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Diversity, conflict resolution, and (dis)agreement

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Abstract: Is reaching an agreement a product of strong arguing-making and argument-having? Mediators are trained to be neutral facilitators with a range of *diverse* strategies for resolving disagreements. In spite of this, parties in conflict can derail a mediator's trajectory in helping all involved by i) understand different positions and especially ii) develop resolutions. Borrowing from the literature of conflict resolution this paper questions the efficacy of critical-logical normative argumentation models.

Keywords: Accommodator, avoider, argument, collaborator, competitor, compromiser, conflict resolution, critical-logical perspective, mediation, resolution

1. Introduction

We are all faced with situations of conflict often, maybe even daily for many of us. Conflict is not something we need to avoid or fear, but rather it affords us opportunities (Furlong, 2005) - to understand other views, to change our behaviours, to make others understand us, and so on. What makes the resolution of conflicts effective? This paper demonstrates the positive impact that a diversity of tools and methods to access can have on conflict resolution. The more specific question that is under scrutiny: Is reaching an agreement a product of good argumentation skills or amenable conflict styles? This question is limited in scope, obviously, addressing only conflict styles, while there are many other facets of human behaviour and argumentation communication that also aid to develop a diverse approach to argument. It is a rather specific question, and it stems from a practical disposition, one where argument practitioners are forefront of mind. Given this the focus of this paper is strictly on $argument_2$ an argument as an interactive act (O'Keefe, 1982, p. 3). The essence of an $argument_1$ is its structure – we make an $argument_1$, and we study its components (e.g. premises, conclusion). In juxtaposition to an $argument_1$ we have an $argument_2$. The latter involves necessary engagement, an interaction about some disagreement, and actually a criterion to underscore is that there may not actually be an $argument_1$ in an $argument_2$ (O'Keefe, 1982, p 9). For the purposes of distinguishing arguments, argument-making represents argument[1] and argument-having represents $argument_2$.

Since the introduction of multi-modal argumentation (Gilbert, 1994), where the logical, visceral, emotional, and kiscceral modes are outlined, there has been little in the way of acknowledging and developing a more well-rounded and encompassing descriptive framework of argumentation, let alone normative frameworks (Gilbert, 2005). A system that adequately addresses a multi-modal argumentation approach is lacking, and yet it is the full range of argumentative modes, without excluding other possible modes such as the visual or auditory, that real argument practitioners deal with, not just the logical mode. It follows from acknowledging this that a bias in favour of a critical-logical perspective needs to be "checked." A critical-logical perspective of argumentation involves relying on reason to inform good argumentation (Gilbert, 1997, p. 76). This perspective implies that factors such as conflict styles are an addendum to the

notion of argument-making and argument-having, not necessarily something that is endemic of argumentation. What if, however, it is not necessarily *reason* that allows for the resolution of disagreement but rather *connection* between interlocutors. What can allow for connection in some capacity is the dance between different conflict styles involved in the disagreement. Conflict styles offers a system of communication strategies used during argument-making and argument-having that can help interlocutors themselves, as well as observers, understand, observe, and/or evaluate why and how disagreements within conflict can or cannot be solved. As with my disposition with the critical-logical approach to arguments, conflict styles would not be an all-encompassing tool for describing, resolving, or evaluating arguments, it would be one of several different tools. Sometimes it is logic that allows interlocutors to come to resolution, sometimes it is recognizing one's best alternative given the circumstances, sometimes it is acknowledging emotional needs, sometimes it could be argument-having that is supported by synchronicity between conflict style preferences – sometimes all of these factors, which are not exhaustive, are in play. Furthermore, disagreements may remain as such - largely due to incompatible conflict styles. When this occurs, the efficacy of logic, or reasoned arguments, is a non-starter anyway. Conflict styles that may fall outside the parameters of yielding appropriate argument-having maneuvers are explored below and discussion for the argumentation community to consider when faced with disagreements that succeed or suffer from conflict style issues, rather than arguing style, are put forward.
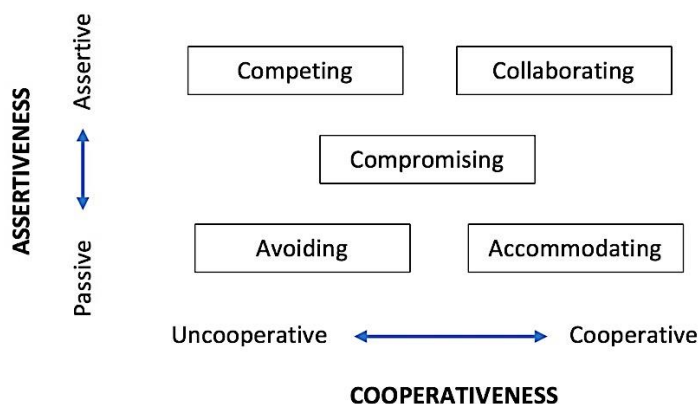
2. Conflict and conflict styles

