**CHAPTER 9**

**What Are the Best Ways to Manage Intercultural Conflict?**

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**Chapter 9: Learning Objectives**

As a result of reading Chapter 9 and participating in related class discussions and activities, you should be able to

1. Define intercultural conflict and describe cultural background factors that in­fluence an intercultural conflict interaction, including the culture-based con­flict lens, intercultural conflict perceptions, conflict goals, and perceived scarce resources.

2. Describe in detail several important conflict process factors, such as cross-cultural conflict communication styles and facework behaviors.

3. Explain intercultural conflict competence and identify the skills necessary to manage intercultural conflict flexibly, including facework management, mind­ful listening, mindful reframing, and adaptive code-switching.

4. Practice flexible conflict communication skills, adapting them based on han­dling conflict from a collectivistic or individualistic lens.

**Chapter 9: Brief Outline**

Introduction section:

**Intercultural conflict**: implicit or explicit struggle or frustration between persons of different cultures over various factors (NOTE: This is a brief description; for actual definitions, consult your textbook.)

1. **Intercultural Conflict: Cultural Background Factors**
   1. Culture-Based Conflict Lenses
      1. Individualists and those with i**ndependent-self conflict lens** views conflict from a(n):
         1. Outcome-oriented model
         2. Content conflict goal lens
         3. Clear win-lose conflict approach
         4. “Doing” angle
      2. Collectivists and those with **interdependent-self conflict lens** views conflict from a:
         1. Process-oriented model
         2. Relational process lens
         3. Win-win relational approach
         4. “Being” angle
         5. Long-term compromise mode for relationship preservation
   2. Intercultural Workplace Conflict Grid
      1. Uses 2 value dimensions (individualism-collectivism and power distance)
      2. Forms a grid with 4 approaches:
         1. **Impartial** (individualistic-small power distance) Personal freedom, equal treatment valued. Denmark, Sweden, Norway, also U.S.
         2. **Status-achievement** (individualistic-large power distance) Employees can voice complaints, managers have authority. France, also U.S.
         3. **Benevolent** (collectivistic-large power distance) Manager in authoritative parental role. S America, Asia, Africa, Arab speaking nations.
         4. **Communal** (collectivistic-small power distance) Communal decision-making, rotating leadership. Costa Rica is only nation; nonprofits.
   3. Intercultural Conflict Perceptions: 3 primary perception features of intercultural conflict:
      1. Involves intercultural perceptions (i.e., ethnocentrism, stereotypes)
      2. Ethnocentric perceptions add biases to conflict attribution process
      3. Attribution process complicated by differing verbal-nonverbal conflict styles.
         1. Straight talk: low context, assertive, emotionally expressive
         2. Face talk: high-context, hesitant, indirect style.
      4. Identity threat theory: 4 conditions that trigger perceived conflict: (1) prior conflict history; (2) ignorance or knowledge gap; (3) type and frequency of intergroup contact; (4) identity membership status.
   4. Intercultural Conflict Goal Issues
      1. **Content goals**: practical, external issues
      2. **Relational conflict goals**: how relationship is defined
      3. **Identity-based goals**: face-saving and face-honoring issues, can include identities (social, sociocultural, personal)
   5. Perceived Scarce Resources
      1. **Conflict resources**: rewards people strive for
         1. **Tangible resources:** items, time, scarce commodities, etc.
         2. **Intangible resources:** desires or emotional needs (security, etc.)
      2. Three techniques to negotiate scarce resources:
         1. **Differentiation**: divide into different pieces
         2. **Expansion**: search for creative solutions
         3. **Compensation**: offer exchanges for issues each values differently
2. **Intercultural Conflict Process Factors**
   1. Conflict Face-Negotiation Theory: A Brief Introduction
      1. **Face**: claimed sense of favorable social self-image and consideration of other’s social self-image.
      2. **Facework**: verbal and nonverbal behaviors to defend, save, maintain, uplift our social image (or attack or defend others’)
      3. Face negotiation theory (FNT) explains why group members use different conflict styles in intercultural settings.
      4. See also: self-face, other-face, mutual-face, communal-face.
   2. Defining Conflict Styles: Different viewpoints
      1. **Conflict communication style:** patterned responses to conflict
      2. Three viewpoints to studying conflict styles:
         1. **Dispositional**: conflict style depends on personality traits
         2. **Situational:** conflict topic and situation shapes styles and strategies
         3. **Systems:** integrates a and b. People have predominant styles but modify based on situation, etc. Main preference of researchers.
      3. Five-style conflict grid: five conflict style tendencies
         1. **Dominating** (or **competitive/controlling**): push for one’s own position above others’ conflict interest
         2. **Avoiding:** dodge conflict topic, party, or situation, deny conflict exists
         3. **Obliging** (or **accommodating**): concern for others’ conflict interest above one’s own conflict goals
         4. **Compromising:** give-and-take concession to reach midpoint agreement
         5. **Integrating** (or **collaborative**): high concern for both oneself and others’ interest. Nonevaluative descriptions, clarifying questions, qualifying statements. Most time-consuming style.
   3. Cross-Cultural Conflict Communication Styles
      1. *Face-negotiation theory:* explains how individualism-collectivism value patterns influence use of conflict styles in different cultures
      2. *Individualists*: self-face oriented, direct, low-context style
      3. *Collectivists*: other-/mutual-face oriented, indirect, high-context style
      4. *Independent-self individuals*: competitive/dominating conflict styles
      5. *Interdependent-self individuals*: avoiding, obliging, integrating, and compromising styles
   4. Cross-Ethnic Conflict Styles And Facework
      1. **African American conflict styles: Black mode of conflict:** energetic, nonverbally animated, emotionally expressive. **White mode of conflict**: low-keyed nonverbally and emotionally restrained
      2. **Asian American conflict styles:** Confucianism influence (roles, status, collective face-saving), avoiding, obliging, sometimes “silence”
      3. **Latinx American conflict styles:** tactfulness, *respeto* in Mexico, avoidance for minor and midrange issues, diversity exists in Latinx Americans.
      4. **Native American conflict styles:** verbal restraint, other- and mutual-face sensitivity, deliberate silence, ask elder for wisdom; diversity among tribes exists
3. **Developing Intercultural Conflict Competence and Skillsets**
   1. Applying Intercultural Conflict competence
      1. Appropriateness: degree behaviors are regarded as proper, match expectations
      2. Effectiveness: degree of achievement of shared meanings, outcomes
      3. Adaptability: ability to change behaviors to meet needs of situation.
   2. Facework Management skills
      1. **Self-oriented face-saving**: regain or defend one’s image
      2. **Other-oriented face-giving**: support other’s face claims, prevent further face loss
      3. *Individualists in conflict with collectivists*: acknowledge collectivists’ ingroup concerns, hold mutual-orientation perspective, apologize if needed
      4. *Collectivists in conflict with individualists:* candid expression of ideas, explicit verbal acknowledgement, complimenting others’ abilities and contributions
   3. Mindful Listening Skills
      1. **Mindful listening**: learning to listen responsively or *ting* (a Chinese word that means “attending mindfully with our ears, eyes, focused heart”)
      2. **Creating new categories**: to interpret conflict variation behaviors
      3. **Paraphrasing skills** involve:
         1. verbally summarizing content meaning of the message
         2. nonverbally echoing your interpretation of emotional meaning
      4. **Perception-checking**: Direct and indirect statements to ensure correct interpretation of speaker’s behaviors, usually ends with questions
   4. **Mindful reframing**
      1. Highly creative, mutual-face honoring skill
      2. Mindful process of using language to change how a person defines or thinks about experiences and views the conflict situation
   5. Adaptive Code-Switching Conflict Skills:purposefully modifying behavior to accommodate to different cultural norms.
4. **Intercultural Reality Check: Doables**
   1. To deal with conflict in a collectivistic culture, *individualists need to do the following*:
      1. Be mindful of mutual face-saving premises
      2. Practice patient, mindful observation and limit *why* questions
      3. Mindful listening skills, attend to others’ identities and relational expectations
   2. In conflict situation in an individualistic culture, *collectivists need to do the following*:
      1. Assertive conflict behavior, state a clear thesis then develop key points
      2. Use “I” statements and more content-clarification questions
      3. Use active listening skills; do not rely solely on nonverbal signals
   3. With interdependent-self collectivists: be sensitive to “process” orientation
   4. With independent-self individualists, be sensitive to “outcome” orientation

