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Peter Cardon  
*University of South Carolina*

Ephraim Okoro  
*Howard University*

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# A Meta-Analysis of the Cultural Propositions about Conflict Management Styles in Face-Negotiation Theory

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**Peter Cardon**

University of South Carolina, USA

**Ephraim Okoro**

Howard University, USA

## **Abstract**

Among the most influential intercultural communication theories is Ting-Toomey's face-negotiation theory. The theory has undergone a number of refinements over the past two decades and has emerged as one of the most cited theories in intercultural business communication research. The theory posits that face or "identity respect and other-identity consideration" is maintained and negotiated in communications and interactions of members of all cultures; however, it is perceived and enacted differently across cultures as a function of the cultural dimensions of individualism-collectivism, power distance, and low-context/high-context orientation. Our study is a meta-analysis of all research during the past two decades about the cultural propositions related to conflict management styles in this theory. Specifically, these propositions state that individualist cultures tend to use more dominating conflict management styles whereas collectivist cultures tend to use more integrating, compromising, avoiding, and obliging conflict management styles. We integrate findings across studies to answer the degree to which these theoretical propositions are answered by empirical research. We then describe avenues for future intercultural business communication research.

## **Introduction**

In their recent book about intercultural communication theory, Gudykunst, Lee, Nishida, and Ogawa (2005) summarize existing theories about intercultural communication. They identify just two theories about communication that are based on cultural variability: Ting-Toomey's face-negotiation theory (2005) and conversational constraints theory (Kim, 1993, 1995). One recent review of intercultural business communication literature examined 224 articles during the period 1990 through 2006 from seven major business and technical journals. With the exception of Hall's high/low context model, face-negotiation theory was the most frequently cited

intercultural communication model (Cardon, 2008). Thus, face-negotiation theory is among the most important theories for intercultural communication. However, despite its importance in terms of citations, no studies have examined this theory in more than three or four cultures. This study examines the degree to which the cultural propositions of this theory have been empirically supported and employs meta-analysis in order to assess the theory across many cultures.

### Literature Review

Among the most influential intercultural communication theories is Ting-Toomey's face-negotiation theory. The theory has undergone a number of refinements over the past two decades and has emerged as one of the most cited theories in intercultural communication research. The theory posits that face or "identity respect and other-identity consideration" is maintained and negotiated in communications and interactions of members of all cultures; however, it is perceived and enacted differently across cultures as a function of the cultural dimensions of individualism and power distance.

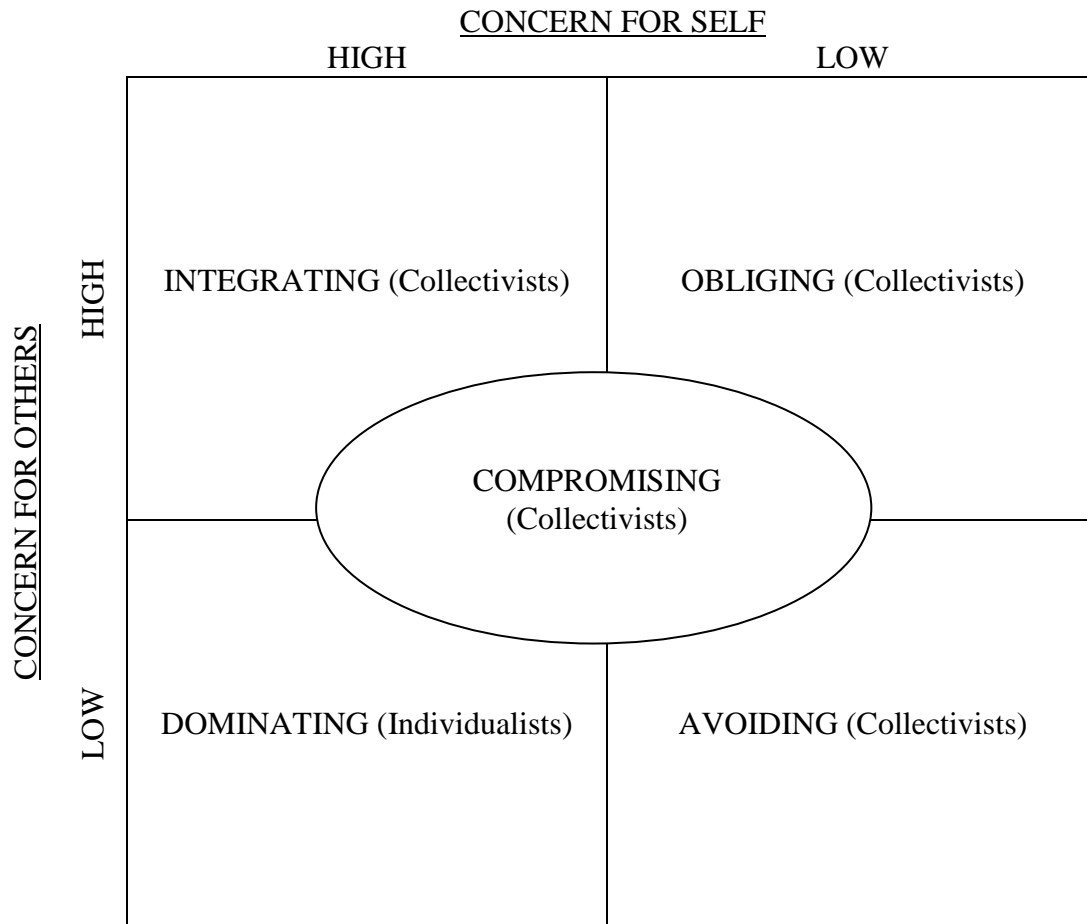
Ting-Toomey and her colleagues have examined their theory in several cultures during the past two decades by employing Rahim's (1979) model of conflict, which was based on the five-style conflict paradigm of Blake and Mouton (1964). In Figure 1, a modified version of Rahim's (1979) conflict management model is presented with cultural-level preferences for conflict management strategies as posited in face-negotiation theory. Generally, the *integrating* CMS indicates efforts to fully meet the needs of both parties, *obliging* indicates efforts to meet the needs of the other party, *dominating* indicates efforts to meet the needs of self, *avoiding* indicates efforts to evade resolving the issue, and *compromising* indicates a desire to meet some of the needs of both parties. The central cultural-level propositions in face-negotiation theory state that individualist cultures tend to use more dominating conflict management styles whereas collectivist cultures tend to use more integrating, compromising, avoiding, and obliging conflict management styles.

While Ting-Toomey describes face as the mechanism that leads to different conflict approaches, she developed the theory without any measure of face. She assumed that people in individualist cultures based their conflict approaches on self-face, and people in collectivist cultures based their conflict approaches on other-face or mutual-face. Yet, in the development of her theory, she provides no evidence that different views of face on a cultural level lead to different approaches to conflict. She takes it as a given that individualists, who focus more on self-face, prefer more confrontational, self-centered conflict approaches such as dominating. On the other hand, collectivists prefer less confrontational approaches (e.g., integrating and compromising) to save other-face or mutual-face.