In the field of communication Putnam and Poole (1987) define conflict as "the interaction of interdependent people who perceive the opposition of goals, aims, and (/or) values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals (aims, or values)" (p. 552). Conflict, from the Harvard Negotiation Project, is defined similarly as a disagreement between individuals' interests, where interests can be made up of wants, desires, needs, expectations, hopes, concerns, and so on (Fisher & Ury, 1991). Important to extrapolate from these definitions is that conflict involves more than one agent, and it is the agents themselves who perceive the conflict. Presumably when individuals are in conflict with each other a common method to resolve such conflict is to enter into dialogue, and it follows from this that the dialogue contains disagreements that need to be mutually resolved. In the domain of Argumentation Theory there are too many models and theories to mention here that can be applied to solving disagreements – for examples, consider the pragma-dialectical model (van Eemeren & Grootendorst, 1984, 1992; van Eemeren et al., 1993), informal logic (Govier, 1990; Johnson & Blair, 2006), or rhetoric (Tindale, 1999). While some theories are more adequate than others, the point of interest in this paper is to focus on the conflict between interlocutors, and not just the arguments made themselves. In shifting the concentration to conflict and conflict resolution, argumentation is - as a matter of course – addressed too.

   Conflict styles refer to typical responses individuals have in the midst of conflict. Stemming from the work of Blake and Mouton (1964) researchers have since presented a 5-type model for describing conflict styles, though with different terminology (Nicotera & Dorsey, 2006). These related models suggest that conflict styles are guided by i) a concern for self and ii) a concern for others (Mouton & Blake, 1964; Rahim, 1983; Thomas, 1976). As one might guess, to have concern for self entails solving conflicts by advancing one's own priorities, and to have concern for others entails solving conflicts in a manner that ensures the other(s) has a desirable outcome in the conflict. Assertiveness and Cooperativeness are two dimensions of behaviour output that are

used to define the following five styles: accommodating, avoiding, collaborating, competing, and compromising. See below for a visual of the conflict styles along the two axes of assertiveness and cooperativeness. There are several iterations of this theory to be found in various assessment instruments. Thomas and Killman (1974) describe the styles using animals to symbolize the trait behaviours in conflict: the accommodating teddy bear; the avoidant turtle; the collaborative owl; the competitive shark; the compromising fox. In the field of conflict resolution Oudeh and Oudeh (2006) use birds to symbolize the same conflict styles: the accommodating peacock; the avoidant ostriche; the collaborative owl; the competitive woodpecker; the compromising hummingbird. These are examples; there are other models of conflict styles.

Figure 1
Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas 1976)

3. Conflict styles and argumentation

An accommodating conflict style tends to lighten the mood. Maintaining relationships with others is key for an accommodator, so there may be neglect of self-interests in order to give other interlocutors what they want, and as a result preserve or strengthen the relationship between all involved in the conflict (Oudeh & Oudeh, 2006, p. 70). In the context of argument, this conflict style – low on the assertive scale - is advantageous if one does not care about the outcome much, or one knows that another interlocutor has put forward a stronger resolution.

Low in both assertiveness and cooperativeness an avoidant conflict style tends to withdraw from conflict. Avoidance tactics can even occur in the form of denying conflict or delaying it. In the context of argument, an avoiding conflict style is advantageous when de-escalation of conflict is needed – for instance when a conflict is emotionally-charged (Oudeh & Oudeh, 2006, p. 105).

