to an escalating situation.

Each of these events took place before I created the Intercultural Conflict Style (ICS) model and ICS Inventory. As I reflect on the way in which the various individuals attempted to deal with substantive disagreements in both of these events, I am convinced that one critical difference involved very different styles or approaches for solving problems and resolving conflicts.

◆ *Conflict and Style*

Conflict is a form of social interaction in which substantive disagreements arise between two or more individuals (Geist, 1995) which gives rise to an affective or emotional reaction, often based on a perception of threat or interference by one or more other parties to the disagreement (Hammer, 2001, 2005). Therefore, conflict involves two core elements. The first is substantive disagreements. In this sense, conflict is more than a simple misperception or misunderstanding. Rather, it involves real disagreements between individuals over goals, values, or other issues. Second, conflict interaction is stressful and involves some degree of emotional upset or even distress.

Our "conflict style" refers broadly to how we attempt to resolve our disagreements and deal with emotional upset when interacting with one another. Ting-Toomey and colleagues (2000) defined conflict style as "patterned responses to conflict in a variety of situations." Further, they posited that differences in conflict styles are a central factor that can escalate difficulties between contenting parties.

Conflict style has been conceptualized in a number of ways (see Hammer, 2005, for a brief summary of various taxonomic models). Common to these typologies is a focus on two personal goal dimensions: a high/low concern for attaining one's own goals and a high/low concern for the other party obtaining their goals.

Pruitt and Carnevale (1993) identified four conflict styles from this vantage point (see Table 17.1). *Problem solving* involves a high concern for self and other goal attainment, *contending* or dominating a high concern for one's own goals and low concern for the other party's goals, *yielding* or accommodating a low concern for one's own goals and high concern for the other party's goals, and *avoiding* or inaction a low concern for self and other goal attainment.

Table 17.1 Dual Concern Model

Concern for own goals	High	Problem Solving	Contending
	Low	Yielding	Avoiding
		High	Low
		Concern for others' goals	

SOURCE: Pruitt & Carnevale (1993).

Not overtly discussed in many of these conflict style models is the observation that conflict style is also culturally learned (Ting-Toomey et al., 2000; Hammer, 2005). Ting-Toomey (1994) persuasively argues that because these models were not developed along intercultural dimensions, they may not possess sufficient cross-cultural generalizability. She points out that an avoiding/yielding strategy from a Western cultural definition reflects a low concern for achieving one's own interests and a low concern for the other party's goals. However, within more collectivistic, Asian cultural contexts, avoiding/yielding approaches are used to maintain or restore harmony between the contending parties and actually indicate a high concern for achieving one's own goals and a high concern for the attainment of the other party's interests.

Because there was not a model and assessment tool of conflict style based on an overt consideration of "etic" (culturally generalizable) dimensions of cultural difference related to the way disagreements are addressed and the way emotion is dealt with in a conflictual interaction, I embarked on a process to develop such a framework and measure of an individual's intercultural conflict style. This resulted in the Intercultural Conflict Style (ICS) model and ICS Inventory.[2]

♦ *Theoretical Basis of the Intercultural Conflict Style Model*

Above, I offer Ting-Toomey and colleagues' (2000) definition of conflict style as patterned responses to conflict across situations. Yet what is a "patterned response"? Is it, for instance, predispositions or personality traits characteristic of an individual? The problem with viewing patterned responses in terms of personal characteristics is that, as Folger, Poole, and Stutman (2005) cogently pointed out, "although people certainly develop habitual ways of responding to conflict, they also have the capacity to change or adapt their behavior from situation to situation" (p. 216). Viewing conflict style in terms of personal traits does not adequately address how our responses change depending on different demands of the situation. A second approach to "patterned responses" defines conflict styles as particular types of behavior individuals employ (Cosier & Ruble, 1981). The problem with viewing conflict styles strictly in terms of behaviors is that the same action can be used in different identified styles due to functionally different meanings of that specific behavior, depending on the situational context (Folger, et al., 2005).