Ting-Toomey and colleagues have used Rahim's Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROC-II) instrument to measure the conflict management strategies (CMS) of integrating, compromising, dominating, obliging, and avoiding styles. The ROC-II instrument is a 28-item self-report instrument that assesses these five styles of handling conflict. It was developed as a 5-point Likert scale instrument in which higher scores represent higher use of a particular style (Rahim, 2001). One sample of the instrument is provided in the appendix. Rahim (2002), who developed the five conflict strategies that are the core of face-negotiation theory, later described the *problem solving* and *bargaining* strategies. Problem solving is calculated by subtracting the avoiding style score from the integrating styles score. Bargaining is calculated by subtracting the

obliging style from the dominating style. The problem solving approach to conflict focuses on meeting the needs of self and others. The bargaining approach to conflict either focuses more heavily on the needs of self or more heavily on the needs of others.

Figure 1. Rahim's Conflict Management Strategies and Face-Negotiation Theory.

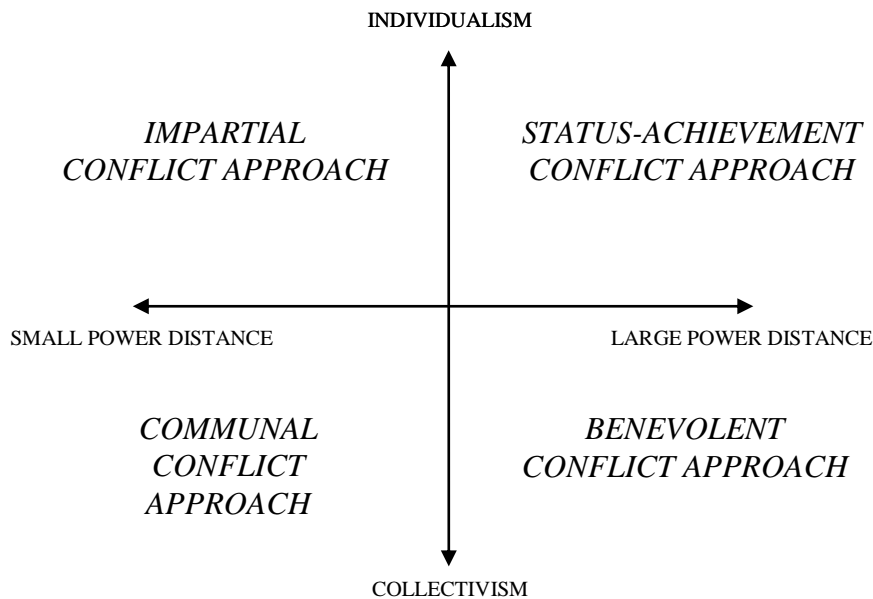


Numerous studies have been conducted based on face-negotiation theory with mixed results (Brew & Cairns, 2004; Cai & Donohue, 1997; Cai & Fink, 2002; Oetzel et al., 2001; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Ting-Toomey, Oetzel, & Yee-Jung, 2001). Generally speaking, these studies have failed to identify differences between CMS preferences between individualist and collectivist countries, particularly for integrating and compromising (Boonsathorn, 2007). The failure to identify differences between integrating and compromising is particularly noteworthy since these are the most prioritized strategies in samples from individualist and collectivist cultures.

In more recent work, Ting-Toomey (2009) explains that the strong influence of individualism and power distance results in a matrix of communication approaches to conflict as depicted in Figure 2. Members of individualist, small power distance societies adopt an *impartial conflict approach*, in which personal freedom and equality are the primary values. Managers tend to be direct, specific, and upfront with employees in conflict situations. Employees are expected to speak frankly about their positions in the conflict episode. Resolution occurs through an

objective, fact-based approach. Members of individualist, high power distance societies adopt a *status-achievement conflict approach*, in which personal freedom and earned inequality are the primary values. In this conflict approach, managers and employees tend to directly and frankly discuss conflict issues with one another. However, managers and those of higher rank are the ultimate decision-makers by virtue of their accrued power and authority resources. Members of collectivist, small power distance societies adopt a *communal conflict approach*, in which the primary values are interdependence and equality. Managers and employees are viewed as equals and are direct and expressive with one another in conflict situations. Members of collectivist, high power distance societies adopt a *benevolent conflict approach*. In these societies, the primary considerations are one's role or status in hierarchical, interdependent, and extended social networks. Managers adopt a parental role in their relations with employees, and employees rarely challenge or directly voice concerns to managers.

Figure 2. Corporate Values' Cultural Grid: Four Conflict Approaches.



Source: Ting-Toomey, 2009, p. 232

The most serious limitation to empirical studies of face-negotiation theory is that none contain sufficient sample sizes (number of cultural groups) to make adequate claims about cultural variability. Hofstede (2001) explained that in order to identify etic (applicable to all cultures) dimensions of cultural variability, data from a minimum of 10 to 15 societies is necessary. Hofstede's contributions are numerous. One of the primary contributions that we point out here is his focus on statistical comparison across a large number of national samples, thus providing excellent methodological standards for developing cross-cultural theories. He pointed out that cross-cultural comparisons are difficult because each national sample is a single data point. Thus, identifying cultural dimensions is nearly impossible with small sample sizes ( $n=2$  or  $n=4$ ). Yet, he also recognized the practical (e.g., resources and coordination) problems of collecting data in many countries. He emphasized that ideal studies should include 40 to 50 countries (resulting in an  $n=40$  to  $n=50$ ). However, given the challenging issues of getting such large datasets and based on the characteristics of his dataset, he explained that cultural variability could be identified

satisfactorily with 10 to 15 countries. In the case of face-negotiation theory, no known studies exist that contain more than four cultural groups. A meta-analysis, however, could assist in examining results across studies in a sufficient number of cultural groups.

After extensive searches of scholarly databases, including EBSCO, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses, and Google Scholar, we found just one prior meta-analysis of CMSs across cultures. Holt and DeVore (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of self-report conflict studies that included an examination of differences between individualist and collectivist cultures. They concluded that individualist cultures use more dominating conflict styles and collectivist cultures use more avoiding compromising, and integrating styles. Only obliging did not show significant results. As a result, they specifically state support for Ting-Toomey's face-negotiation theory. However, we consider this meta-analysis to have several weaknesses. First, it included standardized mean differences for various CMS scales, including CMS, MODE, and ROCI-II. The use of results from different scales is problematic in interpreting results across studies (Lipsey, 2000). Second, for culture, they used just 14 to 17 comparisons for each CMS. Based on a review of their sources (they did not explicitly identify countries), we infer that these comparisons were primarily between just 5 or 6 countries, thus falling short of Hofstede's standard of using a minimum of 10 to 15 countries to make generalizations about cultural variability.

