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Conflict Management Styles in Romantic Relationships between Chinese and American Students: Exploring the Role of Cultural Individualism-Collectivism and Self-Construal

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BETWEEN CHINESE AND AMERICAN STUDENTS: EXPLORING THE ROLE OF
CULTURAL INDIVIDUALISM-COLLECTIVISM AND SELF-CONSTRUAL

By

Wuyu Liu

A THESIS

Submitted to the Faculty
of the University of Miami
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<u>Conflict Management Styles in Romantic Relationships</u>   (May 2012)
<u>between Chinese and American Students: Exploring the</u>
<u>Role of Cultural Individualism-Collectivism and</u>
<u>Self-Construal</u>

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With the acceleration of globalization, the world is filled with intense interaction between and among cultures. Whenever there is communication among people with different cultural backgrounds, disagreements, arguments and interpersonal conflicts may occur. This study is designed to investigate the influence of the cultural values and personality traits, especially individualism-collectivism and independent-interdependent self-construal, on people's preferences of conflict management styles within the context of romantic relationships among Chinese and American students. Results from the questionnaire survey conducted in China and the United States separately revealed that there were transitions for the cultural values and personality traits in the Chinese and American societies. In this study, Americans were equally individualistic and collectivistic, and Chinese were more independent than interdependent. In addition, both the cultural and individual factors significantly influenced individuals' choices of conflict management styles. High individualistic participants used more dominating and integrating styles, and high collectivistic participants used more obliging and third-party help styles. Students with a high level of independent self-construal used more dominating, integrating, emotional expression, and compromising styles. High interdependent respondents used more obliging and third-party help styles. No significant differences were found on the preference for the neglect style between the high/low

individualism and the high/low independent self-construal groups. Similarly, there were no significant differences on the preference for the styles of avoiding and compromising between the high/low collectivism and high/low interdependent self-construal groups. These findings may suggest that in addition to cultural and individual factors, the situational and relational context also have an influence on people's choices of conflict management styles. According to the rankings of conflict management style preferences for both nations, within the context of romantic relationships, young people preferred the styles which work quickly and well (i.e., compromising, integrating) rather than passive and aggressive styles that may hurt each other and ruin the relationship (i.e., avoiding and neglect).

Dedication

To my supportive family in China. Dear mom, Fang Fang: thank you for giving me life and encouraging me to pursue my dreams all the time. Dear dad, Dongping Liu: thank you for teaching me the truth of life and the ways to be a real person. I love you so much!

To my beloved boyfriend Jian Liu. I cannot imagine how I could finish this thesis without your relentless encouragement, love, and support. We have been together for six years. It is you who make me believe that the long distance would change nothing; it is you who encouraged me to come to this great country; it is you who teaches me to never give up. Thank you, my "Bear". I also thank your parents. Without their help, I would not have been able to collect all the data in China.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis investigates the role of individualism-collectivism and self-construal during conflicts among two national groups: Chinese and American students within the context of romantic relationships. It seeks to uncover the preferred romantic conflict management styles among Chinese and American young adults, and the influence of cultural factors and personality dispositions on their conflict resolution choices.

Nowadays, the globalized world is filled with intense interaction between and within cultures. Whenever there is communication among people with different cultural backgrounds, disagreements, arguments and interpersonal conflicts may occur. For this reason, the study of cultural differences in conflict resolution is of great value to society at large.

Conflict is an inevitable phenomenon existing in all ethnic and cultural groups, as well as all forms of social relationships (Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). It refers to "the interaction of interdependent people who perceive opposition of goals, aims, and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals" (Putnam & Poole, 1987, p. 552). Ting-Toomey (1994) defined conflict as "the perceived and/or actual incompatibility of values, expectations, processes, or outcomes between two or more parties over substantive and/or relational issues" (p. 360). Conflict could occur in any type of relationship. Previous research has been conducted in various contexts, including organizational (Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Stohl, 2001), small group (Kotlyar & Karakowsky, 2006; Rau, 2005), intergenerational (Bergstrom & Nussbaum, 1996; Zhang, Harwood, & Hummert, 2005), intercultural (Cai, Wilson, & Drake, 2000;

Kochman, 1981), gender (Cupach & Canary, 1995; Halpern & McLean Parks, 1996), as well as romantic (Cahn, 1990; Caughlin & Vangelisti, 1999; Fitzpatrick & Winke, 1979; Hubbard, 2001).

In this study, a romantic relationship is defined as any dating, engaged, or marital relationship between two heterosexual individuals. In intimate romantic relationships, people fall in love or fall out of love. Joyfulness and happiness are part of the emotional highs, while sadness, conflict, tension, and anger are part of the emotional lows. Conflict is a normative feature of a stable romantic relationship, with episodes of conflict occurring approximately twice a week (Lloyd, 1987). As the saying goes, the person you love the most hurt you the most. Indeed, the more interested the two parties are in one another, the more inevitable the conflict and the added pressure on the relationship can occur (Burgess & Huston, 1979). Romantic conflict results from cultural and/or individual differences in how to approach, treat, and handle social norms. The worst situation could be ending a relationship, which is extremely painful and costly because of the amount of time, commitment, and emotional energy the two parties have invested into the maintenance of it. Therefore, managing conflicts effectively becomes quite important in romantic relationships.

Prior research indicated that the management of conflict can be a productive experience since it would bring about positive changes in a relationship and /or achievement of goals (Canary & Spitzberg, 1990; Deutsch, 1973; Thomas, 1976; Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). Appropriate conflict management styles provide "interpersonal relationship satisfaction and creative problem solving" (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 3), and lead to "improved efficiency, creativity, and profitability" (Axelrod & Johnson,

2005, p. 42). However, since "it is through multiple channels that we acquire and develop our own ethics, values, norms, and ways of behaving in our everyday lives" (Ting-Toomey, 2005a, p.211.), people with different socio-cultural norms and personal characteristics may adopt different strategies to deal with conflicts (Haar & Krahé, 1999). What might be a proper way of managing disputes in romantic relationships in one society may not be acceptable in another due to different assumptions regarding behavioral natures, expectations, and values. Thus, cross-cultural conflict management is more difficult than intra-cultural conflict management since the former involves individuals with different cultural backgrounds and expectations of how the conflict should be handled (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Chen (1996) suggested that, in such an age of globalization, the increased frequency of cross-cultural linkage and contacts shows that the need for cross-cultural conflict management knowledge is not only important, but urgent.