The Intercultural Conflict Style (ICS) model is most consistent with the view of patterned responses in terms of *behavioral orientations* (Folger et al., 2005) individuals adapt toward negotiating disagreements and dealing with emotional upset during a conflictual interaction. By behavioral orientation, I mean an interpretive *frame* within which an individual "makes meaningful" messages and behavior that arise from interaction with the other party. As Folger and colleagues (2005) remarked, "behavioral strategies and general orientations are bound up with each other because behaviors are not meaningful outside the context of the style they represent" (p. 218).

On the broadest level, frames are viewed as interpretations of interaction that serve to define the activity in which individuals are engaged (Hammer, 2007). Bateson (1954/1972) defined a frame as "a class or set of messages (or meaningful actions)" (p. 186) that functions as a map providing cues about how the interaction is to be defined and how to interpret the communicative acts within the specific context. At a general level, framing is the process by which people attach idiosyncratic definitions, interpretations, and meaning to a class of objects, persons, and events (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967).

At a more precise level of meaning, frames reflect a person's expectations about the issues at hand. According to Lewicki, Saunders, and Minton (1999), frames "are abstractions, collections of perceptions and thoughts that people use to define a situation, organize information, determine what is important, what is not, and so on" (p. 31). Yet frames do not exist as abstract forms disconnected to how people behave. As Gray (2006) cogently pointed out, "how we frame a situation also affects how we respond to it" (p. 194). Frames, as applied to conflict interaction, are interpretive lenses through which individuals perceive and behave in relation to a particular issue, problem, or concern.

THE INTERCULTURAL CONFLICT STYLE (ICS) MODEL

Based on the above discussion, conflict style and intercultural conflict style are defined as "the manner in which contending parties communicate with one another around substantive disagreements and their emotional or affective reaction to one another" (p. 679).

♦ *Direct Versus Indirect Cultural Patterns*

Two intercultural dimensions of cultural difference provide the foundation for how individuals solve problems and resolve conflicts: (1) direct versus indirect approaches for communicating about substantive issues (disagreements) and (2) emotionally expressive versus emotionally restrained strategies for dealing with emotional upset.[3]

Direct culture strategies focus attention on the specific words participants use when discussing particular issues. That is, direct cultures emphasize precise, explicit language use to increase understanding of the issues or disagreements. For direct cultures, it is each party's responsibility to verbalize their own concerns and perspective and to verbally confront misperceptions and misunderstandings that can arise in a dispute. Direct cultures prefer direct face-to-face methods for resolving conflict. From this perspective, there is a greater opportunity for productive dialogue and resolution of the disagreement when the parties can finally sit down and talk to one another. In fact, for many direct culture systems, the process of conflict resolution is considered to be finally initiated and maintained when the contending parties are able to directly address their disagreements with one another. Direct cultures value individuals who speak their mind and can verbally assert (albeit tactfully) differences in viewpoints. Direct cultures value persuasion that is conducted largely through logically ordered arguments supported by verifiable, objective facts, concluding with logically related recommendations or solutions. In this sense, direct cultures emphasize a "solution oriented" approach to problem solving.

In contrast, indirect cultures look to identify meaning in one another's statements and actions by looking outside the verbal messages being exchanged between the parties. This includes greater attentiveness to history, context, and nonverbal behaviors. Words are more often used in indirect cultural systems to meet social or situational expectations and less to communicate what each party actually believes or wants. Indirect cultures prefer to use third-party intermediaries (TPIs) to mediate a conflict-resolution process. From an indirect culture view, engaging in direct, face-to-face meetings when tensions are escalating only increases discomfort among the parties. Indirect cultures value discretion in voicing one's own views and goals as direct statements may threaten the harmony that needs to be maintained during the conflict episode. Consequently, indirect culture systems prefer to "talk around" disagreements through such strategies as hinting,

analogies, historical examples, and metaphors. For indirect cultures, persuasion is accomplished by sensitivity to face—publicly supporting the social position or reputation of the other party. This influence is wielded incrementally and framed relationally, with less overt emphasis on the factual basis of the dispute. Evidence is suggested more than asserted, relational connections and obligations are reinforced, and solutions are "adjusted" depending on the response of the other party. In this sense, indirect cultures employ a "relationship repair" framework for dealing with substantive issues.

