CHAPTER 10
Intercultural Conflict

Conflict is inevitable
• If human beings are involved…
• Can be of a variety of types:
  – International
  – National
  – Social
  – Interpersonal
• Understanding and solving conflicts now more important than ever

Conflict is inevitable
• Conflict between individuals not limited to intercultural contexts
• May however be heightened by cultural differences
  – Culture tells us what’s worth fighting about
  – Uncertainty breeds anxiety => hostility
  – Core of many cross-cultural films

Kim’s Model of Intercultural Conflict

Face
• Dealing with “face” one way of explaining intercultural conflict
• Face = Favorable social impression that a person wants others to have of him or her
• Another way to think of causing someone to “lose face” = “dissing”
• To maintain face, you want others to act toward you with respect, regardless of how these people actually feel
• Involves a claim for respect and dignity from others
• Face is social—refers to public or social image of an individual that is held by others
• Occurs in a relational setting: can be gained or lost through actions known by others
• Cannot be claimed independent of other’s social perceptions—differs from psychological concepts such as self-esteem or pride

6. **Facework**
   • Facework behaviors may be verbal or non-verbal messages that maintain, restore, or save face
   • Generally speaking, it is in every participant’s best interest to maintain each other’s face
   • However, individual cultures => more concerned with “self-face” while collectivistic cultures => more concerned with “other-face”
   • Behaviors may include apologies, excessive politeness, justification/excuse for original behavior, displays of deference and submission, use of intermediaries, use of implication and indirect speech, etc.
   • Specific strategies are shaped and modified by one’s culture

7. **Conflict Communication Styles**
   • Like speech, people develop different conflict styles
     – You may be overbearing in arguments or accommodating
     – Related to cultural values, but also individual
   • Avoiding
   • Dominating
   • Obliging
   • Compromising
   • Third-party help
   • Emotional expression
   • Neglect
   • Integrating

8. **Conflict Communication Styles**

9. **Conflict Communication Styles**
   • Research results show…
– Individualist cultures
  • Tend to use dominating styles
  • See avoiding and obliging styles negatively
  • Outcome oriented (who wins the argument)
– Collectivists
  • Tend to use more integrative styles
  • See avoiding and obliging styles positively
  • Emphasis on preserving harmony and saving face

10 **Intercultural Conflict Style**
• Model that tries to accommodate Eastern conflict styles
• According to Mitchell Hammer, conflicts come from…
  – Disagreement
  – Emotional response
• Model development based on cognitive & affective components
• Individualistic, low-context cultures normally…
  – Direct style
  – Emotionally expressive
• Collectivistic, high-context cultures normally…
  – Indirect style
  – Emotionally restrained

11 **Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory**
12 **Intercultural Conflict Style**
13 **Individualist vs. Collectivism in conflict**
• Individualists are outcome oriented in conflict.
  – Individualists become frustrated when feelings aren’t asserted honestly.
  – Conflict is perceived as productive when tangible resolutions are reached.
• Collectivists are process oriented in conflict.
– Conflict is perceived as threatening when substantive issues are addressed before facework management.
– Conflict is perceived as unproductive when face issues and group feelings are not addressed properly.

**Context and Conflict**

- Low-context cultures are more direct and explicit in conflict.
  – Separate conflict from the individual.
  – Prefer a solution-oriented style.
- High-context cultures are more indirect and implicit in conflict.
  – Connect conflict with the individual.
  – Prefer a non-confrontational style.