**Chapter 9: Chapter Checkup**

**Check out the following self-assessment questions:**

**QuikChoice 9.1**: Take the [**QuikChoice 9.1**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-quickchoice-9-1?previousFilter=tag_chapter-09)quiz to explore two conflict lenses. To take a full assessment of your conflict lenses, check out QuikChoice 9.1 in the text.

**QuikChoice 9.2:** Click on [**QuikChoice 9.2**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-quickchoice-9-2?previousFilter=tag_chapter-09) to examine your understanding of general conflict styles. To take a full assessment of your general conflict style, check out QuikChoice 9.2 in the text.

**QuikChoice 9.3**: Use the [**QuikChoice 9.3**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-quickchoice-9-3?previousFilter=tag_chapter-09) quiz to learn about five specific conflict styles.

For help, see the descriptions in Chapter 9 of integrating, compromising, avoidance, dominating, and obliging conflict styles.

**Chapter 9: Critical Incident Analysis**

**Check out the following intercultural scenario:**

(NOTE: See “Chapter 9 Class Handouts” for a printable version.)

**A Critical Incident: Who Gets the Job?**\*

Competitive organizations across the United States are trying to create more open climates where all people from diverse backgrounds can get along. Their ability to do so effectively depends largely on whom they bring into the workplace when promotional opportunities exist. The following incident will raise a number of important issues about this complex subject.