EMOTIONALLY EXPRESSIVE VERSUS EMOTIONALLY RESTRAINED (CONTROLLED) CULTURAL PATTERNS

Emotionally expressive cultures value more overt displays of emotional experience during a conflict event. There is a sense that when someone is upset, it is important to braid how one feels with one's position on the substantive disagreement. For emotionally expressive systems, emotional upset is controlled by externalizing, or letting out emotion. Trying to control or hide emotional upset can escalate rather than deescalate the situation. More visible displays of affect through nonverbal behaviors along with more expansive vocalization characterize emotionally expressive approaches. Sensitivity is found toward perceived or actual constraints being placed on an ability to fully express one's emotional reality. The sometimes well-intentioned comment to "take a break so we can all calm down" is often negatively perceived by emotionally expressive individuals. Advice to calm down or soften one's emotional expressiveness is experienced as a statement that directly challenges one's sense of authenticity. From this cultural perspective, to divorce how one feels from how one addresses substantive issues during a conflict is to be insincere to the difficult process of "working through our issues." Emotional authenticity is central for resolution as it is through emotionally expressive commitment that relational trust is gained and credibility established. In emotionally expressive cultures, conflict is deescalated after the personal credibility and sincerity of each party is demonstrated through more emotionally expressive and authentic displays.

In emotionally restrained systems, the focus is on maintaining emotional control even when one is upset. Strong feelings should be hidden to some degree to avoid upsetting the other party. Emotions are controlled by internalizing. Unlike emotionally expressive cultures, where humor is a comfortable strategy to reduce tensions, humor for emotional restrained cultural systems is risky when tensions are high because it may be negatively interpreted as diminishing the situation or the experiences and feelings of the other party. Minimal displays of emotion through nonverbal behavior and a more constrained vocal pattern characterize resolution strategies often employed in emotionally restrained cultures. Sensitivity is directed toward not hurting the feelings of the other party; thus, emotionally controlled cultures are uncomfortable with more overt expressions of emotion. Relational trust and credibility is established and maintained through emotional control or suppression. Maintaining calm in the face of emotional upset also communicates sincerity. More overt displays of emotion send a message of insincerity, questionable intentions, and suspicious motives. Each of these approaches, when combined, produces four distinct conflict resolution styles.

THE FOUR INTERCULTURAL CONFLICT STYLES

Table 17.2 presents the four-quadrant model of intercultural conflict style differences.

Table 17.2 Intercultural Conflict Style Model

	Emotionally Restrained	Emotionally Expressive
Direct	Discussion	Engagement
Indirect	Accommodation	Dynamic

The *discussion* style uses direct strategies for communicating about substantive disagreements and emotionally restrained or controlled approaches for dealing with emotional upset. This style resolves issues through a focused, problem-solving process in which objective facts and information are presented in a logical argument format. Clarity in expressing one's goals or position is important as is maintaining emotional calm when tensions rise. This style follows the American maxim, "Say what you mean, and mean what you say."

Strengths from the *discussion* style perspective include an ability to directly confront problems and elaborate arguments so people do not misunderstand your views and a willingness to maintain a calm atmosphere. From the perspective of other styles, however, the discussion style can appear logical but unfeeling and appear to overemphasize verbal clarity to the exclusion of recognizing other, more emotional and relational concerns that arise during a conflict. A few exemplar cultures that normatively function largely within a discussion style are those of the United States (European American), Australia, and northern Europe.[4]

The *engagement* style also emphasizes verbal direction in communicating about substantive issues. Unlike the discussion style, however, the engagement style couples this form of directness with an emotionally expressive demeanor. This style is comfortable with more emotionally intense dialogue and in fact participants feel that when each party "puts their emotion on the table" the resolution of the dispute is satisfactorily progressing. This style, because of its more emotional expressive focus, follows the Irish proverb, "What is nearest the mouth is nearest the heart."

Strengths from the engagement style viewpoint include an ability to provide detailed information and explanations and a sincerity and commitment to the other party through more emotional expressions and a positive sense that sharing one's feelings is how conflicts are successfully resolved. From the orientation of other styles, the engagement style can appear unconcerned with the views and feelings of others and dominating and rude. A few examples of engagement-style cultural systems are those of African Americans in the United States and people of southern Europe, Cuba, Nigeria, and Russia.

