



Understanding Diversity in Communication & Conflict Management

Kat Parpana, M.A.
Eric Sanchez, M.Ed.
Diversity & Inclusion Educators and Specialists
Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



Flow

- Cross Cultural Communication
 - Identity Model
- High and Low Context Communication
- Evolution of Conflict Theory
- Stages in Conflict
- Conflict Modes/Conflict Management Styles
 - Thomas-Kilman Assessment
- Closing considerations



Objectives

- To learn about our own and each other's communication styles and discuss how we incorporate other styles to facilitate effective communication given the diversity of the community we serve
- To dialogue about diversity in communication styles and reflect on how we can use this as a framework in negotiating communication in cross-cultural situations
- To gain new information on the important skills related to communication and conflict management

Guidelines for Discussion

- Respect
- Encourage
- Share air time
- Have fun

■ "I speak to be understood, not to convince you I am right...I listen to understand, not to formulate my rebuttal."
~Hispanic Outlook Journal

Cross Cultural v. Intercultural Communication

- Cross-Cultural Communication
 - Focuses on comparisons of communication styles
- Intercultural Communication
 - Focuses on "sharing of meanings" across cultures

Decision-Making Situations Questionnaire

Multicultural Competence



A set of skills or attributes which allow a person to respond effectively and appropriately to a particular situation or circumstance.

Multicultural competence involves:

- An ability to increase one's **awareness** about personal biases, assumptions, attitudes and worldviews
- Specific **knowledge** of cultures, history, worldviews, languages and diverse experiences
- A repertoire of **skills** that allow one to effectively intervene in personal and professional domains

Factors Influencing Effective Communication

- Assumptions/Suspensions

I suspect they did this because...

- Perceptions

I see... I hear... I think... I feel...

- Communication Style

What & how they said it (verbal and non-verbal)

- Values/Attitudes

What is important to me

Cross-Cultural Experience

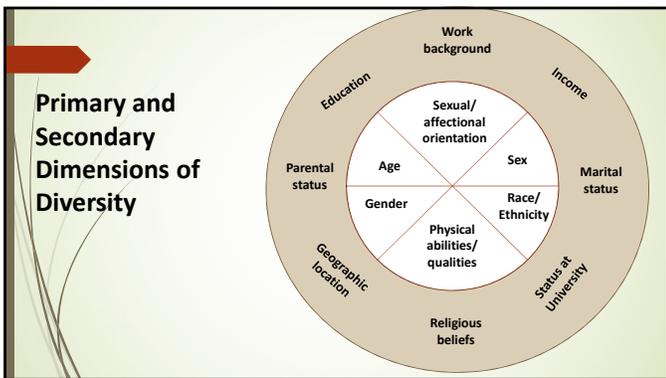
- Pair up and share a time when you had a cross cultural experience

- What occurred?

- How did you negotiate the cross-cultural experience?

“ The biggest mistake is believing there is one right way to listen, to talk, to have a conversation... ”

~Deborah Tannen



Values and Communication: Low Context v. High Context

Low	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Task-oriented• Results• Individual• Direct• Monochronic• Words	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationship-oriented• Process• Group• Indirect• Polychronic• Non-verbal cues

LCC & HCC Verbal Patterns

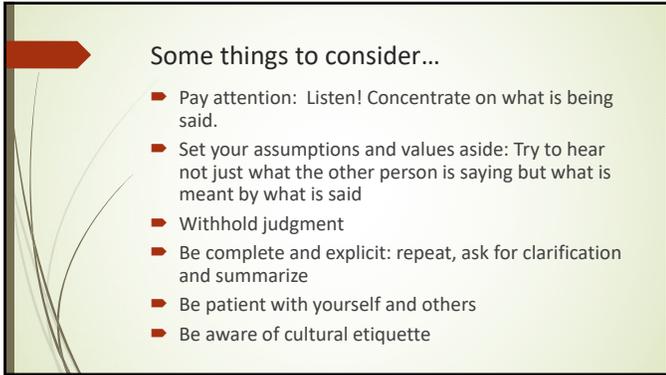
Low Context Communication	High Context Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Individualistic Values• Linear Logic• Direct Verbal Style• Matter-of-Fact Tone• Informal Verbal Style• Verbal Assertiveness or Talkativeness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collectivistic Values• Spiral Logic• Indirect Verbal Style• Understated or Animated Tone• Formal Verbal Style• Verbal Reticence or Silence

Negotiating High Context/Low Context : A study in contrast

“How far are we’re going?”
“It’s not too far, it’s on the other side of the causeway”
“How long does it take to get there?”
“If we leave now, we should get there before dark.”
“What time is dinner?”
“I have to go to the store this afternoon, so I’ll cook as soon as I get home, and we can eat after I finish cooking.”
“What time is it?”
“It’s still early.”