A medium-sized company in the southern part of Oregon is looking for a manager to oversee the accounting department, which consists of 20 bookkeepers, controllers, and accountants, and four secretaries. The current manager, who has been in the job for seven years, has just been promoted. While the company does have a history of promoting from within, it is also interested in creating a more diverse work environment. It is the hope of the company that a diverse work environment can spark new ideas, and, at the same time, attract new customers in different parts of the region and perhaps expand to California. To that end, it is willing to consider both outside and inside job applicants. Four candidates have shown interest in the job:

**JOHN CONNORS** is a skilled accountant. He has been with this company for six years. He is actively involved in community affairs, and graduated from a local university. He has cultivated excellent interpersonal relationships both in and out of the company. The only concern some people have is with his sexual orientation: he is gay. While his sexual orientation has not been an issue at work, he does bring his partner to company parties and picnics. However, some people in the department think his sexual orientation is immoral. If he does not get the promotion, he will consider leaving the company. After all, he has served the company loyally for the last six years.

**JENNY CHU** is a Chinese immigrant from Singapore and has been with the company for seven years. In fact, she and the outgoing manager started their employment at the same time. Jenny, a Certified Public Accountant, has outstanding accounting skills and is viewed as the real expert when work-related issues come up. While Jenny has her college degree from Singapore, she continues to update her accounting skills and acquire supervisory skills via continuing education courses at the local university. Her work relationships with others are congenial. However, some people believe she is a bit quiet and introverted.

**EDURADO GARCIA** is an outsider who heard about the job opening from some of his fellow Mexican friends at a recent church meeting. He ran his own successful business in Mexico City, sold it, and moved to the United States seven years ago. He has been a practicing accountant in several different companies. He has depth of experience and a good track record. He is extremely involved in his ethnic community and recently joined the Rotary Club to expand his social contacts. He is personable, approachable, and easygoing. He enjoys spending lots of time with his clients. However, some people are uncomfortable with his accent.

**MALCOLM WASHINGTON, JR**. is an African American new to the area and an outsider. He graduated with honors from Yale where he got his B.S. and his MBA is from Wharton (University of Pennsylvania). For the past year, he was a rising star at his former company, but left to relocate when his wife was offered a once-in-a-lifetime position in this city. Malcolm is bright and willing to learn. He looked like a shoo-in for the job until the vice-president took him and his wife out for dinner. In a town not used to interracial relationships and marriage, there was a lot of discomfort. Malcolm’s wife is Euro-American.

\*Source: Adapted from Lee Gardenswartz and Anita Rowe. (1995). *The Diversity Toolkit*. Irwin Publishing.

**Rankings: Who Gets the Job?**

(NOTE: See “Chapter 9 Class Handouts” for a printable form containing these questions.)

**Instructions**: Read the incident very carefully and rank order the job candidates based on who you think is the best candidate for the job and the company. Be clear about why you are ranking the individuals in your order of preference. After your individual ranking, please discuss your decision with a personnel committee in your class. In the group consensus ranking, everyone on the team has to agree on the top four candidates in order of preference. You have to come to a true consensus ranking system through active communication.

# INDIVIDUAL RANKING:

# I would vote for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as the top candidate because:

My second choice is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because:

My third choice is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because:

My fourth choice is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because:

**GROUP CONSENSUS RANKING:**

# We, as a team, would vote for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as the top candidate because:

Our second choice is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because:

Our third choice is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because:

Our fourth choice is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because:

**Interactive Probes**

(After the completion of the entire group discussion exercise,

ask yourself and probe your classmates’ reactions)

(NOTE: See “Chapter 9 Class Handouts” section for a printable form containing these questions.)

1. How would you characterize your own conflict styles in this group discussion exercise?

2. How would you characterize your group members’ conflict styles?

3. Did you or your team members apply some of the intercultural conflict skills mentioned in Chapter 9?

4. On a scale of 1–10, with 1 = not satisfied and 10 = extremely satisfied, how would you rank your satisfaction level with the team negotiation process? Why?

5. If you could rewind the group discussion, what would you do differently?

6. Can you relate to any of the characters in the “Who Gets the Job?” critical incident? Can you share your story with your teammates?

# Further Application Proves for “Who Gets the Job?”

# Click on the [Chapter 9 Further Application Probes](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-chapter-9-further-application-probes?previousFilter=tag_chapter-09) to apply some concepts from chapter 9 to the scenario.

**Chapter 9: Glossary-Matching Quizzes**

Click to complete[**Matching Quiz 9.1.**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-glossary-matching-quiz-9-1?previousFilter=tag_chapter-09)

Click to complete[**Matching Quiz 9.2.**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-glossary-matching-quiz-9-2?previousFilter=tag_chapter-09)

**Chapter 9: Practice Quiz**

Click for the[**Chapter 9 Review Practice Quiz.**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/ting-toomey3e-student-resources/ting-toomey3e-chapter-9-review-prep-quiz?previousFilter=tag_chapter-09)

**Chapter 9: Exercise Handouts**

Note: Your instructor may ask you to[**download,**](https://learninglink.oup.com/access/ting-toomey3e-student-resources#tag_chapter-09)print out, and/or e-mail the following class handouts for this chapter:

**QuikChoice 9.3 Assessing Your Specific Five Conflict Styles**

**Reflections on Your QuikChoice 9.3 Conflict Styles Scores**

**Reflecting on Conflict Styles**

**A Critical Incident: Who Gets the Job?**

**Rankings: Who Gets the Job?**

**Interactive Probes for “Who Gets the Job?”**