The *accommodation* style uses indirect strategies for solving problems coupled with an emotionally restrained approach. This style emphasizes ambiguity, stories, metaphors, and use of third parties to soften verbal confrontation between contending individuals. Relational harmony is maintained in a tense conflict situation by masking or controlling one's own emotional discomfort. The accommodation style follows the Japanese maxim, "Hear one and understand 10."

Self-perceived strengths of the accommodation style are an ability to consider alternative interpretations of ambiguous messages and sensitivity to the feelings of the other party. From the view of other styles, however, the accommodation style can reveal difficulty in clearly voicing one's own opinion, problems in providing detailed explanations, and an appearance of being uncommitted and perhaps dishonest. Some cultural exemplars of the accommodation style are those of Native Americans (United States), Somalians, Mexicans, Japanese, and Thai.

The *dynamic* style uses indirect messages to negotiate substantive disagreements along with more emotionally intense and expressive verbal and nonverbal communication. This style may use language elements that include strategic hyperbole, repetition of one's position, ambiguity, stories, metaphors, and humor along with greater reliance on third-party intermediaries for resolving an escalating dispute. Prioritization of concerns may be communicated more through the level of emotional expression than a direct statement of what is important and what is unimportant.

Individuals with a dynamic style may describe themselves in terms of being comfortable with other people interjecting themselves into a disagreement and offering solutions to the contending parties, skilled at observing behavior, and comfortable with strong emotional displays. From the perspective of the other styles, a dynamic style may be seen as unreasonable, too emotional, volatile, and rarely able to "get to the point." Some dynamic cultures include those of a number of Arab Middle Eastern countries and Pakistan.

♦ *Development of the ICS Inventory*

The ICS Inventory is an 18-item, self-scoring questionnaire that assesses an individual's core approach for solving problems and resolving conflicts.[5] Based on an extensive review of the literature, a total of 122 items were generated that reflect direct and indirect strategies and emotionally expressive and emotionally restrained approaches for resolving conflict. Once these items were identified, a panel of 16 intercultural conflict experts rated these items in terms of the degree to which they are clear indicators of the cultural dimensions examined. Following this review, 52 items were retained for further statistical analysis.

A total of 510 respondents from a variety of cultures then responded to the (randomly assigned) items using a Likert agree/disagree scale format. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was then completed. The results clearly indicated that the dimensions of direct/indirect and emotionally expressive/restrained provided a good fit to the data. A review of these items (e.g., factor/item correlations, redundancy of meaning) resulted in an 18-item direct/indirect scale and an 18-item emotionally expressive/restrained scale. The reliability (coefficient alpha) for the direct/indirect scale was .71 and .86 for the emotionally expressive/restrained scale. Additional analysis was then conducted examining the effects of gender, educational level, and previous experience living in another culture. No significant differences were found on either scale by gender, education, or previous intercultural experience.

The ICS items were then formatted as follows: The nine direct style items and the nine indirect style items were paired with one another as two separate options (A, B) to the question, "In general, when resolving conflict with another party, my preferred approach is to. . . ." This produced nine questions. The same was then done for the nine emotionally expressive items and the nine emotionally restrained items. These questions were than randomly arranged in the questionnaire. This newly formatted questionnaire was then administered to a new sample of 487 culturally

diverse respondents. Coefficient alpha was then calculated, resulting in a reliability of .73 for the direct/indirect scale and .85 for the emotionally expressive/restrained scale. Overall, these tests demonstrate the ICS Inventory is a cross-culturally valid and reliable assessment of an individual's core approach for resolving conflict.

♦ *Uses of the ICS Model and Inventory*

There are currently over 600 intercultural and conflict resolution professionals using the Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory in various coaching and training efforts. It is employed in the U.S. military, education, the court system, mediation, health care, industry, and the diplomatic community both within the United States and internationally.

