Intercultural Conflict Styles and Inventory

by Sophia

In this lesson, we will discuss culture, and how it affects the way we interpret conflict. The specific areas of focus include:

1. An Overview of Culture

Culture is a form of human social organization in which people identify themselves as members of a group that share symbol systems, norms, traditions, and viewpoints towards the world.

However, the United States of America is known as a melting pot; people from all over the world have come to this country and participated in American culture.

This has created **cross culture**, or interactions between members of different cultures, in which cultural differences may influence behavior, perception, or interpretation.

> ⤳ EXAMPLE If you've ever traveled abroad, you've run into these kinds of cross-cultural differences. For example, you may not have been able to speak the language of the country you were visiting. When people come to the United States, they of course bring with them their cultural traditions, norms, and ways of seeing the world. Citizens of this country have a lot of things in common, but we often retain a lot from our country of origin.

Thus we also have **subcultures**, which are groups with a different cultural orientation than the larger culture around them.

> ⤳ EXAMPLE Many big cities have areas with names like Chinatown or Little Italy. These areas are often home to people of a subculture who have their own traditions and ways of seeing and doing things. However, they are also assimilating into the larger culture.

📄 TERMS TO KNOW

Culture
A form of social organization in which people identify themselves as members of a group sharing symbol systems, norms, traditions, and viewpoints towards the world.

Cross Culture
Used to describe interactions between members of different cultures, in which cultural differences may influence behavior, perception, or interpretation.

Subculture

A group with a different cultural orientation than the larger culture around it.

2. Culture's Impact on Determining Conflict Styles

Recall that the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Inventory is the best-known tool for measuring conflict styles.

However, this instrument was designed under the notion that all its users come from American culture, and thus all share the same assumptions and worldview. Therefore, it may not be as effective a tool if the people using it come from a different culture.

For this reason, there is also an Intercultural Conflict Styles Inventory, which is a tool for determining conflict styles that takes into account the cultural differences that people have. This can be an especially helpful tool for a conflict involving cross-cultural elements.

🚩 HINT

Remember that when using either of these tools, it's important to consider the significance of cross-cultural differences in conflict.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Assessment is a short assessment of 30 questions. Taking this questionnaire is a great way to provide a personal context to this lesson, but it is not required that you take the assessment for this course. See the website below, where you can pay to take this assessment and receive a personal report through **Kilmann Diagnostics**.

Additionally, you can take a free conflict style assessment on the **United States Institute of Peace Website**.

You may also learn more about the **Intercultural Conflict Style Inventory (ICS)**.

(Again, you won't be tested on this.)

📋 SUMMARY

In this lesson, you were given an **overview of culture**, and learned how **culture impacts the tools used to determine conflict styles**. You now understand that while the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles Inventory is the most widely known tool for measuring conflict styles, the Intercultural Conflict Styles Inventory can be more effective, as it takes the cultural differences of its users into consideration.

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Cross-Cultural

Used to describe interactions between members of different cultures, in which cultural differences may influence behavior, perception, or interpretation.

Culture

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Subculture

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