A collaborative conflict style is communicative. Those who employ this style tend to be interested in listening to others, addressing conflicts, and solving them. They do not shy away from conflict – but rather they take the time to review all angles and reach agreeable solutions. Collaboratives are high in both assertiveness and cooperativeness. In the context of argument a collaborator is beneficial when long-standing resolutions are important. They are concerned with accuracy with respect to the issue but also the agreeability of all involved in the conflict (Oudeh & Oudeh, 2006, p. 94).

Competitors are very concerned with getting what they want in the context of conflict (Oudeh & Oudeh, 2006, p. 50). To this end, they may even be threatening or intimidating to other interlocutors. It is difficult for competitors to be open-minded to views outside their own. In an argument context, competitors can be relied on to advocate and implement (their) resolutions adeptly.

A compromising conflict style has the goal of resolution at top of mind. Compromisers have no real trouble with being flexible with what they want, and they actively seek compromises from all involved so that a resolution can be sought (Oudeh & Oudeh, 2006, p. 123). In the context of an argument this style is helpful when there is no clear preferable resolution, or when there are multiple solutions.

All conflict styles have advantages and disadvantages in situations of conflict. With closer scrutiny it is the collaborative style that is most emblematic of the critical-logical model. These interlocutors are conscious of being fair to everyone involved while searching for the strongest resolution given the circumstances. The resolution is not typically influenced by what s/he needs (important to a competitor), what other interlocutors need (important to an accommodator), hiding from uncomfortable contexts (important to an avoider), or trying to get to resolution as efficiently as possible (important to a compromiser). Rather, outcomes for collaborators are guided by just outcomes.

Given that conflict styles are not static, it is possible that in the context of an argument, depending on the interaction of conflict styles, that an interlocutor might make use of more than one conflict style (Oudeh & Oudeh, 2006), and resolutions are possible with the intermingling of any of the five styles described. Much like multi-modal argumentation the theory of conflict styles allows for versatility in the social communication of argument-having.

4. Conflict Resolution Setting

To elaborate on the five conflict styles, and take the discussion to the context of argument-having a situation of conflict is discussed with the aid of conflict styles. A very abbreviated summary of a community mediation, facilitated by two mediators, follows. Over the span of two months the mediators met with parties separately, as needed for case development, and then conducted two mediation meetings. Mediations are a free service provided by the city. Few parties are turned away after case development, and it is usually because there is a potential safety risk involved. Those who enter into mediation do so completely voluntarily.

Two married couples, both at the stage of retirement in their lives, have lived next door to each other for approximately 30 years. Their, now adult, children used to play with each other. They had a cordial relationship throughout the years. Approximately 15 years ago the complainants, Bessie and Bart, had an underground pool installed. They spend most summer weekends in their yard, entertaining friends and family and/or enjoying their pool. In the last five years, the complainants have had issues with leaves and debris from the respondents' tree interrupt the enjoyment of their backyard. Levi and Loren, with the consultation of a specialist, planted a species of the locust tree around 29 years ago, shortly after moving into their home. They have watched their honey locust tree grow – it provides shade, but mostly they view this tree as a beauty of nature. The parties had spoken to each other about the shedding tree, infrequently over the last three summer seasons, but no long-term resolution was discussed.

4.1 Case Development

Prior to a mediation the mediators met with each party to learn about the issue and each party's needs. The complainant, Bessie in particular, had many demands. Before case-development in a phone conversation, she shared that she did not want to waste time in a case development unless she was assured her neighbours were also engaging in case development. She wanted to spare her husband any further interruptions to his schedule, so she stated that he would not waste his time in case development, but that he would be present at the mediation. Ultimately, he attended case development sessions, as he was not permitted to the mediation otherwise. She wanted to speed up the process by having the meetings, and mediation, at her home rather than waiting for community centre space that is booked for community mediations. This was not possible either as it breached "neutrality" - a stance the mediators practiced. Throughout case development, Bessie made it clear that the only resolution she would accept is the removal of the tree – paid by Levi and Loren. Bart agreed that this was the ideal outcome, but he was open to discussing the situation and striking some sort of deal. There were many more details and conversations, but only those that are relevant to the discussion will be elaborated as needed.