An additional potential pitfall in Ting-Toomey's face-negotiation theory, Holt and DeVore's meta-analysis, and nearly all commentary we are aware of about cross-cultural differences in conflict management is the exclusive reference to individualism-collectivism as a predictor of CMS variability. Based on our review of the literature regarding face-negotiation theory (with ROC-II as the instrument), we have not observed any analysis of the impact of other cultural dimensions on CMSs across cultures. The only study we are aware of which tangentially made observations of the impact of cultural dimensions other than individualism-collectivism on CMSs across cultures was the work of Kozan (1989). He stated the following about his study comparing Turkish, Jordanian, and American managers using the ROC-II instrument:

A critical requirement for effective comparative research has been to dimensionalize the discrete variable culture, so that we do not have to deal with each national culture as a unique setting. The present study showed, however, that neither the *a priori* dimensions of Punnett and Ronen (1984) nor the empirically-derived dimensions of Hofstede (1980) helped in this regard. Jordan seems to be much closer to Turkey than the U.S. in terms of almost all these dimensions of culture. Yet, the conflict management practices in Jordan appeared to be as far removed from Turkey as from the U.S. If we are not to treat culture as unique, we may need a more complex set of dimensions than presently available in the comparative management field. (p. 795)

One frequent mischaracterization of the literature regarding cross-cultural preferences in CMS is that individualists prefer dominating. For example, Elsayed-Ekhouly and Buda (1996) compared the preferences of executives in Arab Middle Eastern countries and executives from the United States. They showed that the American group scored significantly higher for the dominating CMS compared to the Arab group. They failed to explicitly point out, however, that the dominating CMS was the fourth choice of the American group, with the American group preferring integrating, compromising, and obliging ahead of dominating. Thus, stating that individualists (in this case Americans) prefer dominating is exaggerated and inaccurate. In their

meta-analysis of conflict management strategies, Holt and DeVore (2005) commented that their study identified Americans as preferring dominating first, but also obliging and compromising. This claim is false on several fronts. First, it ignored the strong first preference for integrating among Americans and Arabs alike. Second, it implied that dominating was the first choice for Americans when in fact it was the fourth choice, which can hardly be considered a preference.

Much of the cross-cultural literature about conflict has oversimplified CMS preferences without taking into account the role of context. Several cultural studies, however, have shown the importance of context. For example, Lee (2002) found that among Koreans, obliging was the preferred CMS for conflicts with superiors, compromising with peers, and dominating with subordinates. Also, members of various professions may employ different CMS's. For example, Kozan, Wasti, and Kuman (2006) found that in the Turkish automotive industry, buyers used integrating more than suppliers did, whereas suppliers used more obliging and avoiding.

We employ two sets of culture dimension scores in the methods and findings section to identify correlations between CMS scores and cultural dimension scores. The first set we use is Hofstede's (2001) well-known cultural dimensions scores. Hofstede's work is clearly the seminal empirical study of cultural dimensions that employed a standard instrument across national samples. Yet, one weakness may be that the cultural dimension scores are based on four-decade-old scores. We also include the more recent GLOBE study of 62 societies (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). The GLOBE study was designed to build upon Hofstede's study. It employs similar methodological techniques to examine cultural dimensions and provide more current cultural dimension scores. We use both data-sets because we view Hofstede's study as the familiar standard in the cross-cultural communication field and the model of methodological rigor whereas we view the GLOBE study as a potentially more current and elaborated conceptualization of cultural dimensions.

### Methods

We used Lipsey's (2000) recommendations for meta-analysis. We attempted to find all available cultural-level studies that employed the ROCI-II instrument on a 5-point Likert scale. We then coded the following statistics: mean, standard deviation, sample size, and referent. The referent relates to the other party involved in a conflict. We coded for superiors (S) and peers (P). We do not include any statistics for subordinates because only a few studies reported about CMS preferences with subordinates. Once the studies were coded, we calculated the following statistics for each study: *ES* (effect size); *SE* (standard error of effect size); and *w* (inverse variance weight of the effect size). We employed the following formulas (Lipsey, 2000, p. 41):



$$ES_m = \bar{X} = \frac{\sum x_i}{n}$$

$$SE_m = \frac{s}{\sqrt{n}}$$

$$\omega_m = \frac{1}{SE_m^2} = \frac{n}{s^2}$$

Then, we calculated cultural-level scores using the following formulas (Lipsey, 2000, p. 47):

$$\bar{ES} = \frac{\sum(\omega_i ES_i)}{\sum \omega_i}$$

$$SE_{\bar{ES}} = \sqrt{\frac{1}{\sum \omega_i}}$$

Next, we constructed confidence intervals by multiplying the mean standard error by the critical  $z$ -value (1.96 for .05) to obtain lower limits ( $\bar{ES}_{LL}$ ) and upper limits ( $\bar{ES}_{UL}$ ). Finally, we conducted homogeneity analysis (Lipsey, 2000, p. 115) by using the following formula for  $Q$ -scores:

$$Q = \sum \omega_i (ES_i - \bar{ES})^2$$

In the first portion of our analysis, we compared means and confidence intervals by designating each of the cultural groups as individualist and collectivist. We designated the following countries as individualist: Australia, France, Spain, and the United States of America. We designated the following societies as collectivist: Bangladesh, Bulgaria, China, Greece, Egypt (Arab), Hong Kong, Japan, Korea (South), Philippines, Thailand, and Taiwan. These designations are based on common understanding in the cross-cultural management field and are largely based on Hofstede's (2001) individualism scores.

In the second portion of the analysis, we correlated cultural-level CMS scores with cultural dimension scores. This is a common approach to searching for relationships between culture and behavior and avoids dichotomizing groups into either low or high on any given cultural dimension (Hofstede, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). We used three sets of cultural dimension scores. First, we used Hofstede's set of scores. The final two sets of cultural dimension scores are from the recent GLOBE study of managers in 62 societies. We chose to use the GLOBE study cultural dimension scores for several reasons. First, they are based on much newer data than those of Hofstede. Second, unlike in Hofstede's study of work-related values, the GLOBE team distinguished between practices and values, which are oftentimes negatively correlated. Practices identify the degree to which certain values are



implemented in society whereas values identify the degree to which certain values should be implemented in society (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004).