The studies of cross-cultural communication and conflict management have rapidly increased over the past two decades (Cai & Fink, 2002). For example, intercultural researchers have examined cross-cultural conflict management between Americans and Asians (Ohbuchi & Takahashi, 1994; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991), Americans and Arabs (Elsayed-Elkhouly & Buda, 1996), Americans, Asian- Americans and Mexicans (Gabrielidis, Stephan, Ybarra, Dos Santos Pearson, & Villareal, 1997), and Jordanians and Turks (Kozan, 1990).

Nevertheless, the prior cross-cultural researchers have characteristically emphasized the individualism-collectivism distinction as a description of American and Chinese differences (Lin, Insko, & Rusbult, 1991). According to previous research and

theory (Gao, 2001), Chinese culture has been identified as more collectivistic and less individualistic than the U.S. culture. However, the lack of research, focusing specifically on the role of personality traits (e.g., self-construal) between these two cultures, reveals a major gap in the literature.

Self-construal refers to an individual's view of how much he or she is connected to or separated from others. It is what one believes about the relationship between the self and others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The Chinese society, comprising more than 1.3 billion people, is in transition; the lines between Confucianism and capitalism, and communes and corporations, are not clear. As new economic and political ideologies impinge on old ones, new ways of relating to others and oneself are emerging (Fitzgerald, 1993). Individual perceptions of authority, hierarchy, group cohesiveness, and family responsibility, while important, are now in flux (Chen, 1995; Chu, 1985). Greater contextual clarity that existed previously about what constituted appropriate or inappropriate social behavior is blurring now. Therefore, it is important to examine the role of this individual-level factor, self-construal, across societies. In addition, given the regularity of conflict and the normative functions that conflict plays, it is necessary that scholars continue to investigate the role of conflict in a variety of settings and contexts, including romantic relationships. However, little research has been conducted to study conflict from a romantic perspective in Asian countries, especially China. Thus, this study is designed to fill this gap.

Extending previous research on cross-cultural interpersonal conflict management, the current study intends to examine the role of individualism-collectivism and self-construal during romantic conflicts among Chinese and American students. The findings

will enhance our knowledge of how students in China and the United States manage romantic conflicts in light of their cultural backgrounds and self-construals, and help romantic partners adopt the best conflict resolution styles from the perspective of Chinese and American young adults. A component of Ting-Toomey's (1988, 1998) theory of conflict face-negotiation was used to guide this investigation.

This study is organized into four sections. Chapter Two provides a literature review of the related foundational research. Chapter Three offers an overview of the methods used to conduct this investigation. The respondents, research design, measurement, and plan for data analysis are provided. The questionnaire for this study and the scoring for the questionnaire items are included (see Appendix A and B). The statistical analyses used to assess the relationship between variables are explained. Chapter Four provides an analysis of the results found from this study. Chapter Five discusses the implications of the findings. To conclude, the innovations, limitations and future research directions are addressed.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Chapter 2 provides an extensive review of the foundational research related to this study. This chapter starts with a literature review of the face-negotiation theory and summarizes the eight different conflict management styles: dominating, avoiding, integrating, compromising, obliging, emotional expression, third-party help and neglect. Past findings suggested possible correlations between people's cultural backgrounds, personality traits, and their preferred styles in conflict management. Among them, individualism-collectivism is the cultural dimension of interest since it appears to be the most important one for distinguishing among cultures and the most influential factor in determining how people from different cultures manage conflict. Self-construal is considered as the variable for personality traits since it is the individual-level equivalent of the cultural dimension of individualism-collectivism (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim et al., 1996). Independent self-construal is associated with people of individualistic cultures, whereas interdependent self-construal is associated predominately with people of collectivistic cultures. Six hypotheses are posed based on the aforementioned cultural and individual variables.

Face-Negotiation Theory

Influenced by the work of Goffman (1955) and Brown and Levinson (1987), Ting-Toomey and her colleagues (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998) developed face-negotiation theory to explain differences and similarities in face and facework during conflict. This theory takes into account that every culture is always fighting for "face" or the way that we want others to see and treat us. It compares and contrasts individualistic

and collectivistic, high and low context cultures, and the different ways that they use "face." In general, face negotiation theory argues that: (a) people in all cultures try to maintain and negotiate face in all communication situations; (b) the concept of "face" is especially problematic in uncertain situations (such as conflict situations) when the situated identities of the communicators are called into question; (c) cultural variability, individual-level variables, and situational variables influence cultural members' selection of face concerns over others (such as self-oriented face-saving vs. other-oriented face-saving); and (d) subsequently, cultural variability, individual-level variables, and situational variables influence the use of various facework and conflict strategies in intergroup and interpersonal encounters (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). Much of Ting-Toomey's face-negotiation theory is based on face and facework.

Face. The concept of face, which originated in Chinese culture, consists of two conceptualizations: lien (or lian) and mien-tzu (or mianzi) (Chang & Holt, 1994; Gao, 1998; Hu, 1944). In most cultures, face is associated with respect, honor, status, reputation, credibility, competence, family/network connection, loyalty, trust, relational indebtedness, and obligation issues. Additionally, the concept of face includes aspects of social image presented to others. Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) observed that face pertained to a favorable self-worth and/or projected other worth in interpersonal situations. People do not "see" another's face; rather, face is a metaphor for the boundaries that people have in their relationships with others. Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) argued that face is an explanatory mechanism for different conflict management styles in different cultural groups and represents an individual's claimed sense of positive image in the context of

social interactions. They also asserted that although face is a universal concept, it has various interpretations in various cultures.

Face can be interpreted in two primary ways: face concern and face need. Face concern means maintaining one's face or the face of others. Face-negotiation theory emphasizes three face concerns. *Self-face* is the concern for one's own image, *other-face* is the concern for another's image, and *mutual-face* is the concern for both parties' images and/or the "image" of the relationship (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Generally, individualistic cultures have high self-face concerns, whereas collectivistic cultures have high other-face and mutual-face concerns (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998).

Facework. When their positive or negative face is threatened, communicators tend to find some ways to restore their or their partners' face. This action is defined as *facework* by Ting-Toomey (1988). Lim and Bowers (1991) identified three types of facework: tact, solidarity, and approbation. *Tact facework* extends to which a person respects another's autonomy. This type of facework allows an individual freedom to act as he or she pleases while minimizing any imposition that may restrict this freedom. *Solidarity facework* pertains to a person accepting the other as a member of an in-group, enhancing the connection between two speakers. *Approbation facework* focuses less on the negative aspects and more on the positive aspects of another.

Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, Yokochi, Masumoto, and Takai (2000) conducted a study describing a typology of facework behaviors during interpersonal conflicts (Oetzel et al., 2000). The researchers completed this study in several stages and found 13 different types of facework behavior during conflicts with best friends or relative strangers: (a) aggression, (b) apologize, (c) avoid, (d) compromise, (e) consider the other, (f) defend

self, (g) express feelings, (h) give in, (i) involve a third party, (j) pretend, (k) private discussion, (l) remain calm, and (m) talk about the problem.