Levi was looking forward to putting the issue regarding the tree to rest. It had been three years that the complainants had approached him, sporadically, about the tree. The complainants even went so far as to prune it, without telling Levi and Loren, when the respondents were out of the country on a family vacation. The complainants pruned the tree on their side of the property line, which Levi knew was legal, but they had the arborist trespass onto Levi and Loren's property - which upset the respondents. The mediators learned in case development that Levi and Loren would not speak with Bessie if they saw her outside, as she was rude and threatening to them. Levi and Loren reported that they could not have a productive, positive, discussion with Bessie. Levi and Bart had recently spoken, cordially – as usual, about the tree. While Levi wanted to engage with the complainants, and put the matter to rest, Loren was hesitant. She was very attached to the tree, enjoying her morning coffee by it daily, and while they were at the point that they could accept getting rid of the honey locust in their yard, Loren was much more reluctant than Levi.

Bessie likely would not be able to enter into a mediation without Bart. She had an "all or nothing" perspective. She stated that if Levi and Loren did not agree to pay in full for the removal of their tree (approximately $2500) then Bessie would consider litigation. She was very angry, very frustrated, and on top of her peace being compromised because of the tree shedding into her backyard over the last several years, she believed the leaks in her basement, due to clogged gutters were also attributed to her neighbours' tree. Bart was frustrated, but he was much calmer. He accepted some fault in neglecting their home's gutters, but since the gutters were clogged with leaves, seeds, and pods from the honey locust, he believed his neighbours had some culpability and should help pay for the home renovations Bart and Bessie had to endure.

Levi and Loren had no intention of paying to remove a tree that they enjoyed immensely, but they had no serious issues with the complainants taking care of the cost to remove the tree once and for all. Ultimately, after the last few years, they came to the decision that it was more important for the respondents to keep some semblance of peace with their neighbours. Levi and Loren made it clear that if Bessie as much as blinked wrongly or raised her voice during mediation, then they would walk out. They emphasized that Bessie was highly emotional, which caused her to be rude to Levi and Loren, and often intimidating to Loren.

4.2 Mediation

After the first mediation, three hours in length, the parties did not achieve a resolution. Typically with these types of community mediations, the three-hour time block is sufficient. The mediators were willing to come back to the table. The following homework needed to be completed to resume: i) compile some quotes for the cost of tree removal; ii) research replacement trees that could be planted to replace a locust tree; and, iii) compile some quotes for the planting of a (mature) tree to replace the locust.

A month later all parties met again. The mediators first caucused with both couples separately to learn what they had researched and where they stood with respect to the mediation. Not much had changed, except that there were now very specific dollar amounts and arborist-informed information the parties were working with. Ultimately, though, no memorandum of understanding was reached. The respondents were prepared to pay for a new tree if the complainants paid to remove the tree that they found to be a "nuisance." The costs ended up being quite similar, so that it would cost each party between $2000 and $3000. The respondents did not feel responsible for removing the tree, as it was healthy, a beautiful part of nature, and planted long before the complainants' pool was installed. The complainants were unprepared to accrue the full cost associated with the tree removal. They were prepared to pay for half of the tree removal cost, in order to end the conflict, but Bessie was also dismayed that in a mediation to discuss the honey locust, now the respondents were adding the issue (i.e., cost) of replacing the locust tree with another, different, tree. This is quite normal during mediation, as the mediators help make explicit the interests of all parties involved. Bessie, in particular, made it clear that if Levi and Loren were not open to removing the locust tree – at their own expense, then Bessie and Bart would consider seeking a legal route, and it would be for all damages they attributed to the respondents' tree shedding into their yard (e.g., replacing clogged pool heater motors, damages related to the basement leak, constant yard cleaning, impact on their peace and enjoyment of property). Levi and Loren had already considered this, but their research showed that it is a homeowner's responsibility to clean eavestroughs, gutters, and pool equipment on one's property – they were not intimidated with legal action. They were disheartened that their neighbours would consider litigation though.