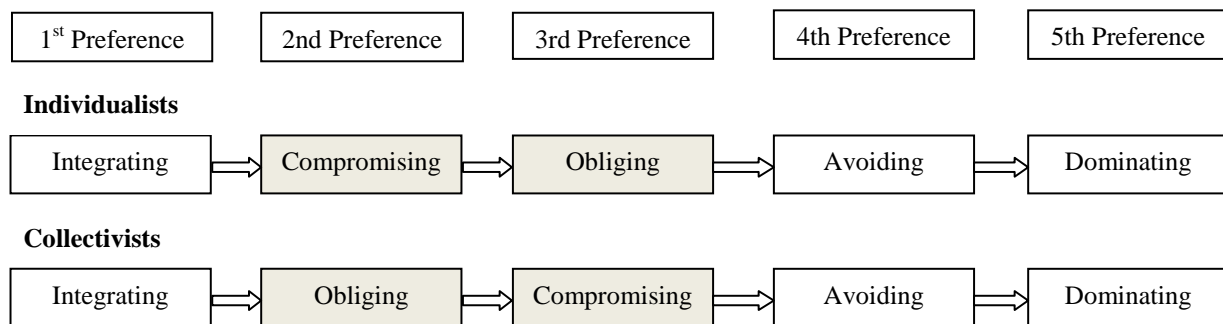
We note several limitations to this study. First, the countries represented in studies about conflict are still relatively few. We were able to collect mean scores from the ROCI-II instrument from a total of just 15 countries. Second, the countries represented in this study poorly represent the cultures of the world. With the exception of East Asia and North America, no other geographical/cultural area is well represented. Notably, the Western European, East European, Latin American, African, and South Asian areas are vastly underrepresented. Third, the studies extend over nearly two decades. It is possible that over time, some cultures have adjusted their CMS preferences. Thus, we also recommend that future work include samples from more diverse cultural regions and clusters. In particular, Latin American, Middle Eastern, and African cultures are vastly underrepresented in interpersonal conflict literature. Therefore, we consider it essential that future cross-cultural studies of conflict management preferences examine the impacts of previously unexplored configurations of cultural dimensions (exclusive reliance on individualism and power distance is inadequate); include a minimum of 10 to 15 cultural samples; and include previously underrepresented regions (i.e., Latin America, Africa).

### Findings

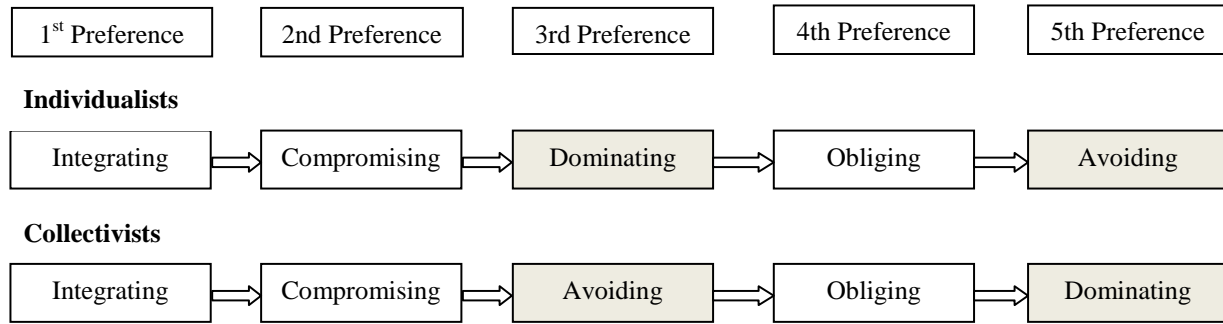
Based on confidence intervals around the mean scores for individualist and collectivist countries in this study, half of the face-negotiation cultural propositions are not supported. Counter to face-negotiation theory, integrating is more preferred among individualist countries for conflicts with supervisors and peers. Also, compromise is more preferred among individualist countries for conflicts with supervisors. There is no difference for compromise for conflicts with peers and obliging for conflicts with superiors. On the other hand, half of the propositions are supported based on the confidence intervals. Collectivists are more likely to prefer avoidance in conflicts with superiors and peers and obliging for conflicts with peers. Individualists are more likely to prefer dominating for conflicts with superiors and peers.

When profiling the reported prioritization of these strategies in resolving conflicts, the cultural propositions of face-negotiation theory make the individualist/collectivist distinction particularly problematic. Notice the preferences as depicted in Figures 1 and 2 (which emerge directly from data in Tables 1 through 10).

**Figure 1.** Conflict Management Preferences with Superiors in Individualist and Collectivist National Samples.



**Figure 2.** Conflict Management Preferences with Peers in Individualist and Collectivist National Samples.



These priorities tend to indicate several patterns. First, samples from collectivist and individualist nations both prefer integrating strategies for conflicts with supervisors and peers. Both groups rank compromising and obliging highly for conflicts with supervisors, and both groups rank compromising highly for conflicts with peers. While it is true that individualists had higher mean scores for dominating, it is the least preferred conflict management strategy for conflicts with supervisors, and it is less preferred than integrating and compromising for conflicts with peers.

However, all of these results should be treated with caution. As indicated in Tables 1 through 10, all *Q*-values for individualist and collectivist country samples were significant at  $p < .01$ . This indicates that the null hypothesis of homogeneity of samples is rejected. In other words, the dispersion of effect sizes around the mean is greater than would be expected for sampling error alone. Thus, it cannot be assumed that these scores represent the same population effect size (see Lipsey, 2000). One explanation for this non-homogeneity is that individualism does not predict CMS preferences.

Table 1. Preference for Integrating CMS with Supervisors.

	<i>Studies</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>Q</i>
<u>Society</u>							
Taiwan	1	224	4.40	.04	4.33	4.47	
Bangladesh	1	250	4.28	.03	4.22	4.34	
Spain	1	226	4.26	.03	4.19	4.33	
Greece	1	244	4.10	.03	4.04	4.16	
USA	3	667	4.01	.02	3.97	4.04	
China	2	243	3.85	.05	3.76	3.94	
Bulgaria	1	202	3.82	.05	3.73	3.91	
Korea	3	557	3.68	.02	3.65	3.72	
Japan	1	197	3.38	.05	3.28	3.48	
<u>Culture</u>							
Individualist	4	893	4.07	.02	4.04	4.10	42.53**
Collectivist	10	1917	3.90	.01	3.88	3.93	1629.34**

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Table 2. Preference for Integrating CMS with Peers.

	<u>Studies</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>LL</u>	<u>UL</u>	<u>Q</u>
<u>Society</u>							
Egypt/Arab	1	779	4.30	.02	4.27	4.33	
Philippines	1	17	4.22	.13	3.97	4.47	
USA	6	633	4.09	.02	4.04	4.13	
France	1	73	4.08	.05	3.98	4.18	
Thailand	2	482	4.02	.02	3.98	4.07	
Australia	1	153	4.02	.05	3.92	4.12	
Hong Kong	3	1270	3.98	.01	3.95	4.00	
China	3	1001	3.97	.02	3.93	4.00	
Taiwan	3	710	3.95	.02	3.90	3.99	
Japan	2	552	3.77	.02	3.72	3.82	
Korea	1	100	3.09	.02	3.05	3.13	
<u>Culture</u>							
Individualist	8	859	4.08	.02	4.04	4.11	31.41**
Collectivist	16	4911	3.92	.01	3.90	3.93	2731.52**

Table 3. Preference for Avoiding CMS with Supervisors.