The ICS model and Inventory shed a needed light on an area of the human landscape that is only dimly understood. Differences in the way we attempt to authentically interact with one another when we disagree and are frustrated or angry are often misinterpreted as negative personal characteristics. Thus, discussion styles are falsely judged to be unfeeling, engagement approaches are evaluated as dominating and rude, accommodation styles are dismissed as uninvolved and unclear, and dynamic styles are avoided because the individual is thought to be volatile and unstable.

When the discussion style is the normative approach expected of managers and employees in our organizations, then individuals whose approach is different are likely to be marginalized. In the training programs I conduct on the ICS, I have heard countless stories from individuals who, after receiving feedback on their ICS Inventory, for the first time are able to look at these differences between their own approach for solving problems and the "way things are expected to be done" in their organization. As they reflect on these differences, they realize how differences as identified in the ICS model and Inventory have affected their personal and work lives. Here are some examples of how—and why—intercultural conflict style differences often "make a difference":

- An accommodation-style middle manager was told by his boss that he "needs to speak up, to not be shy, to believe in something, to assert himself—or he will never get anywhere in this company." From his accommodation perspective, however, he was working very hard in maintaining effective relations in the company and he thought his contributions were being recognized.

- An engagement-style employee stated that she was overlooked for promotion because she was too dominating in meetings and she needed to "better control" her emotional outbursts. She was flabbergasted at this suggestion! From her perspective, she did not feel she offended anyone! In fact, she was passionate!

- A dynamic-style executive (Mari) was confused. A customer previously received a price quote from the company and now was personally asking for a better price for some steel strapping. Mari immediately called the customer and invited him out to what ended up being a 2-hour lunch. When Mari returned to work, she was shocked when her boss said to her, "Your customer just called. He says he wasted two hours with you at lunch. He thought you were meeting him to discuss his product needs, but all you did was ramble on about how long they have worked together!" Mari thought the customer knew that the invitation to a long lunch was a way to inform the customer that he was very important to Mari and the company but that it was not possible to lower the prices further.

◆ A Return to "A Conflict Brewing"

It is now time to return to the case presented at the beginning of this chapter. As manager for project development for an international aid organization, you are facing a difficult situation. Your newly formed work team is having significant difficulties in articulating a plan to develop a more effective emergency-response effort in the more remote areas of India and Indonesia. As you reflect on this escalating problem, you come to the following conclusion. The very different (and largely negative) perceptions the various team members have of one another have a lot to do with differences in the way they attempt to solve problems and deal with frustration and stress—in short, how they handle conflict. Much of what is interfering with their ability to have more cooperative interactions with one another has to do with differences in intercultural conflict styles.

The two American members operate within a discussion style frame for dealing with disagreements. They value maintaining emotional control and they place particular importance on group brainstorming sessions as a verbally direct method for making progress on the assigned tasks. During these meetings, they fully participate by sharing not only ideas that they have given some serious thought to but also ideas that just occur to them while the meeting is going on. From their perspective, isn't that what brainstorming is all about?

Geetha's intercultural conflict style is dynamic. She participates in these brainstorming meetings only reluctantly—and frankly, she finds them more of a waste of time and effort than they are worth. From her perspective, effective participation means being well prepared and being very careful when voicing your opinion. She is frustrated because these sessions rarely have a specific agenda of topics, so she feels she comes to the meetings unprepared. She attempts to let the others know her frustrations, often through a past example of how a project was conducted. When she is frustrated, she is comfortable showing her emotional reality to others—after all, she thinks, "How will everyone know my views if they don't know how I feel?"

Slamet's style is accommodation. She also has difficulty fully participating in these brainstorming meetings, for reasons similar to those expressed by Geetha. Slamet has attempted to share her concerns with another colleague, Bill, but he does not seem willing to act as a third party in communicating her thoughts, particularly to the American team members. Consequently, she has remained quiet during many of the meetings. She is also somewhat offended that her team members do not seem to recognize that she has personal experiences around disasters. After all, don't they know that in Indonesia, when difficulties or disasters occur, it is not uncommon to rename your child "Slamet" (which means good fortune) as a way to help ensure more positive experiences later in life?