There was no resolution; no memorandum of understanding was drafted. As all were preparing to leave, Bart stated that he would let Levi and Loren know whether he and Bessie would assume costs to prune the parts of the tree that descend into their yard with a licensed professional (which is in accordance with the city by-law) or pay the cost of tree removal while the respondents assume the cost of planting their new tree. This seemed to be his way of making clear that he was not actually considering litigation. Levi and Loren were happy to hear this, and they added that either way they wanted everyone to agree that whatever decisions were made they would be neighbourly/friendly moving forward. They all agreed. Note that the respondents were thus agreeable to the complainants deciding on either of the outcomes specified by Bart. Then as everyone was involved with handshakes and goodbyes, Loren hugged Bessie. This was a shock to everyone in the room. There was a moment of silence as the mediators and husbands watched the hug unfold. At this time Loren repeated that even though they did not reach agreement at the meeting, they wanted to fix this situation for Bessie and Bart. They are in agreement with Bessie and Bart about the tree needing to be removed. This moment was a pivotal moment, and likely the most important moment for this conflict. After ten hours of meetings, through phone conversations, case development, and mediation, this moment caused a very obvious shift in Bessie. She teared up; she apologized for having issues with the locust tree; she empathised with the tree being a natural beauty. She understood that it was hard for Loren and Levi to part with the

tree. It was the only interaction where she was not angry or accusatory or focusing on self-needs, and it occurred in the last minute as the parties were nearly out the door. Bart and Levi agreed to share a drink in the near future. Bart escorted a teary Bessie out the door, and Levi and Loren stayed back and expressed their relief and happiness at how they just ended the situation with their neighbours. Whatever was going to happen, they experienced a shift in the conflict – and it meant more than Bart's parting words.

This was not a typical mediation – no memorandum was drafted. From the mediators' perspective though, there was an informal resolution as everyone said their goodbyes. Nothing was written on paper, but the parties left the mediation with a plan; they left less insecure, upset, or intimidated than when the process began. They had the tools to continue the dialogue in their backyards.

5. Conflict management styles

The complainants had very different conflict management styles. Bart was a compromiser. He was annoyed with the amount of physical yard work he had to assume daily, and especially at his age, but he empathized with his neighbours' attachment to their tree. He was upset that he had to pay for water damage in his basement, but he also recalled their friendlier relations with the neighbours over the years, which he wanted to reignite. He needed to fix the problem of the tree, but he was interested in keeping his neighbours satisfied too. When it came down to it, Bart was willing to take the best offer, and he came to the conclusion that the reasonable solution – when all possibilities and costs were weighed, was for he and Bessie to take responsibility for removing the tree. Bessie could not come to this decision. She presented as a competitor. From the outset she wanted to "win" - using the mediation to either criticize arguments made by Levi and Loren or by making arguments for the removal of the tree. There was no listening and no empathizing present during mediation. It would have been impossible to have a mediation with solely Bessie as the complainant because while she implemented some skills of the critical-logical model (presenting arguments, evaluating arguments), she lacked communicative skills and respect. Towards the end of the second mediation she asserted that the neighbours should pay, at minimum, for half the cost of the tree removal. This position demonstrated some movement on Bessie's part – she began the mediation with the goal of having the respondents pay entirely for the removal of the tree. During caucus she was convinced by a combination of Bart's logical explanation for shouldering some of the costs for the tree removal and the mediators' reality checking mechanisms. She could not agree to paying for the entire cost as it meant that she would be perceived as weak, as a "loser." She initiated the mediation, and if she and Bart assumed the entire cost, then she would be perceived as not making any self-imposed "gains" in mediation. She was very assertive throughout the process, even when the respondents were not present – and ultimately less cooperative than Bart was prepared to be.

The respondents both presented collaborative conflict styles. They listened, empathized with the struggles of the complainants due to the tree, came to mediation prepared by having researched how to maintain trees in the city they resided, who was culpable for paying for house floods due to clogged gutters, etc. However, they also stood firm on being able to present their position, and they wanted the same kind of listening and empathizing to be demonstrated by the complainants. Halfway through the mediation they started only addressing Bart, and they made it clear they were doing so because there was no point in trying to have a discussion to resolve an

issue with Bessie. They likely had the fairest solution, but the rift in conflict styles and communication made it impossible to reach resolution/agreement.