	<u>Studies</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>LL</u>	<u>UL</u>	<u>Q</u>
<u>Society</u>							
Taiwan	1	224	4.09	.04	4.01	4.17	
Bangladesh	1	250	3.37	.04	3.28	3.46	
China	2	243	3.32	.04	3.24	3.40	
Bulgaria	1	202	3.31	.05	3.21	3.41	
Spain	1	226	3.30	.05	3.21	3.39	
Greece	1	244	3.20	.05	3.10	3.30	
Korea	3	557	3.20	.02	3.15	3.24	
Japan	1	197	2.99	.05	2.89	3.09	
USA	3	667	2.94	.02	2.89	2.99	
<u>Culture</u>							
Individualist	4	893	3.01	.02	2.97	3.06	47.20**
Collectivist	10	1917	3.33	.01	3.30	3.36	460.24**

Table 4. Preference for Avoiding CMS with Peers.

	<u>Studies</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>LL</u>	<u>UL</u>	<u>Q</u>
<u>Society</u>							
Taiwan	3	710	3.45	.02	3.41	3.49	
China	5	1201	3.35	.02	3.32	3.38	
Hong Kong	2	1106	3.32	.02	3.28	3.35	
Philippines	2	79	3.24	.08	3.08	3.40	
Japan	2	552	3.22	.03	3.17	3.28	
Egypt/Arab	1	779	3.21	.02	3.17	3.25	
Korea	1	100	3.05	.02	3.00	3.10	
India	1	160	2.96	.07	2.83	3.09	
USA	8	897	2.95	.02	2.91	3	
France	1	73	2.92	.09	2.74	3.10	
Thailand	2	482	2.77	.03	2.71	2.84	
Turkey	2	122	2.33	.07	2.20	2.46	
<u>Culture</u>							
Individualist	9	970	2.95	.02	2.91	3	116.32**

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Collectivist	21	5291	3.24	.01	3.22	3.25	1312.26**
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Table 5. Preference for Compromising CMS with Supervisors.

	<u>Studies</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>LL</u>	<u>UL</u>	<u>Q</u>
<u>Society</u>							
Taiwan	1	224	4.09	.05	4.00	4.18	
Spain	1	226	3.78	.04	3.71	3.85	
Bulgaria	1	202	3.54	.04	3.46	3.62	
USA	2	422	3.51	.02	3.46	3.56	
China	2	243	3.21	.04	3.12	3.29	
Korea	2	307	3.16	.03	3.11	3.21	
Japan	1	197	3.05	.05	2.95	3.15	
<u>Culture</u>							
Individualist	3	648	3.59	.02	3.55	3.63	35.86**
Collectivist	7	1173	3.35	.02	3.32	3.39	490.00**

Table 6. Preference for Compromising CMS with Peers.

	<u>Studies</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>LL</u>	<u>UL</u>	<u>Q</u>
<u>Society</u>							
Turkey	2	122	3.91	.05	3.81	4.01	
Korea	1	100	3.91	.04	3.84	3.98	
Philippines	1	17	3.87	.16	3.57	4.17	
Hong Kong	2	1,106	3.71	.01	3.68	3.74	
Taiwan	3	710	3.70	.02	3.66	3.74	
Thailand	2	482	3.69	.03	3.64	3.75	
Japan	2	552	3.63	.03	3.57	3.68	
USA	5	583	3.62	.02	3.57	3.66	
France	1	73	3.47	.07	3.33	3.61	
Egypt/Arab	1	779	3.46	.03	3.41	3.51	
China	3	1,001	3.21	.02	3.18	3.25	
<u>Culture</u>							
Individualist	6	656	3.60	.02	3.56	3.64	27.70**
Collectivist	17	4,869	3.60	.01	3.58	3.62	1080.43**

Table 7. Preference for Dominating CMS with Supervisors.

	<u>Studies</u>	<u>n</u>	<u>M</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>LL</u>	<u>UL</u>	<u>Q</u>
<u>Society</u>							
Spain	1	226	3.09	.05	3.00	3.18	
China	2	243	3.00	.05	2.90	3.09	
Greece	1	244	2.96	.04	2.88	3.04	
Bulgaria	1	202	2.93	.05	2.84	3.02	
USA	3	667	2.92	.02	2.88	2.97	
Korea	3	557	2.82	.02	2.78	2.86	
Bangladesh	1	250	2.80	.03	2.73	2.87	
Taiwan	1	224	2.75	.06	2.64	2.86	
Japan	1	197	2.05	.06	1.94	2.16	
<u>Culture</u>							
Individualist	4	893	2.95	.02	2.91	2.99	11.79**
Collectivist	10	1,917	2.81	.01	2.78	2.84	476.13**

Table 8. Preference for Dominating CMS with Peers.

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	<i>Studies</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>Q</i>
<u>Society</u>							
Philippines	2	79	3.71	.07	3.57	3.85	
India	1	160	3.39	.05	3.30	3.48	
USA	7	847	3.34	.02	3.30	3.38	
Turkey	2	122	3.22	.06	3.10	3.34	
China	5	1201	3.18	.02	3.15	3.22	
Taiwan	3	710	3.15	.02	3.11	3.20	
Hong Kong	3	1270	3.06	.02	3.03	3.10	
France	1	73	3.06	.08	2.91	3.21	
Korea	1	100	3.01	.03	2.95	3.07	
Thailand	2	482	2.72	.03	2.65	2.78	
Egypt/Arab	1	779	2.59	.02	2.54	2.64	
Japan	2	552	2.34	.03	2.27	2.40	
Australia	1	153	2.26	.06	2.14	2.38	
<u>Culture</u>							
Individualist	9	1,073	3.21	.02	3.17	3.25	554.09**
Collectivist	22	5,455	2.99	.01	2.97	3.01	1622.25**

Table 9. Preference for Obliging CMS with Supervisors.

	<i>Studies</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>Q</i>
<u>Society</u>							
Korea	3	557	3.73	.02	3.69	3.77	
Bangladesh	1	250	3.46	.04	3.38	3.54	
Spain	1	226	3.44	.05	3.35	3.53	
USA	3	667	3.43	.02	3.39	3.46	
Greece	1	244	3.35	.04	3.27	3.43	
Taiwan	1	224	3.17	.05	3.07	3.27	
Bulgaria	1	202	3.16	.05	3.06	3.26	
China	2	243	3.08	.04	3	3.16	
Japan	1	197	2.93	.05	2.84	3.02	
<u>Culture</u>							
Individualist	4	893	3.43	.02	3.39	3.46	228.94**
Collectivist	10	1,917	3.44	.01	3.41	3.46	732.63**

Table 10. Preference for Obliging CMS with Peers.