Conflict and Conflict Management Styles

Conflict is an emotionally frustrated experience in conjunction with perceived incompatibility of expectations, face concerns, conflict styles, goals, scarce resources, processes, and/or outcomes between a minimum of two interdependent parties (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Putman and Poole (1987) defined conflict as "the interaction of interdependent people who perceive the opposition of goals, aims, and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals (aims, or values)" (p. 552). It is an inevitable and pervasive phenomenon in human society. People often regard conflict as problematic and invoking negative feelings. Studies (i.e., Komin, 1995; Ting-Toomey, 1997; Tjosvold, Moy, & Shigeru, 1999) have indicated negative outcomes of conflict ranging from discomfort, misunderstanding, and disruption of relationship to the collapse of organizations. Thus, individuals seek to avoid and resolve conflict in valued relationships. With good reason, conflict in romantic relationships has evoked enormous scholarly and popular interest. When managed well, conflict in romantic unions would enable relational partners to learn about each other and foster a sense of cohesion and commitment (Siegert & Stamp, 1994). When mishandled, conflict can have negative implications for the relationship and for the relational partners (Fincham & Beach, 1999).

Romantic conflict is a prevalent occurrence. The outcomes can damage the relationships, as well as impact individuals beyond those directly involved. There are many research studies focusing on romantic conflict and its associated influence. For

example, several studies compared the conflict behaviors of distressed and non-distressed

married couples. Gottman (1994) suggested that distressed couples more often display

anger, criticism, hostility, and contempt. Similar studies indicated that distressed couples,

when compared with non-distressed couples, also show greater rates of negative

reciprocity (Pike & Sillars, 1985) and lengthier sequences of negative reciprocity (Ting-

Toomey, 1988). Research also claimed that couples that lack proper communication

skills in conflict situations are more likely to resort to abusive or violent behaviors

(Sabourin, Infante, & Rudd, 1993). Thus, romantic conflict is an important context in

which to examine the effects of culture and individual differences on conflict styles.

Conflict styles refer to individuals' general tendencies or modes of managing

disputes in a variety of antagonistic interactive episodes in various interactions (Putnam

& Poole, 1987; Sternberg & Soriano, 1984; Ting-Toomey, 1997; Ting-Toomey et al.,

2000). Conflict styles provide an overall picture of an individual's communication

orientation toward conflict. Most individuals have a predominant conflict style, but it is

possible to modify and tailor conflict styles in regards to a specific situation (Cupach &

Canary, 1997; Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). Thus, conflict style is a combination of traits

(e.g., cultural background and personality) and states (e.g., situational factors, such as

ingroup-outgroup conflict and conflict salience) (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001).

Among the numerous approaches for explaining conflict styles, the primary

approach is Rahim's (1985) five-style model. According to Rahim, interpersonal styles of

conflict management fall into five categories based on the dual-concern model: concern

for own outcomes and concern for other's outcomes (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Rahim,

1983, 1992; Thomas & Kilmann, 1974). Ting-Toomey (1988) incorporated these conflict

styles into her work because of their compatibility with face-negotiation theory.

Dominating style, the first type described by Rahim, involves direct tactics that assert and

defend one's own face or self-interest above and beyond the other person's. A conflict

managed with a dominating style results in the victory of one party at the expense of the

other (Thomas, 1976). The second type, *avoiding* style, emphasizes eluding the conflict

topic, the conflict party, or the conflict situation altogether, in order not to embarrass the

other person's face directly. This is a non-confrontational style that involves withdrawing

from the situation and avoiding the other party (Thomas, 1976). The third conflict style,

integrating, also referred to as a collaborating or problem-solving style (Cai & Fink, 2002;

Thomas, 1976), indicates a need for solution closure in conflict and involves mutual

concern for both self and other in conflict's substantive negotiation. Individuals who use

the integrating style strive to satisfy the goals and needs of both parties during a conflict.

The *compromising* style refers to a give-and-take concession solution to reach a midpoint

agreement or mutually satisfactory concerning the conflict issue. It can be placed

between the styles of compromising and accommodating and often involves an equal

distribution of resources (Thomas, 1976). Lastly, the *obliging* style is characterized by a

high concern for the other person's conflict interest above and beyond one's own conflict

interest. When using the obliging style, also referred to as accommodating (Thomas,

1976), an individual attempts to preserve relational harmony by accommodating to the

other's desires.

However, while the five-style model serves as a good initial probe of conflict style,

scholars have critiqued this model for only reflecting the individualistic, Western

interpretation of what constitutes appropriate and effective conflict communication

(Ting-Toomey et al., 2000), and for missing some other salient style factors such as emotions, third-party consultation or concern, and passive-aggressive types of conflict tactics (Ting-Toomey, 2005b). As a result, Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) developed a more complete interpersonal conflict management instrument, the Conflict Style Dimension (CSD) scale. She added three other conflict styles typically employed by collectivists to maintain mutual-face interests (Ting-Toomey, 1988, 1999), accounting for the potentially rich areas of cultural and ethnic differences in conflict: emotional expression, third-party help, and neglect. *Emotional expression* involves incorporating emotional expression strategies to guide communication behaviors during conflict. Individuals are open and expressive of their own emotions in a conflict episode, be it anger or resentment. They rely on their feelings to guide conflict responses (Ting-Toomey et al., 2000; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). *Third-party help* refers to mediating the conflict with the help of an outsider. In this case, a person not directly involved in the conflict episode is asked to help conflict parties to resolve the conflict issue (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). *Neglect* is characterized by using passive-aggressive strategies to escape the conflict but at the same time attempt to get an indirect reaction from the other conflict party (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Individuals who use the neglect style are not only direct and assertive, as those who use the dominating style to attain their goal, but also aggressive with the goal to hurt or harm the other person's image. This study considered all eight styles applied in romantic conflicts.

Cultural Variability

Culture is defined as "a group level construct that embodies a distinctive system of traditions, beliefs, values, norms, rituals, symbols, and meanings that is shared by a

majority of interacting individuals in a community" (Streeck, 2002). It is a "patterned way of living by a group of interacting individuals who share similar set of beliefs, values, and behaviors" (Ting-Toomey, 1997). Culture influences the way we see and perceive the world. Keesing (1974) argued that culture provides its members with an implicit theory about how to behave in different situations and how to interpret others' behavior in these situations. People learn their implicit theories of their cultures through the process of socialization. Thus, individuals enact behaviors that vary from the predominant cultural framework of a society (Gudykunst, 2003).

Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) proposed two cultural value dimensions to help explain why individuals with different cultural backgrounds have diverse approaches to and perceptions of conflict behavior, as well as its management styles. These dimensions, originally identified by Hofstede (1980, 2001), are individualism-collectivism and power distance.

Cultural individualism and collectivism. Individualism-collectivism is the cultural dimension of interest since it is the most important one for distinguishing among cultures in social science and psychological research, and the initial frame in explaining the underlying logic or motivational bases for people's different behaviors in a cultural scene (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). It is the major dimension of cultural variability isolated by theorists across disciplines to explain similarities and differences in behavior (e.g., Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hofstede, 1980, 1991; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Parsons & Shils, 1951; Triandis, 1988, 1990, 1995). Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988) indicated that individualism and collectivism exist in all cultures, but one pattern tends to be predominant. Individualism-

collectivism is used in this study since it appears to be the most influential factor in determining how people from different cultures manage conflict.

Individualism is a social pattern that consists of loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives and who tend to give priority to their personal goals beyond the goals of others (Triandis, 1995). Individualistic societies indicate three major aspects: low sacrifice (low subordination of personal goal), self-reliance, and low extension (i.e., one's action is of little concern for others) (Bontempo, 1993). In contrast, *collectivism* is a cultural pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who perceive themselves as part of one or more collectives (i.e., family, coworkers, tribe, nation) and are willing to prioritize the goals of these collectives over their own personal goals (Triandis, 1995). In collectivistic societies, "we-ness" is valued most (Hui, 1988), and group identity and ingroup-oriented concerns are strongly emphasized (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Hui (1988) defined seven major components of collectivism: (a) consideration of implications of one's own decisions and/or actions for other people; (b) sharing of material resources; (c) sharing of nonmaterial resources (i.e., time and effort); (d) susceptibility to social influence; (e) self-presentation and facework; (f) sharing of outcomes; and (g) feeling of involvement in others' lives.

At the cultural level, Triandis (1995) indicated that societies could be characterized primarily as individualistic or collectivistic cultures. Individualism is predominantly found in Northern and Western Europe, North America, and Australia (Inkeles, 1983; Stewart, 1966; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001). Southern Italy (Banfield, 1958), Greece (Triandis & Vasiliou, 1972), Asia, Africa, the Middle East, Central and

South America, and the Pacific Islands (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001) are examples of collectivistic cultures.

Some studies have examined how individualism-collectivism influences romantic relationships. Gao (1998) indicated that cultural variability, such as individualism-collectivism, influenced how individuals felt about intimacy, love, and commitment. Furthermore, she found that Chinese men and women were less expressive of their love for one another, while North American men and women were much more expressive of intimacy. Gudykunst and Lee (2001) also reported that cultural variability impacted different cultural views of romantic love. Dion and Dion (1988) found that people from individualistic cultures when in romantic relationships were often negatively impacted by the primacy of the "I" in the relationship.

Individualism-collectivism and conflict management styles. As a major cultural variability dimension, individualism-collectivism has been largely used to understand differences in relationships across cultures (Dion & Dion, 1988, 1993). Cross-cultural communication scholars have examined the relationship between individualism-collectivism and conflict management styles (Komarraju, Dollinger, & Lovell, 2008). Numerous studies suggested that there were differences in conflict management styles between individualists and collectivists (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001; Ting-Toomey, 2000). However, studies found mixed results regarding which styles were preferred by members of individualistic and collectivistic cultures (Kim & Leung, 2000).

On the one hand, previous studies (e.g., Elsayed-Ekhouly & Buda, 1996; Gabrielidis et al., 1997; Ohbuchi, Fukushima, & Tedeschi, 1999; Ting-Toomey et al., 1991) demonstrated that members of individualistic cultures tend to use more dominating

conflict strategies, more substantive, outcome-oriented strategies (i.e., integrating), and fewer avoiding conflict strategies than members of collectivistic cultures (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). For example, Ohbuchi et al. (1999) found that American students reported greater direct conflict confrontation and less conflict avoidance than Japanese students. French, Pidada, Denoma, McDonald, and Lawton (2005) studied conflict styles between Indonesian and American children. Their findings showed that Indonesian children tended to exhibit disengagement when faced with conflict, while European-Americans considered that conflicts were best directly addressed.

Research also indicated that the avoiding style was used more frequently by individualists rather than collectivists (Cai & Fink, 2002; Lee & Rogan, 1991) and can be perceived very negatively (e.g., inappropriate and ineffective) in some collectivistic cultures (Zhang et al., 2005). For example, Cai and Fink (2002) examined the association between collectivism and individualism and conflict management styles with participants consisting of both American and international graduate students. They found that individualists preferred the avoiding style more than collectivists.

The United States and China are compared in this study due to the fact that the two cultures' value orientations and communication are quite different (Gao & Gudykunst, 1995; Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). According to Hofstede's cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 1980), the United States, with a score of 91 on the individualism dimension, represents a highly individualistic culture. There is a high degree of geographical mobility in the United States and most Americans are accustomed to doing business with, or interacting, with strangers. Consequently, Americans are not shy about approaching their prospective counterparts to obtain or seek information. Samovar, Porter,

and Stefani (1998) also indicated the top one dominant cultural pattern in the United States was individualism. In contrast, with a score of 20, China is a highly collectivist culture where people act in the interest of the group. In-group considerations affect hiring and promotions with closer in-groups (such as family) are getting preferential treatment. Ting-Toomey and Chung (2005) noted that China subscribed to a collectivistic philosophy and most Chinese believed that people were born into extended families.

Furthermore, the cultural dimension of individualism-collectivism has been examined in various contexts between the United States and China. Studies indicated that Chinese (collectivists) tended to use the accommodating and avoiding styles, while competition was perceived more desirably by Americans (individualists) (French et al., 2005). Ting-Toomey et al. (1991) and Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, and Lin (1991) suggested that Chinese were guided by the moral philosophy of Confucianism, which emphasized harmonious interpersonal relationships. Thus, Chinese tended to use more obliging and avoiding conflict styles, whereas European Americans tended to use a higher degree of dominating conflict style than their Asian counterparts. Leung, Au, Fernandez-Dols, and Iwawaki 's (1992) work also provided some evidence that Asians tended to use avoidance and third-party management styles to deal with conflict issues, while European Americans tended to use upfront, solution-oriented style (i.e., integrating and compromising) in dealing with conflict problems.