Oudeh and Oudeh (2006) offer practical tips for responding to any of the five conflict styles. Bessie had a competitive style. She was aggressive in communicating throughout the mediation process, even when she addressed solely the mediators. Oudeh and Oudeh (2006) state some tips when dialoguing over a disagreement with a competitive person. Ask "why" questions of the competitor to further clarify viewpoints - rather than being defensive when a competitor repeats her views; use self-assertive language - be clear about your concerns; allow the competitor to save face - do not get drawn in to showing the flaws of a competitor's arguments (pp. 59-60). While Levi and Loren were reminded by the mediators to be cognizant of and practice the latter tip, they exemplified these behaviours for the most part. They were ideal candidates for a mediation setting, where disagreement in the midst of conflict is present, because they were openminded and flexible enough to try different responses to the complainants (negotiation, listening, empathy, storytelling, apologies, firmness, fairness, human contact, and so on as warranted throughout the process). They demonstrated self-awareness and an understanding of others.

Bessie was challenged when it came to communicating in a manner outside of a competitive conflict style. Some tips Oudeh and Oudeh (2006) offer to individuals who orient with this style primarily follow. Consider the other person(s) - consider how your relationship will be impacted with this individual moving forward; listen – sincerely aim to understand other perspectives on surrounding the conflict; be able to identify issues – all parties bring issues into a conflict, know the others' views (pp. 57-58). It is very possible that agreement could have been reached if Bessie was able to truly consider the position her neighbours were in. One of the stages of mediation requires parties to describe the interests of the other party – Bessie could not acknowledge any of the interests of the respondents (e.g., to have neighbourly peace; concern for the environment; be treated with respect, etc.). The respondents had no legal obligation to do anything with the tree. In fact, the by-law stipulated that if a tree encroaches onto your property, no matter who owns the tree it is your responsibility to prune it such that you do not harm the vitality of the tree. Levi and Loren could have refused to take the time to enter into mediation and would have no recourse for their refusal. Bart acknowledged this, but Bessie did not. A combination of having a very narrow focus on her interests and an unwillingness, or inability, to acknowledge other perspectives caused a situation akin to stalemate. She seemed to truly believe her interests trumped others' interests. Because Bart was a compromiser, he helped the mediators keep the mediation afloat by continually validating his partner's view and the respondents' views. He never held firmly to any possible resolution – he could understand and see merit in multiple outcomes.

In argumentation theory we spend our time describing and evaluating arguments with some sense of an argument's structure in mind, or with a normative methodology for acceptable and unacceptable arguments and argument processes. In a situation like the one above – the mediators availed themselves of different strategies: reframing views, diffusing accusatory statements, empathizing with parties, prompting parties with questions to build strong views, or prompting parties to explain rationale for views. Five out of the six individuals in mediation tended to communicate in a manner consistent with the critical-logical model. The mediators were each a collaborator and compromiser, yet no formal resolution occurred during mediation. It is arguable that what occurred after the mediation, where Loren continued to implement different strategies, was the most helpful step towards all of them finding peace. She made a *connection* with Bessie.

Argumentation analysis tends to exclude aspects of culture, class, race, gender, age, sex, religion, personality, communication style, interlocutor intuition, and so on. These facets of interlocutors in argument usually get suspended, as models of argument focus on conclusions and premises, and/or on a stage of argumentation, and/or on the type of dialogue, etc. These tenets of argumentation theory tend to emphasize the structure of argument-making or argument-having. However, when the "practice" of argument is being considered, including the less structured components of argument into the fold of resolving arguments allows for a more inclusive outlook. Implicit in an argumentation approach that could recognize that advice about argument-giving in the context above would not be helpful – something else is needed for interlocutors and third party practitioners - would set the context for acceptance of a multi-modal approach (Gilbert, 1997) to arguments with a multi-tool approach to arguing and resolution. For instance, at the end Loren had not changed her argument, but she relayed it in a multi-modal approach when she hugged Bessie: viscerally, logically, and emotionally. It seems possible that well "reasoned" arguments, strong standpoints, can be peripheral to solving disagreements. Sure, we can evaluate an argument made in the mediation described above (and there were strong ones), but it strikes me that there is no good reason to prioritize reason (which was obviously present) over empathy, or intuition, or connection, or symbiosis.