	<i>Studies</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>	<i>Q</i>
<u>Society</u>							
Hong Kong	2	1,106	3.48	.02	3.45	3.52	
Philippines	1	17	3.47	.16	3.16	3.78	
Korea	1	100	3.19	.02	3.15	3.23	
Taiwan	3	710	3.18	.02	3.13	3.22	
Japan	2	552	3.15	.03	3.09	3.20	
USA	5	583	3.07	.02	3.03	3.12	
China	3	1,001	3.07	.02	3.03	3.11	
France	1	73	3.05	.08	2.90	3.20	
Egypt/Arab	1	779	3.01	.02	2.97	3.05	
Thailand	2	482	2.92	.03	2.86	2.98	
<u>Culture</u>							
Individualist	6	656	3.07	.02	3.03	3.11	123.21**
Collectivist	15	4,747	3.19	.01	3.17	3.21	753.06**

In Tables 11 through 13, we present correlations between the cultural dimension scores of Hofstede and GLOBE with country mean effect size scores for CMS preferences. Among Hofstede's cultural dimensions, there are only three significant correlations: masculinity is negatively correlated with preference for dominating for conflicts with supervisors and for bargaining with peers. Also, power distance is positively related to dominating with peers. Individualism shows no correlation with any of the CMS preferences.

So, it is possible that this newly identified cultural dimension, institutional collectivism, is related to preference for integrating. Those societies that practice this dimension the most are those societies that are less likely to prefer integrating. Several other cultural dimensions were significantly correlated with integrating. Assertiveness values and future orientation practices were negatively correlated with integrating with superiors. Societies with higher performance orientation values, higher power distance values, and higher gender egalitarianism practices were more likely to prefer the integrating CMS for conflicts with peers.

The only correlations with the avoiding CMS with peers were a positive relationship with performance orientation practices and a negative relationship with power distance practices. This is not surprising given the fact that avoidance is widely perceived as decreasing performance in individualist and collectivist societies (Song, Xie, & Dyer, 2000).

Institutional collectivism practices and assertiveness values were negatively related to compromise with superiors, and institutional collectivism values were positively related to compromise with superiors. The strong emphasis on interdependence in terms of institutional collectivism practices may lead to heavier focus on integrating rather than compromising strategies, which fall short of fully meeting the needs of all parties. Lower power distance values and higher future orientation values were related to preference for higher compromising in conflicts with peers. Again, these results are not surprising. Hope for more equitable and long-lasting relationships may naturally lead some cultures to focus more on compromise.

Among the cultural dimensions of GLOBE, there are many significant relationships – far more than with Hofstede's dimensions. Institutional collectivism values are positively related to preference for the integrating CMS for conflicts with superiors, and institutional collectivism practices are negatively related to preference for the integrating CMS for conflicts with superiors and with peers. The GLOBE team found that individualism-collectivism could be broken into two dimensions. The first, in-group collectivism is similar to Hofstede's individualism-collectivism. The second, institutional collectivism, refers to “the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families” (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004, p. 30).

The dominating CMS with superiors was significantly and negatively related to future orientation practices. The dominating CMS with peers was significantly and positively related to in-group collectivism practices. It is possible that approaching superiors with a dominating approach yields unfavorable long-term results, thus those cultures that focus more on the future are more sensitive to this outcome. We are slightly perplexed by the relationship between dominating with peers and in-group collectivism. Obliging with superiors was significantly and

positively related to assertiveness practices. This relationship is opposite of what we expected and likewise deserves future research.

Table 11. *Correlations between Conflict Management Styles and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions*

	Power Distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty Avoidance
Integrating (S)	.10	-.08	-.56	-.14
Integrating (P)	.27	.30	.12	-.41
Avoiding (S)	.28	-.59*	-.45	-.09
Avoiding (P)	.18	-.28	.40	-.38
Compromising (S)	-.18	.00	-.56	.02
Compromising (P)	-.12	-.19	-.26	.30
Dominating (S)	.20	.00	-.75**	-.23
Dominating (P)	.52*	-.21	-.22	-.37
Obliging (S)	-.13	.04	-.63*	.10
Obliging (P)	.32	-.22	.25	-.40
Bargaining (S)	.34	-.04	-.25	-.33
Bargaining (P)	.25	-.10	-.62*	-.32
Problem Solving (S)	.02	.35	-.02	-.20
Problem Solving (P)	.50	.29	-.04	-.23

*Note.* \*Correlation is significant at .10 level. \*\*Correlation is significant at .05 level. \*\*\*Correlation is significant at .01 level. *S* refers to conflict preferences with superiors; *P* refers to conflict preferences with peers.



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Table 12

*Correlations between Conflict Management Styles and GLOBE Value Cultural Dimensions*

	Assertiveness	Institutional Collectivism	In-group Collectivism	Future Orientation	Gender Egalitarianism	Humane Orientation	Performance Orientation	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance
Integrating (S)	-.73*	.78**	.18	-.26	.10	-.47	.52	-.18	.35
Integrating (P)	-.03	.60	.20	-.15	-.06	-.34	.64**	.64*	.11
Avoiding (S)	-.54	.42	-.44	-.43	-.59	-.69*	-.21	.03	.61
Avoiding (P)	.47	-.41	-.49	-.55*	-.44	-.17	.10	.40	.15
Compromising (S)	-.76*	.81*	.20	-.19	.06	-.49	.36	-.17	.22
Compromising (P)	-.33	-.11	.34	.61**	.34	-.08	-.33	-.82***	-.25
Dominating (S)	-.48	.51	.20	-.11	.15	-.08	.65	-.23	.35
Dominating (P)	.05	.14	-.03	-.07	.02	-.19	.25	-.30	.09
Obliging (S)	-.56	-.06	.53	.66	.37	.44	.21	-.64	-.17
Obliging (P)	.37	-.35	-.18	-.05	.16	-.02	-.02	-.30	-.34
Bargaining (S)	-.05	.66	-.25	-.72*	-.17	-.50	.56	.31	.57
Bargaining (P)	-.37	.49	.13	-.31	-.02	.05	.47	-.05	.32
Problem Solving (S)	-.32	-.12	.62	.14	.41	.15	.68*	.40	-.40
Problem Solving (P)	-.02	.54	.61*	.33	.13	-.26	.71**	.20	.19

Note. \*Correlation is significant at .10 level. \*\*Correlation is significant at .05 level. \*\*\*Correlation is significant at .01 level. *S* refers to conflict preferences with superiors; *P* refers to conflict preferences with peers.

