Exploring the Cultural Dimensions of Conflict

Sukh Singh
Willamette University College of Law

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11:30 am – 12:45 pm PACIFIC TIME

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Exploring the Cultural Dimensions of Conflict

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What is my culture?

- Indo-American
- Mediator
- Teacher
- Sikh
- Father
- Husband
- Son

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Framework for my Talk

- Dimensions of Conflict
- Defining Culture
- Cultural Influence on Conflict
- Conflict Resolution and Culture
- Resources
“There should be zeal to learn about a new culture. There should be an honest non-judgmental approach to learning the new culture. Take it this way. A new culture will only adopt you if you are willing to accept that culture without inhibitions.”

Stella Ting Toomey & Leeva C. Chung
(A) Different Dimensions of Conflict

Cultures perceive and address conflict differently

See Bee Chen Goh Et All “As We See It”
University of Mumbai - American vs. Indian Perspectives
Willingness to Learn
Awareness of our “own” culture
(B) WHAT IS CULTURE?
The term culture constitutes the following essential elements:

- Patterned way of thinking
- of a group
- Based on value
- Followed over a period of time
Culture is the “air” you breathe in.

- It also constitutes (what we often forget!)
  - Religion
  - Identity
  - Core Values
  - Our set World-views
  - Our Belief Systems and Traditions
BROAD VIEW OF CULTURE

- National
- Organizational
- Personal
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDIVIDUALIST</th>
<th>COLLECTIVIST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Satisfy needs of the individual before those of the group</td>
<td>Survival of the group ensures well-being</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autonomy, independence, and personal freedom are highly valued</td>
<td>Identity tied to primary group (“in-group” = usually family)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only one-third of world’s population</td>
<td>Harmony and interdependence are stressed and valued</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>External</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control is within the individual</td>
<td>Some things in life are predetermined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No limits on what you can do/become if you make the necessary effort</td>
<td>There are limits beyond which you cannot go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are responsible for what you do</td>
<td>Success is a combination of efforts and good fortune</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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CULTURAL COMPETENCY

- Your (m) Cultural Awareness
- Cultural Consciousness (moment to moment)
- Time and Goal Orientation
Your Cultural Awareness
Your Cultural Awareness
Your Cultural Awareness
CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS (MOMENT TO MOMENT)

- A longer Journey; because it’s inward
- Learning to control our biases & our reliance on shortcuts
- On generosity, compassion, and understanding
- Humbleness, dya & confidence in “them” and “us”
No to Cultural Coercion

No to Cross-Cultural Disrespect

No to One-dimensional Approach to Conflict

No to Always making the Conflict about Culture
GOAL ORIENTATION

- Your Culture dictates your Goals

- Just like each one of us

- We are one yet so distinct
Thank you for your time.
Upcoming CADRE webinar!

The Mediator's Mind:
Insights from Psychology and Neuroscience
Richard Birke
Director, Center for Dispute Resolution,
Willamette University College of Law
May 2, 2013
11:30 am – 12:45 pm PACIFIC TIME

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