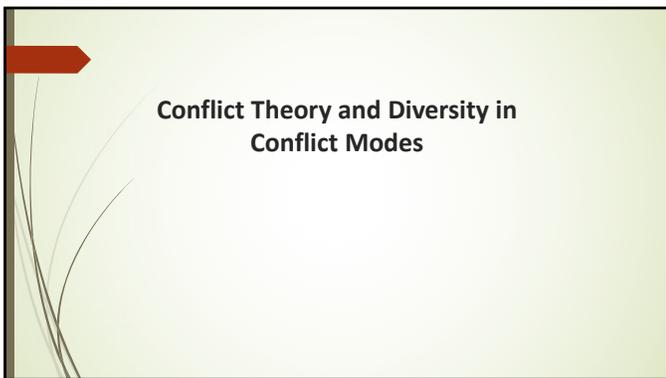
Low Context / High Context: In Interaction

The diagram shows two cartoon horses representing Low Context and High Context. A vertical line separates them. Arrows point from the Low Context side to the High Context side, and vice versa, with various factors listed in between: importance, facts, words, social setting, tone, education, appearance, history, gender, gestures, age, class, and social status.

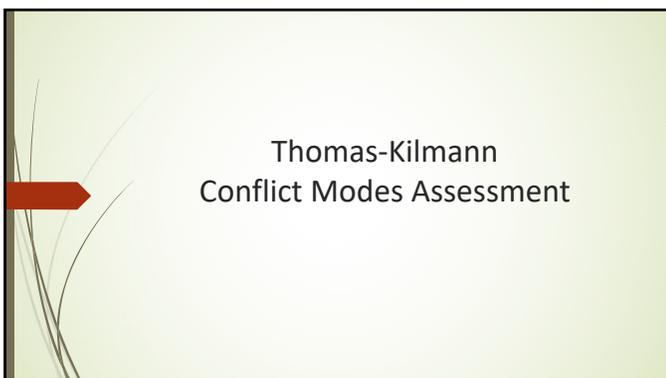


Some things to consider...

- ▶ Pay attention: Listen! Concentrate on what is being said.
- ▶ Set your assumptions and values aside: Try to hear not just what the other person is saying but what is meant by what is said
- ▶ Withhold judgment
- ▶ Be complete and explicit: repeat, ask for clarification and summarize
- ▶ Be patient with yourself and others
- ▶ Be aware of cultural etiquette



Conflict Theory and Diversity in Conflict Modes



Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes Assessment

Pair and Share...

Think of a time when you were in conflict with someone.

How did you know you were in conflict? Did the other person know there was a conflict?

Who was at fault?

How was the conflict dealt with?

Was there a resolution to the conflict?

“ It is possible to conceive conflict as not necessarily a wasteful outbreak of incompatibilities, but a normal process by which socially valuable differences register themselves for the enrichment of all concerned. ”

– Mary Parker Follett

The Evolution of Conflict Theory

• The Traditional View

- Conflict is negative
- Conflict as something that need to be fixed
- If it can't be fixed, then needed to be eliminated
- Response to conflict was typically to suppress it
 - “Get along or move along”; ignore or deny it (“We have no problems”)
- Created a preference for dealing with issues indirectly
 - Instead of telling the individual with whom they had a conflict, involved someone to “deal” with the conflict

The Evolution of Conflict Theory

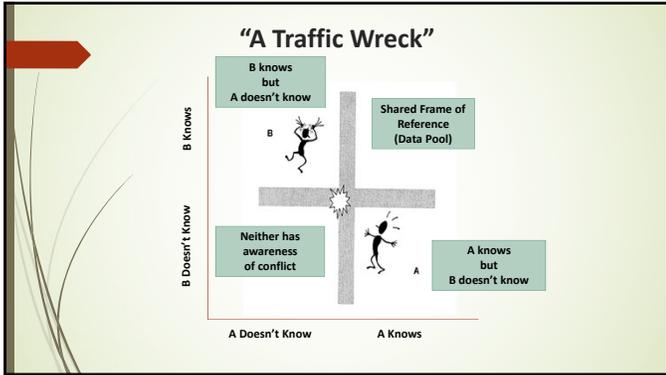
- The Human Relations View
 - Conflict is natural and expected...accept it!
 - Mechanisms were developed to address conflict
 - Formal systems (complaint process or judicial process)

The Evolution of Conflict Theory

- The Interactionist View
 - Conflict is encouraged at a "constructive" or functional minimal level as a way to bring about change
 - Conflict seen as a "gift" because they allow for improvement in processes and relationships
 - i.e., customer service
 - Important to accept that some conflicts are "dysfunctional," which requires examination of how parties work through the stages of conflict

Stages of Conflict

- **A rule is broken**
 - The "rules of the game" of one party is "broken" by another party
- **Unspoken tension**
 - Offended party develops an "attitude" toward the "rule breaker,"
 - "Rule breaker" may pick up on the tension, but not the reason
- **Consult with others**
 - Offended party seeks validation from others (forming "camps")
 - Spends time talking about the "rule breaker"
- **Engagement**
 - Both parties act out the conflict directly with each other OR indirectly through others (camps)
- **Aftermath**
 - Functional – conflicting parties reach shared understanding of interests/needs; agreement on how to proceed
 - Dysfunctional – fixed hostile positions toward each other; lack of communication or poor communication; lack of respect and trust; distorted expectations of each other



- ### Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Modes
- Competing
 - Collaborating
 - Compromising
 - Avoiding
 - Accommodating
- Source: Kenneth Thomas & Ralph Kilmann

The Five Conflict Styles

<p>High Concern for Own Goals</p>	<p><u>Competing</u> (I win/You lose) • Assertive about own goals • Uncooperative about other's</p>	<p><u>Collaborating</u> (I win/You win) • Assertive about own goals • Cooperative about other's</p>
	<p><u>Compromising</u> (We both mini-win/We both mini-lose) • Negotiate goals • Negotiate relationships</p>	
<p>Low Concern for Own Goals</p>	<p><u>Avoiding</u> (I lose/You lose – because I leave) • Unassertive about own goals • Uncooperative about other's</p>	<p><u>Accommodating</u> (I lose/You win) • Unassertive about own goals • Cooperative about other's</p>
	<p>Low Concern for Other's Goals</p>	<p>High Concern for Other's Goals</p>

Source: Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument

Conflict Management Styles: Avoiding

- "When in a conflict situation, I typically..."
 - Avoid the person.
 - Change the subject or postpone talking about it.
 - Try to turn the conflict into a joke.
 - Avoid the controversy or confrontation.
- The appropriate time to use this style is...
 - When an issue is trivial or more important issues are pressing.
 - When you perceive no chance of satisfying your concerns.
 - When potential disruption outweighs the benefits of resolution.
 - To let people cool down and regain perspective.
 - When gathering information supersedes immediate decision.
 - When others can resolve the conflict more effectively

Conflict Management Styles: Competing

- "When in a conflict situation, I typically..."
 - Use strength, power, position, etc., to reach my goal.
 - Get another person (one with "authority") to decide who is right.
 - Apply pressure until I get my way.
- The appropriate time to use this style is...
 - When quick, decisive action is vital.
 - On important issues where unpopular actions need implementing.
 - On issues vital to the organization's welfare, and when you know you are right.
 - Against people who take advantage of other styles.

Conflict Management Styles: Compromising

- "When in a conflict situation, I typically..."
 - Demand more than I would actually settle for.
 - Suggest a way in which both I and the other person would gain AND lose something.
 - Go for a middle ground (split the difference or meet the other person halfway).
- The appropriate time to use this style is...
 - When goals are important, but not worth the potential disruption of more assertive modes.
 - When opponents with equal power are committed to mutually exclusive goals.
 - To achieve temporary settlements to complex issues.
 - To arrive at expedient solutions under time pressure.

Conflict Management Styles: Collaborating

- "When in a conflict situation, I typically..."
 - Try to understand the other person's point of view.
 - Listen to the other's feelings.
 - Try to find out specifically what we agree and disagree on to narrow down the conflict.
 - Move toward problem solving as best I can.
 - Try to clarify what the other's goals are.
 - Get everything out in the open.
- The appropriate time to use this style is...
 - To find an integrative solution when both sets of concerns are too important to be compromised.
 - When your objective is to learn.
 - To merge insights from people with different perspectives.
 - To gain commitment by incorporating concerns into a consensus.
 - To work through feelings which have interfered with a relationship.
 - To build the trust level and integrity of a relationship.

Conflict Management Styles: Accommodating

- "When in a conflict situation, I typically..."
 - Admit that I am wrong, whether I believe I am or not.
 - Give in.
 - Pretend or appear to agree, even if deep down I still don't.
 - Avoid hurting the other's feelings at all cost.
 - Sacrifice my interests and desired outcomes for the sake of the relationship.
- The appropriate time to use this style is...
 - When you find you are wrong – to allow a better position to be heard, to learn, and to show your reasonableness.
 - When issues are more important to others than to you – to satisfy others and maintain cooperation.
 - To build social credits for later issues.
 - To minimize loss when you are outmatched and losing.
 - When harmony and stability are especially important.
 - To allow others to develop by learning from mistakes.

Steps in Managing Conflict

- What do I feel?
 - Am I glad, sad, mad, scared....
- What do I think?
 - Beliefs, opinion, interpretations, attitudes, intentions, perceptions
- What do I want?
 - What I need, desire, wish for...
- What am I going to do?
 - My next steps



There is little value in preparing a cookbook of recipes for conflict success. The effects of conflict interaction depend directly on what the participants do mentally with conflict behaviors—that is, how they process and interpret those behaviors.

– William Cupach & Daniel Canary



Working in a team...

- *Setting a foundation*
- *Building a Communication Protocol*

“If we are to work as a team...

- ...what values do we share in facilitating effective communication?*
- ...how do we address conflict(s) within the group?*



THANK YOU!