Table 13

*Correlations between Resolution Management Styles and GLOBE Practice Cultural Dimensions*

	Assertiveness	Institutional Collectivism	In-group Collectivism	Future Orientation	Gender Egalitarianism	Humane Orientation	Performance Orientation	Power Distance	Uncertainty Avoidance
Integrating (S)	.24	-.77**	.20	-.75*	.18	-.60	-.31	-.18	-.06
Integrating (P)	-.17	-.69**	-.11	-.14	.64**	.46	-.34	-.52*	.35
Avoiding (S)	-.45	-.16	.49	-.54	-.30	-.24	.01	-.20	.07
Avoiding (P)	-.33	.38	-.01	.19	-.09	.02	.60**	-.57*	.34
Compromising (S)	.05	-.80*	.07	-.61	.12	-.56	-.42	-.24	-.09
Compromising (P)	.24	-.04	.26	.09	-.25	-.07	-.20	.36	-.88***
Dominating (S)	.57	-.63	.39	-.74*	.02	-.54	-.17	.08	.02
Dominating (P)	.09	-.26	.51*	-.12	-.01	-.06	.03	.15	-.16
Obliging (S)	.79**	-.15	.15	-.21	-.39	-.58	.08	.61	-.62
Obliging (P)	.28	.03	.27	.37	.04	-.16	.52	-.23	-.24
Bargaining (S)	-.06	-.61	.32	-.67*	.39	-.11	-.28	-.46	.58
Bargaining (P)	.15	-.38	.30	-.57	.11	-.24	.14	.19	.32
Problem Solving (S)	.46	-.15	-.41	.25	.78**	.25	.69*	-.23	-.04
Problem Solving (P)	-.14	-.61*	.09	-.22	.72**	.63*	-.47	-.05	.00

Note. \*Correlation is significant at .10 level. \*\*Correlation is significant at .05 level. \*\*\*Correlation is significant at .01 level. *S* refers to conflict preferences with superiors; *P* refers to conflict preferences with peers.

In Table 14, we illustrate significant relationships grouped by relevance to Ting-Toomey's updated version of face-negotiation theory that includes the corporate values' cultural grid that groups four conflict approaches based on configurations of individualism and power distance. These conflict approaches are particularly relevant in the case of interactions between managers and subordinates, thus we focus on conflict management strategies in the context of conflicts with superiors.

Table 14. *Significant Correlations with Relevant Conflict Approaches to the Corporate Conflict Grid*

<u>Conflict Approach</u>	<u>Relevant CMS</u>	<u>Significant Correlations</u>
<i>Communal</i> (Expected: Low PD, Low IDV)	Integrating (S)	Institutional Collectivism Values ( $r = .78^{**}$ ) Institutional Collectivism Practices ( $r = -.77^{**}$ ) Future Orientation Practices ( $r = -.75^*$ ) Assertiveness Values ( $r = -.73^*$ )
	Problem Solving (S)	Gender Egalitarianism Practices ( $r = .78^{**}$ ) Performance Orientation Practices ( $r = .69^*$ ) Performance Orientation Values ( $r = .68^*$ )
<i>Benevolent</i> (Expected: High PD, Low IDV)	Obliging (S)	Assertiveness Practices ( $r = .79^{**}$ )
	Avoiding (S)	-
<i>Impartial</i> (Expected: Low PD, High IDV)	Compromising (S)	Institutional Collectivism Values ( $r = .81^*$ )
		Institutional Collectivism Practices ( $r = -.80^*$ )
		Assertiveness Values ( $r = -.76^*$ )
<i>Status-Achievement</i> (Expected: High PD, High IDV)	Bargaining (S)	Future Orientation Values ( $r = -.72^*$ )
		Future Orientation Practices ( $r = -.67^*$ )

Note. PD = Power Distance, IDV = Individualism.  $*p < .10$ ;  $**p < .05$ .

In the case of the *communal conflict approach*, Ting-Toomey (2009) identified interdependence and equality as dominant values. In this approach to conflict, managers and employees are viewed as equals and are direct and expressive with one another in conflict situations. The two conflict approaches most relevant are integrating and problem solving (integrating – avoiding). Neither in-group collectivism (the GLOBE equivalent of Hofstede's individualism dimension) nor power distance were significantly correlated with integrating and problem solving with superiors. However, institutional collectivism practices, future orientation practices, and assertiveness values were negatively correlated with integrating, and institutional collectivism values were positively correlated with integrating. For problem solving, gender egalitarianism practices and performance orientation practices and values were positively correlated. Generally, the communal conflict approach (under the assumption that integrating and problem solving are good indicators of this approach), is the most difficult to identify in terms of cultural dimensions. It appears that power distance and in-group collectivism are not cultural determinants of this approach, as posited by Ting-Toomey. However, institutional collectivism is related to this approach. Cultural practices focused on the future and cultural values of assertiveness may be negatively related whereas performance orientation practices and values may be positively related.

In the case of the *benevolent conflict approach*, Ting-Toomey (2009) explained that the primary considerations are one's role or status in hierarchical, interdependent, and extended social networks. Managers adopt a parental role in their relations with employees, and employees rarely challenge or directly voice concerns to managers. The obliging and avoiding CMS are most likely relevant to the benevolent conflict approach. Again, it appears that power distance and in-group collectivism are not cultural determinants of this approach, as posited by Ting-Toomey. Results showed a strong relationship between assertiveness practices with obliging with superiors and no significant relationship with avoiding with superiors. Thus, the one GLOBE cultural dimension that focuses on directness in speech and which was found to be a separate and distinct dimension from power distance and individualism is an excellent predictor of not expressing one's wishes directly with supervisors. However, the direction of the relationship is opposite of expected. This quandary should be explored in future studies.

In the case of the *impartial conflict approach*, Ting-Toomey (2009) states that personal freedom and equality are the primary values. Managers tend to be direct, specific, and upfront with employees in conflict situations. Employees are expected to speak frankly about their positions in the conflict episode. Resolution occurs through an objective, fact-based approach. The compromising approach is similar to this approach in that both parties are open about their needs and attempt to find a middle ground based on the facts on hand. Again, neither power distance nor in-group collectivism show significant relationships. However, institutional collectivism values are positively related and institutional collectivism practices and assertiveness values are negatively related.

In the case of *status-achievement conflict approach*, Ting-Toomey (2009) described personal freedom and earned inequality as the primary values. In this conflict approach, managers and employees tend to directly and frankly discuss conflict issues with one another. However, managers and those of higher rank are the ultimate decision-makers by virtue of their accrued power and authority resources. The bargaining approach most closely resembles this approach with open discussion among parties but an unequal decision-making approach in that superiors dominate the final decision. As with each of the other corporate conflict approaches, neither power distance nor in-group collectivism show significant relationships. There are significant negative relationships with future orientation values and practices.