6. High-conflict personalities and intercultural competence

The discussion above of personal conflict styles is one of many theories that is relevant to argument-having. Eddy (2006) outlines high-conflict personalities, which are personalities that are typically adversarial in conflict. This model is embedded in psychological theory. The five conflict-prone personalities fall under the categories of anti-social, narcissistic, borderline, paranoid, and histrionic types. Eddy recommends avoiding conflicts with these types of high-conflict interlocutors, and if that is not possible, he suggests certain mechanisms for managing the conflict. There are two issues that I want to point out that are important for considerations in argumentation. 1) Individuals with psychological diagnoses are not all prone to high-conflict. And, 2) for these types of high-conflict interlocutors, facts may fall by the wayside in contexts charged with high conflict and disagreement (Eddy, 2006). These personalities are introduced to distinguish between feasible and potentially unfeasible styles of "conflict." All conflict styles mentioned above are realistic, and more importantly they are entirely capable of reaching a resolution in disagreement. High-conflict personalities, however, are extreme, and reaching resolution is challenging if not impossible.

In addition to personal conflict styles and high-conflict personalities, intercultural competence involves another range of communication styles to be cognizant of. To be interculturally competent in the midst of conflict, given globalization, involves having adaptable behaviour. There are numerous synonyms and frameworks for articulating intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006). This field fleshes out effective and appropriate behaviour and communication in intercultural situations. Transposed to argumentation, it is possible that intercultural competence can add depth to descriptive and pragmatic accounts of disagreement.

The scope of this paper addresses personal conflict styles as described above – introducing these two models is simply to demonstrate that there are tools that will not aid in the resolution of disagreements (such as high-conflict personalities), and there may be more models of conflict that can be helpful (such as intercultural competence).

7. Conclusion

Conflict styles offer a system of communication strategies used during argumentation that can help interlocutors themselves, as well as third parties, observe and/or understand why and how conflict can or cannot be solved. As a mediator one's conflict style(s) aids in both my argument-making and how I facilitate argument-having. Even if viewpoints are argued, knowledge of conflict styles affords us the ability to resolve disagreements from a lens that transcends the structures of an argument-made or had. This perspective does not focus on a stage of argument, on diagramming an argument, on locating potential fallacies – all of which are cognitive exercises. What if these exercises that belong to the critical-logical sphere are only a few slices of the argumentation pie? There are several other slices. And the conflict styles slice is an example of the parts of argument that are much less tangible. Even though the mediation shared above had several reasonable arguments exchanged, there is also an intangible element – what occurred between the individuals at the end of the meditation was emotional and kisceral for all parties and mediators in that room. I stated this at the outset, but I think it warrants repeating – there is nothing wrong with logic, with a dialectical method, with rhetoric – they all contribute to argumentation theory. What this paper focuses on are the parts in argument that we do not necessarily see, that are less objective, but equally important. In the mediation above they were more important than the reasonable arguments presented and the stages of mediation the mediators facilitated. Even the most logical arguer, who has strong positions, can miss the mark with resolving disagreements with others if they do not recognize the symbiosis that undergirds interlocutors who engage in discussing their competing viewpoints.

The perspective of this paper implies a conceptual shift in argumentation. It allows for a broader outlook on the nature of argument. It is more interlocutor-driven, without falling neatly under the category of rhetoric. A rhetorical approach, "concentrates on communication processes inherent in argumentation, on the means by which arguers makes their cases for the adherence of audiences to the claims advanced" (Tindale, 1999, p. 4). While we can concentrate on how conflict styles affect audiences, more primal than their effect is that they are used to help deliver viewpoints. They are a part of argument-making and not just an effect of argument-having.

An awareness of one's own conflict styles, as well as others' styles, can help solve disagreements. When interlocutors are versed in conflict styles and fluidly utilize their own styles and respond to others' styles (i.e., genuinely, not as an argument tactic) this can yield the symbiotic moments that can potentially grist the path to resolution. This is not to be dismissive of tools argumentation theory has already accepted and, in some cases, revered but to show how other tools can be utilized in argumentation, most especially when rationality already prevails.

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