Self-Construal

Self-construal refers to one's self-image and is composed of an independent self and an interdependent self (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). It is conceptualized here as a constellation of thoughts, feelings, and actions concerning the relationship of the self to

others and the self as distinct from others. Self-construal is one of the major individual factors focusing on individual variation within and between cultures (Ting-Toomey, 2005b). It is the individual-level equivalent of the cultural variability dimension of individualism-collectivism (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim et al., 1996). Gudykunst et al. argued that independent self-construal was associated with people of individualistic cultures, whereas interdependent self-construal was associated predominately with people of collectivist cultures. The recognition of self (i.e., self-construal) is a powerful regulator of human behavior (Cross, 1997). Cross believed that it "directs perceptions, memory, and inference concerning both oneself and others" (p. 6). She also believed that self-construal partially determined emotional experiences, responsibility, and self-control.

Independent and interdependent self-construal. *Independent self-construal* is the model of self based on characteristics that are unique to the self. With independent self-construal, "behavior is organized and made meaningful primarily by reference to one's own internal repertoire of thoughts, feelings, and actions, rather than by reference to the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others" (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 226). This self-construal is similar to Hofstede's (1983) individualistic culture, which emphasized self-esteem, self-identity, and self-image, with personal goals superseding those of the group, and competitive interactions are the norm (Chen & Starosta, 1998). The United States, Australia, Great Britain, Denmark, and Canada are representative examples of these cultures (Hofstede, 1983).

In contrast, *interdependent self-construal* is the self defined by relationships with others and especially close others, such as mother or sister (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). The basis of this self-construal is that the self is "connected to others" (Cross, 1997, p. 5)

and that relationships are integral parts of the person's very being. Markus and Kitiyama (1991) stated that with interdependent self-construal, "behavior is determined and contingent on, and to a large extent, organized by what the actor perceives to be thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the relationship" (p. 227). This behavior is representative of collectivistic cultures as described by Hofstede (1983), which are characterized by a rigid social framework with distinct in-group (close family kin) and out-group members, with in-group members conforming to group norms and working together cooperatively (Chen & Starosta, 1998). Mexico, Taiwan, Chile, India, and Hong Kong are examples of collectivistic cultures (Hofstede, 1983).

Self-construal and conflict management styles. Gudykunst et al., (1996) argued that the relationship between cultural-level variables and conflict styles was mediated by individual-level factors (i.e., self-construal). Conflict behavior is perceived within the primary socialization process of one's cultural or ethnic group. Individuals learn the norms and scripts for appropriate and effective conflict conduct in their immediate cultural environment. In addition, these tendencies, in turn, also influence individual-level factors such as the way individuals conceive of themselves. Thus, individuals can vary from the predominant cultural framework of a society (e.g., being interdependent in an individualistic culture). Essentially, cultural values have a direct effect on conflict behaviors and an indirect effect on conflict behaviors that is mediated through individual-level factors (Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim et al., 1996; Singelis & Brown, 1995). In a quantitative study, Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) suggested that conflict management was determined, in part, by interdependent and independent self-construal and that self-

construal "mediates the influence of cultural individualism-collectivism on an individual's behavior" (Oetzel, 1998).

Several studies showed that self-construal was a good predictor in conflict management styles. The data from a qualitative study by Gunawardena et al. (2002) indicated that self-construal may differ among the cultural groups studied, and that it may be a better predictor of conflict style than cultural identity. Likewise, Ting-Toomey, Oetzel, and Yee-Jung (2001) explored the effects of ethnic background, gender, and self-construal or self-image on conflict styles among African Americans, Asian Americans, European Americans, and Latin Americans and found that self-construal was a better predictor of individual conflict style than ethnic background. Specifically, self-construal types accounted for a statistically significant amount of variance in most of the conflict styles, whereas ethnic background did not. These findings are consistent with prior research demonstrating that self-construal is a better explanatory variable than ethnicity or culture for individuals' communication behavior (Ting-Toomey, Yee-jung, Shapiro, Garcia, Wright, & Oetzel, 2000). Thus, the way one behaves and the way conflicts are resolved will be determined, in part, by one's self-construal.

Some studies link self-construals to conflict styles. Oetzel (1998) found that dominating styles were positively associated with independence, whereas avoiding, obliging, and compromising styles were associated positively with interdependence. Integrating styles were associated with both independence and interdependence, but more strongly with the latter one. Oetzel's (1998) finding indicated that in interpersonal conflict, independent self-construal people tended to use dominating styles while people of interdependent self-construal preferred avoiding, obliging, and compromising styles.

Hypotheses

Based on the purpose of this study and the literature review regarding the relationship between culture, self-construal and conflict management styles in romantic relationships in China and the United States, the following hypotheses were posited.

Previous cross-cultural communication research showed that there were differences in conflict management styles between individualistic and collectivistic societies. Members of individualistic cultures tended to use more dominating conflict strategies, more substantive outcome-oriented strategies (i.e., integrating), and fewer avoiding conflict strategies than members of collectivistic cultures (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). Numerous studies have been focused on the United States and China due to the fact that the two cultures' value orientations and communication are quite different (Gao & Gudykunst, 1995; Gao & Ting-Toomey, 1998). According to Hofstede's (1980) original scale on individualism-collectivism, the predominant cultural pattern in the United States is individualism while the major pattern in China is collectivism. A number of studies argued that Chinese (collectivists) tended to use the accommodating and avoiding styles (Ma, 2007), while competition was perceived more desirably by Americans (individualists) (French et al., 2005).

In Oetzel and Ting-Toomey's (2003) study, the result that there was a significant difference between American and Chinese students in adopting different conflict strategies has supported the hypothesis that the cultural value of individualism-collectivism has a direct impact on conflict styles. This difference revealed that when conflict happened in intimate relationships, Americans tended to express their own feelings, concerns, and interests. They were more concerned about asserting their *own*

face interest. Comparatively, Chinese were more likely to take others' face into consideration rather than being merely concerned for their own face. They attempted to find a mid-point solution so that all parties' needs can be met. Drawing on results and discussions from previous studies, the following hypotheses were posited:

H_1: Chinese students involved in romantic relationships will express more collectivism and less individualism than their American counterparts.

H_2: Students who express more individualism will use more dominating, integrating, emotional expression, and neglect styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those who express less individualism

H_3: Students who express more collectivism will use more avoiding, compromising, obliging, and third-party help styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those who express less collectivism.