### **Discussion and Recommendations**

In the first place, this study highlights the need to examine face from an emic research orientation before developing etic models of face-related conflict mechanisms. On an etic level, this study has shown little or no support for the cultural propositions of face-negotiation theory. Therefore, the cultural propositions about conflict management preferences in this theory should be cited cautiously. One particularly interesting finding from this study is that there is little or no support for the relationship between cultural-level individualism and power distance, particularly based on Hofstede's work, and CMS preferences. Furthermore, this study has illustrated that other cultural dimensions may be more influential on CMS preferences.

We believe that one of the fundamental problems with face-negotiation theory is that it applies an etic research model to face, which may best be captured with emic research (Cardon & Callister, 2008). The face-negotiation model focuses primarily on what would be considered face-saving and politeness behaviors (more in line with indirect, high-context communication

that can be expressed in conflict approaches such as avoiding and obliging). However, the importance of face and the many related communication approaches in many collectivist cultures is more variable and culture-specific than implied in the face-negotiation model.

For example, in Chinese culture, face-saving is but one of many types of face-related communication behaviors or face practices. Other major examples include giving face, vying for face, and not considering face. Each face practice is determined largely by the nature of relationships between interactants. Face-saving is generally the approach of subordinates when dealing with superiors. However, giving face is the dominant face practice between peers. Saving face is often of less importance for communication from superiors to subordinates (Cardon, 2009; Cardon & Scott, 2007). Research in Latin American cultures has also shown that face-saving is not important in all relationships. Like findings from Chinese culture, face-saving is less important when superiors communicate with subordinates (Osland, de Franco, & Osland, 1999).

Thus, we consider etic models of face as problematic and premature. We think that additional emic-level studies of face may lead to etic-level theorizing about face and conflict (Berry, 1989, 1990, 1999; Cardon & Callister, 2008). However, the number of emic-level studies written in English in various cultures is still quite limited. We urge researchers with an interest in face to adopt an emic approach to identify the nuanced and culture-specific nature of face and related communication practices in particular cultures.

On an etic level related to cross-cultural comparisons of conflict management strategies, the findings of this study demonstrate the murky relationship between cultural dimensions and conflict communication approaches. In particular, tidy conceptualizations that rely on two cultural dimensions (in this case, power distance and individualism) may not be sufficient to explain cross-cultural differences in CMS. Ting-Toomey's model, however, is not necessarily without merit. For example, she explains that interdependence is an important value in two of the four conflict approaches in the corporate values grid. Indeed, this study seems to indicate that is true: as a basis for institutional collectivism, interdependence is a determining factor for the communal/integrating and impartial/compromising approaches to conflict with superiors.

This study is important to the field because it serves to illustrate that models based on cultural dimensions should be advanced cautiously in the absence of a large sample of cultures. It also opens the door for new hypothesizing and theorizing about the impact of various cultural dimensions other than individualism and power distance on conflict management preferences and other communication patterns. Finally, it shows that newer developed sets of cultural dimensions, such as the GLOBE cultural dimensions, may be more predictive of communication behaviors.

Cross-cultural researchers need to be particularly careful about developing models of how cultural dimensions impact communication practices, especially with limited samples sizes in terms of cultural groups. Hofstede's (2001) recommendation of samples with a minimum of 10 to 15 cultural groups was not met at any point over the course of the twenty-year development period of Ting-Toomey's face-negotiation theory. Her studies depended on comparisons of between just 2 to 4 cultural groups that were generally comparisons between Far Eastern and Western European/North American cultures. With such small sample sizes and so many

potentially confounding explanations (after all, Far Eastern and Western cultures differ on nearly all of Hofstede's dimensions), the likelihood of advancing flawed theory and models is quite high.

We also consider this study valuable because it implies that there is much needed exploration of the impact of other cultural dimensions on communication practices. Individualism and power distance have dominated the literature, particularly for models involving interpersonal communication. This study indicates there is much room for new hypothesizing and theorizing about the impact of other cultural dimensions on CMS. For example, institutional collectivism (not in-group collectivism) was an important factor for a variety of CMS. Similarly, other GLOBE cultural dimensions appear to have promise as predictors of conflict approaches across cultures, including future orientation, performance orientation, assertiveness, and gender egalitarianism. We urge researchers who are examining conflict management strategies from an etic perspective to consider the impact of these other cultural dimensions. We also recommend incorporating emic-level findings about face and identity into more complex theorizing about the impact of relationship types (i.e., between insiders, between outsiders, between peers, between superiors and subordinates) in etic models of cross-cultural conflict management strategies.

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Peter Cardon teaches business communication, intercultural communication, and spreadsheets and databases at the University of South Carolina. His primary research areas are intercultural communication and technology-mediated communication. His favorite higher education activity is leading study abroad groups. He has taken groups to Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Taiwan, Macao, and soon to India. He can be contacted at [petercardon@gmail.com](mailto:petercardon@gmail.com).

Dr. Ephraim Okoro is an assistant professor at Howard University. He teaches business communication, principles of marketing, and management/marketing communications. His primary research interests probe the interface between intercultural communication and workforce diversity. He has authored articles in peer-reviewed journals. He can be contacted at [eaokoro@howard.edu](mailto:eaokoro@howard.edu).

## Appendix of Sample ROCI-II Instrument

### *Dominating*

- I would use my influence as a group leader to get my ideas across.
- I would use my authority as group leader to make a decision in my favor.
- I would use my expertise to make a decision in my favor.
- I would be firm in pursuing my side of the issue.
- I would use my power as group leader to win a competitive situation.

### *Integrating*

- I would investigate the problem with the group member, and find a solution acceptable to both of us.
- I would integrate my ideas with the group member or come up with a decision jointly.
- I would try to work with the group member to find a solution to a problem which satisfies our expectation.
- I would exchange accurate information with the group member to solve the problem together.
- I would try to bring all concerns out, so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.
- I would collaborate with the group member to come up with decisions acceptable to both of us.
- I would try to work with the group member for a proper understanding of the problem.

### *Obliging*

- I would in general try to satisfy the needs or desire of the group member.
- I would give in to the wishes of the group member.
- I would allow concessions to the group member.
- I would try to satisfy the expectations of the group member.

### *Avoiding*

- I would attempt to avoid being 'put on the spot' and try to keep disagreement with the group member to myself.
- I would accommodate the wishes of the group member.
- I would try to stay away from disagreement with the group member.
- I would try to keep my disagreement with the group member to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.
- I would try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with the group member.

### *Compromising*

- I would try to find a middle course to resolve the impasse.
- I would propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.
- I would negotiate with the group member so that a compromise can be reached.

From Ting-Toomey, Gao, Trubisky, Yang, Kim, Lin, & Nishida (1991, pp. 295-296)