As you reflect on this state of affairs, you realize that you will need to help the team members better understand how these patterns of differences in intercultural conflict styles are affecting their relations. Further, you believe that after reviewing this with the team, the team will need to spend some time deciding how they can better adapt to one another's styles so that the full contribution of each member is obtained. To get them started, you may suggest that they develop an agenda for the brainstorming meetings. This will allow Geetha and Slamet to better prepare for each session. Further, you might suggest that each member be permitted to present his or her ideas first rather than beginning with a more freeform discussion

format. Again, this can be helpful to Geetha and Slamet, and, frankly, it would also demand that Jim and Mary do a bit more preparation for the brainstorming sessions as well. Finally, it would be helpful if the team members met with one another individually prior to the brainstorming session. By doing this, Geetha and Slamet can "check out" everyone's views prior to the meeting. These more informal sessions would also allow all team members to get to know one another better, which will solidify the relational context within which the work is being done. By doing this, all team members will likely be more comfortable joining the discussion.

♦ *Conclusion*

Intercultural conflict style differences represent an important, although largely unexamined, aspect of how conflict escalates—even when individuals genuinely desire to cooperate and work out their disagreements. Developing awareness of these style differences begins with oneself. How an individual profiles on the ICS Inventory provides a clear window on how that person will likely frame and respond to a problem that arises or a conflict that erupts. Recognizing how one's own approach differs from others then becomes the basis for increased sensitivity to difference and an improved ability to better bridge across these intercultural style patterns of difference.

The preliminary results from individuals using the ICS Inventory have been most encouraging. An international financial organization trained their full team of over 20 mediators with the ICS Inventory. Reports from the field indicate that the use of the ICS Inventory is being effectively integrated in the mediation process when disputes arise across cultures. Further, insights from this effort have enabled the disputants to more cooperatively resolve their disagreements. In another international development organization, training with the ICS Inventory has resulted in documented benefits in conflict resolution, more effective decision making, and improved relations across cultures. Within the United States, the ICS has been productively used to help judges and attorneys better recognize intercultural style differences in working with clients and within the courtroom protocols. Managers within the corporate sector are modifying the way they provide performance feedback and coaching based on differences in intercultural conflict/problem-solving styles identified by the ICS Inventory and model.

Finally, in one situation, I mediated a conflict-resolution process between two high-level company presidents. One president exhibited leadership through an accommodation style and the other president operated within an engagement style. After individually completing the ICS Inventory, we engaged in a productive conversation on these differences in how each president attempted to resolve substantive issues and how each president brought into the dialogue varying degrees of emotional expressiveness. They discovered that while there were clear, substantive disagreements, these disagreements were exacerbated by different misinterpretations each made of the other about directness/indirectness and emotional expressiveness/restraint. As a result, progress was made and more cooperative behavior was elicited as these individuals worked with one another in the future.

♦ *Discussion Questions*

1. How would you describe your general communication approach toward others? Is it the same as your conflict-resolution style?

2. After reading about intercultural conflict styles in this chapter, do you think your approach for resolving disagreements (when you are upset) is more similar to a discussion, engagement, accommodation, or dynamic style?
3. Think of some situations you have observed or in which you have been involved in which different intercultural conflict styles were used by people to solve a problem or deal with a disagreement. What did you think, feel, or do in these situations?
4. "Code words" refer to more negative (often personal characteristic) statements made about a different intercultural conflict-resolution style. Generate a list of at least 10 code words that have been said about the discussion, engagement, accommodation, and dynamic styles.

♦ Notes

1. The cases presented in this chapter are composite descriptions based on a set of real events. The names of the individuals and the companies are hypothetical and do not represent real persons or corporations.

2. Accompanying the ICS Inventory is the ICS Participant's Guide (Hammer, 2003a) and the ICS Facilitator's Manual (Hammer, 2003b). The ICS Inventory and accompanying materials can be obtained at www.hammerconsulting.org.

3. These two dimensions were identified based on an exhaustive review of relevant research that focused on cultural differences in resolving disagreements and cultural differences related to how individuals express how they feel toward one another during a conflict event. See Hammer, (2005, 2003b) for a summary of this literature.

4. For a more comprehensive discussion of the normative intercultural conflict styles characteristic in some countries, see Hammer (2003b).

5. See Hammer (2005) for a summary of the psychometric testing completed on the Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory.

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