Based on previous studies (Ting-Toomey et al., 1991; Oetzel et al., 2000), the eight conflict management styles reviewed in this study can be grouped into three clusters: (a) integrating and compromising; (b) dominating, emotional expression, and neglect; and (c) avoiding, obliging, and third-parry help. Furthermore, Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggested that independent self-construal was consistent with a high concern for self-interest, whereas interdependent self-construal was consistent with a high concern for other- and mutual-interest. Integrating and compromising are associated positively with both self- and other-concern and thus should be related positively to independence and interdependence. Independent- and interdependent-types likely use these styles because of their high level of independence and interdependence. Dominating, emotional expression, and neglect are associated positively with self-concern and thus should be

related positively to independence. Independent-type respondents likely use these styles because of their high level of independence. Avoiding, obliging, and third-party help are associated positively with other-concern and thus should be related positively to interdependence. Interdependent-type respondents likely use these styles given their high level of interdependence. Based on these expectations and prior research, the following hypotheses were proposed:

H_4: Chinese students involved in romantic relationships will report a higher level of interdependent self-construal and a lower level of independent self-construal than their American counterparts.

H_5: Students with a higher level of independent self-construal will use more dominating, neglect, emotional expression, integrating, and compromising styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those with a lower level of independent self-construal.

H_6: Students with a higher level of interdependent self-construal will use more avoiding, obliging, third-party help, integrating, and compromising styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those with a lower level of interdependent self-construal.

The design employed to test these hypotheses is discussed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methods used to measure and conduct this investigation. The respondents, research design, measurement, and data analysis methods are presented. A questionnaire used for the purpose of this study and the scoring for the questionnaire items are included (see Appendix A and B). The statistical analyses used to assess the relationship between the variables are explained.

Data Collection

A total of seven hundred and fifty-one Chinese and American students participated in this cross-cultural communication research project. Data were obtained from the United States and China separately. Three hundred and forty-six American participants were recruited from college students at a medium-sized Southeastern university in the United States. Four hundred and five Chinese participants were recruited from college students at a medium-sized university in the Northeastern part of China. After answering the filter question at the beginning of the questionnaire (Within the last 12 months, have you ever been involved in a heterosexual romantic relationship), two hundred and sixty American respondents indicated "yes" completed the paper and pencil questionnaire survey and eighty-six (25%) indicated "no" terminated. In the Chinese sample, two hundred and fifty-nine students continued to complete the same instrument in English and one hundred and forty-six (36%) terminated.

The criterion for selecting Chinese participants was having passed the CET4 (College English Test band 4), a national English proficiency test for college students in China. The CET is mandatory for university students in China who are not English

majors. It is also a prerequisite for a bachelor's degree. This requirement guaranteed that all Chinese students can competently understand the questionnaire, which was written in English. All participants were recruited on a voluntary basis and were assured that their responses would remain anonymous. Each student received extra credits as a way of thanking them for their time and participation. The survey took approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Questionnaire Design

For the purpose of this study, a questionnaire for assessing individualism-collectivism, self-construal and conflict management styles across the two national groups was utilized. The independent variables were individualism-collectivism and self-construal; the dependent variables were the eight conflict management styles utilizing in romantic relationships. The questionnaire was written in English and divided into five parts (see Appendix A for the questionnaire and Appendix B for the scoring).

In the first section, participants were asked to provide information about their romantic relationship status. For the purpose of this study, a filter question was designed at the beginning of the survey to ensure that the participants answering the subsequent questions have been involved in at least one heterosexual romantic relationship during the previous 12 months. Participants' current relationship status, the length of the romantic relationship, their romantic partners' ethnicity/cultural backgrounds, and the frequency of disagreements with their partners were collected.

The second part of the questionnaire asked the participants to recall a specific situation over the past 12 months when they and their romantic partners fought or had a disagreement. If the participants were not currently involved in a romantic relationship,

they were encouraged to recall a disagreement they had with a prior intimate other in conflict episodes. Then participants completed a 32-item questionnaire drawn from the Ting-Toomey et al. (2000) Conflict Style Dimensions (CSD), the instrument whose reliability ranged from .73 to .88. The items were modified to fit the romantic relationship context. The CSD scale was created based on the modified Rahim's (1983) Organizational Conflict Inventory (ROCIII) which measured five interpersonal conflict styles, including avoiding (e.g., "I said nothing and waited for things to get better"), integrating (e.g., "I worked with my partner to reach a joint resolution to our conflict"), compromising (e.g., "I tried to find a middle course to resolve the impasse"), dominating (e.g., "I used my influence to get my ideas accepted"), and accommodating/obliging style (e.g., "I tried to satisfy the conflict expectations of my partner"). This scale (and its earlier 28-item version) has been widely used to compare group conflict styles (Van De Vliert & Kabanoff, 1990). Other items were added based on Rahim's (1983) Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II) to measure three additional conflict styles, including third-party help (e.g., "I would generally ask a third person to intervene on our dispute and settle it for us"), emotional expression (e.g., "I would be emotionally expressive in the conflict situation"), and neglect (e.g., "When we discuss the problem, I would refuse to cooperate"). Participants responded to each item using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

The third section of the questionnaire investigated participants' level of individualism and collectivism. They were asked to complete a 20-item questionnaire adapted from Triandis' (1995) INDCOL scale, which was reported to have a reliability level of .78. The original individualism-collectivism (INDCOL) scale developed by Hui

and Triandis (1986) consists of 66 Likert-type scale items used to assess an individual's level of individualism and collectivism by measuring attitudes and behaviors toward six relational domains (e.g., co-workers, neighbors). This scale was modified for this study to fit the romantic context. Items in the questionnaire showed either endorsement of individualism (e.g., "I prefer to be direct and forthright when I talk to people") or collectivism (e.g., "My happiness depends very much on the happiness of those around me"). Participants responded to the items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

The fourth section assessed how participants saw themselves and their self-construal personality traits, and how they saw themselves in relation to others. Participants answered 10 self-construal items adapted from the Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal Scale developed by Gudykunst et al. (1996), and used by Ting-Toomey et al. (2001) in a similar study. The original Independent and Interdependent Self-Construal Scale (Gudykunst et al., 1996) contained 36 items and had a reliability level of .86 and .88 respectively. Some items were modified to fit the context in this particular study. The statements in the questionnaire either supported an independent self-construal (e.g., "I act as a unique person separate from my partner") or an interdependent self-construal (e.g., "I respect the majority of my partner's wishes"). Again, participants responded to each item using a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree).

Finally, the fifth section of the questionnaire gathered demographic information including participant's sex, age, nationality, and education level.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed via SPSS Version 18. Frequency and percentage descriptive statistics, Cronbach's alpha reliability statistics, a series of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), a series of paired *t*-tests and a series of Pearson correlation statistics were run to describe the samples and to test the six hypotheses of this study.

Chapter 4

Results

This chapter presents the results of the methods mentioned in Chapter 3. First, the results of the descriptive statistics of the samples are presented. Second, Cronbach's alpha coefficients of all variables are reported. Third, the results of one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) are presented. Then, the results of the paired *t*-tests are reported. Finally, the correlation coefficients results of all variables are presented.

Descriptive Analysis

The American sample consisted of 170 (65.4%) female respondents and 90 (34.6%) male respondents. The respondents ranged in age from 18 to 39, with an average of 19.7 years old (*SD*=2.48). The sample included 132 freshmen (50.8%), 60 sophomores (26.5%), 35 juniors (13.5%) 20 seniors (7.7%) and 4 graduate students (1.5%). When asked about their current romantic relationship status, 139 (53.5%) American students indicated that they were currently involved in a heterosexual relationship while 120 (46.2%) said they were not. The average length of romantic relationship was 12.9 months (*SD*=15.48). For the question of frequency of disagreements between romantic partners, 95 (36.5%) respondents indicated that such frequency occurred "very seldom," 43 (16.5%) chose "once a month," 44 (16.9%) reported as "twice a week," 48 (18.5%) indicated as "once a week," and the rest 30 (11.5%) respondents reported as "twice or more a week" (See Table 1).

In the Chinese sample, 205 female (79.2%) and 54 male (20.8%) respondents completed the questionnaire survey. The age ranged from 18 to 23, with an average of 20.46 years old (*SD*=1.19). The sample included 100 freshmen (38.6%), 95 sophomores

(36.7%), 62 juniors (23.9%) and 2 seniors (.8%). 185 respondents reported to have a

current heterosexual romantic relationship, whereas 74 respondents (28.6%) reported not.

The average duration of romantic relationship was 14.29 months (SD=12.1). When

asked about the frequency of disagreements with their romantic partners, 127 (49%)

respondents reported as "very seldom," 41 (15.8%) indicated as "once a month," 28

(10.8%) chose "twice a month," 37 (14.3%) reported as "once a week," and other 26

(10%) respondents indicated as "twice or more a week" (See Table 1).

Table 1. Frequency of Disagreements between Romantic Partners

Frequency	Americans (N=260)	Percent (%)	Chinese (N=259)	Percent (%)
Very seldom	95	36.5	127	49.0
Once a month	43	16.5	41	15.8
Twice a month	44	16.9	28	10.8
Once a week	48	18.5	37	14.3
Twice or more a week	30	11.5	26	10.0

Reliability Analysis

Reliability checks were computed for each conflict management style,

individualism-collectivism dimensions, and independent-interdependent self-construal

dimensions in the overall sample as well as in the separate American and Chinese

samples through Cronbach's alpha statistics.

In the overall sample, Ting-Toomey et al.'s (2000) Conflict Style Dimensions

(CSD) yielded acceptable to excellent reliability coefficients. The reliability coefficient

for the avoiding style was .83, for the integrating style was.90, for the dominating style

was .71, for the third-party help was .84, for the emotional expression was .78, for the

neglect style was .71, for the obliging style was .79, and finally, for the compromising style was .70 (See Table 2).

In the American sample, the reliability coefficient for the avoiding style was .75, for the integrating style was.72, for the dominating style was .75, for the third- party help was .87, for the emotional expression was .80, for the neglect style was .73, for the obliging style was .76, and finally, for the compromising style was .64. Thus, it can be concluded that the reliability coefficients of seven of the eight conflict management style dimensions for the American sample ranged from acceptable to good levels of reliability (See Table 2).

In the Chinese sample, the reliability coefficient for the avoiding style was .87, for the integrating style was.73, for the dominating style was .67, for the third-party help was .80, for the emotional expression was .76, for the neglect style was .70, for the obliging style was .75, and finally, for the compromising style was .72. Therefore, the results of the reliability coefficients indicated that, in the Chinese sample, seven of the eight conflict management styles ranged from acceptable to good levels of reliability (see Table 2).

The reliability of the individualism-collectivism dimensions and independent-interdependent self-construal dimensions was also assessed. In the overall sample, the individualism dimension produced an alpha coefficient of .80 and the collectivism dimension received an alpha coefficient of .66. Thus, it can be concluded that the reliability coefficient for the individualism dimension was acceptable, but that there were problems with the collectivism dimension. In the American sample, the individualism dimension produced an alpha coefficient of .79 and the collectivism dimension received a less than satisfactory alpha coefficient of .65. In the Chinese sample, the individualism

dimension produced an alpha coefficient of .74 and the collectivism dimension received

an alpha coefficient of .70, ranging at an acceptable level (See Table 3).

For the self-construal dimensions, in the overall sample, the independent self-

construal produced an alpha coefficient of. 74 and the interdependent self-construal

produced an alpha coefficient of. 73. Therefore, it can be concluded that the reliability of

the self-construal dimensions in the overall sample ranged at an acceptable level. In the

American sample, the independent self-construal produced a low alpha coefficient of. 67

and the interdependent self-construal produced an acceptable alpha coefficient of .70. In

the Chinese sample, both the independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal

produced alpha coefficients of .75, indicating acceptable reliabilities (See Table 4).

Table 2. Cronbach Alpha Coefficients for Conflict Management Styles

Conflict Management Styles	Americans	Chinese	All Participants
Avoiding	.75	.87	.83
Integrating	.72	.73	.90
Dominating	.75	.67	.71
Third Party Help	.87	.80	.84
Emotional Expression	.80	.76	.78
Neglect	.73	.70	.71
Obliging	.76	.75	.79
Compromising	.64	.72	.70

Table 3. Cronbach Alpha Coefficients for Individualism-Collectivism

I-C	Americans	Chinese	All Participants
Individualism	.79	.74	.80
Collectivism	.65	.70	.66

Table 4. Cronbach Alpha Coefficients for Self-Construal

Self-Construal	Americans	Chinese	All Participants
Independent	.67	.75	.74
Interdependent	.70	.75	.73

One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)

Hypothesis one through Hypothesis six were tested by eight univariate one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests. Cultural factor (individualism-collectivism) and personality trait (independent self-construal and interdependent self-construal) were the independent variables, and the eight conflict management styles were the dependent variables. Additional ANOVA tests were conducted to explore the differences between high/low individualism, high/low collectivism, high/low independent self-construal, and high/low interdependent self-construal groups on the eight conflict management styles within each particular nation.

Cultural-level analysis. Hypothesis 1 predicted that Chinese students involved in romantic relationships would express more collectivism and less individualism than their American counterparts. The results of the ANOVA (see Table 5) showed that the individualism differed significantly between the two groups [$F(1, 517) = 214.70, p < .001, \eta^2 = .29$]. An examination of the mean scores between the two groups indicated that the Chinese respondents ($M=3.06, SD= .56$) expressed less individualism than the American respondents ($M=3.76, SD= .52$). This part of Hypothesis 1 was supported.

However, the results (see Table 5) revealed that no significant difference was found between the two groups for collectivism [$F(1, 517) = 2.21, p > .05, \eta^2 = .004$]. The analysis indicated that Chinese participants ($M=3.80, SD= .46$) and American participants

(*M*=3.74, *SD*= .47) were equally collectivistic. Thus, the first hypothesis was partially

supported.

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations for Individualism and Collectivism between
American and Chinese Students

| | Individualism | | Collectivism | |
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
American	3.76	.52	3.74	.47
Chinese	3.06	.56	3.80	.46

In addition, two paired *t*-tests were conducted to evaluate the level of

individualism and collectivism for both the American and the Chinese groups. The results

showed that there was no significant difference between the individualism (*M* =3.76,

SD= .52) and collectivism (*M* =3.74, *SD*= .47), [*t* (259) =.44, *p*> .05] in the American

sample, which means American participants in this study were equally individualistic and

collectivistic. Chinese participants were significant more collectivistic (*M* =3.80, *SD*= .46)

than individualistic (*M* =3.06, *SD*= .56), [*t* (258) = -18.87, *p*< .001].

In order to test Hypotheses 2 and 3, the individualism and collectivism were

recoded into two groups respectively, based on the mean scores. The mean score on the

overall individualism was *M*=3.41 (*SD*=.64). Individuals who scored higher than the

mean score were labeled as high collectivists (*N*=267); individuals who scored lower than

the mean score were defined as low individualists (*N*=252). The same was true with the

collectivism, whose mean score was *M*=3.77 (*SD*=.47). Individuals who scored higher

than that mean score were classified as high collectivists (*N*=268); individuals who

scored lower than the mean score were labeled as low collectivists (*N*=251).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that students who express more individualism would use more dominating, integrating, emotional expression, and neglect styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those who express less individualism. The results of the ANOVA (See Table 6) revealed that the conflict styles of dominating [F (1, 517) = 11.85, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.02$], integrating [F (1, 517) = 228.54, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.31$] and emotional expression [F (1, 517) = 20.49, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.04$] differed significantly between the high and low individualism groups, while the style of neglect [F (1, 517) = .54, $p>.05$, $\eta^2=.001$] obtained no significant difference between these two groups.

An examination of the mean scores between the two groups indicated that participants with a high level of individualism (*M*= 3.21, *SD*= .73) used more dominating style than participants with a low level of individualism (*M*= 2.98, *SD*= .80) in romantic conflicts resolution; participants with a high level of individualism (*M*= 3.68, *SD*= 1.11) used more integrating style than participants with a low level of individualism (*M*= 2.27, *SD*= 1.01) to manage romantic conflicts. Thus, the second hypothesis was supported for these two styles.

However, inconsistent with the prediction, parts of the results were in the opposite direction. The mean scores between the two groups showed that participants with a low level of individualism (*M*= 3.32, *SD*= .78) used more emotional expression style than participants with a high level of individualism (*M*= 2.99, *SD*= .89). And the tendency of using the style of neglect was equal between the low individualism participants (*M*= 2.08, *SD*= .81) and those with a high level of individualism (*M*= 2.02, *SD*= .86) in romantic relationships.

Table 6. Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables by Individualism
(Overall)

	High Individualism		Low Individualism	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Avoiding	2.70**	.85	2.42**	1.03
Integrating	3.68***	1.11	2.27***	1.01
Dominating	3.21**	.73	2.98**	.80
Third Party Help	2.64*	1.17	2.45*	.80
Emotional Expression	2.99***	.89	3.32***	.78
Neglect	2.02	.86	2.08	.81
Obliging	3.68***	.54	2.63***	.59
Compromising	3.88*	.56	3.75*	.78

Note: The *, **, *** symbol indicates a significant difference between the two groups.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Hypothesis 3 predicted that students who express more collectivism would use more avoiding, compromising, obliging, and third-party help styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those who express less collectivism. The results of the ANOVA (See Table 7) indicated that the conflict styles of third-party help [$F(1, 517) = 5.15$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.01$] and obliging [$F(1, 517) = 3.07$, $p<.05$, $\eta^2=.01$] differed significantly between the high and low collectivism groups, while the styles of avoiding [$F(1, 517) = .54$, $p>.05$, $\eta^2=.001$] and compromising [$F(1, 517) = .54$, $p>.05$, $\eta^2=.001$] showed nonsignificant difference between the high and low collectivists.

An examination of the mean scores between the two groups indicated that participants with a high level of collectivism (*M*= 2.64, *SD*= 1.07) used more third-party help than participants with a low level of collectivism (*M*= 2.44, *SD*= .93). Participants

with a high level of collectivism (*M*= 3.24, *SD*= .79) used more obliging style than participants with a low level of collectivism (*M*= 3.09, *SD*= .74). These findings were consistent with Hypothesis 3.

However, parts of the results were different from what had been predicted in H$_3$. The mean scores between the two groups revealed that the tendency of using the avoiding style was equal between the participants with high collectivism (*M*= 2.51, *SD*= .99) and low collectivism (*M*= 2.62, *SD*= .90); and the tendency of using the compromising style was also equal between the high collectivists (*M*= 3.87, *SD*= .66) and low collectivists (*M*= 3.77, *SD*= .70) in romantic relationships.

Table 7. Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables by Collectivism (Overall)

	High Collectivism		Low Collectivism	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Avoiding	2.51	.99	2.62	.90
Integrating	3.00	1.35	3.00	1.19
Dominating	3.14	.78	3.06	.76
Third Party Help	2.64*	1.07	2.44*	.93
Emotional Expression	3.11	.88	3.19	.83
Neglect	1.98*	.86	2.13*	.81
Obliging	3.24*	.79	3.09*	.74
Compromising	3.87	.66	3.77	.70

Note: The *, **, *** symbol indicates a significant difference between the two groups.
* *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001.

In the American sample, the results of the ANOVA (see Table 8) revealed that the conflict management styles of integrating [F (1, 258) = 132.50, $p<.001$, $\eta^2=.34$] and neglect [F (1, 258) = 7.37, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.04$] differed significantly between the high and low individualism groups. High individualism participants used more integrating style than the low individualism participants. However, low individualism participants used more neglect style than the high individualism participants. No significant differences were found on the dominating and emotional expression styles between the high and low individualists. The results of the ANOVA (see Table 9) also indicated that there were no significant differences found on the avoiding, third-party help, obliging, and compromising styles between the high and low collectivists.

In the Chinese sample, the results of the ANOVA (see Table 8) showed that the conflict management styles of dominating [F (1, 257) = 4.94, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.03$] and neglect [F (1, 257) = 7.80, $p<.01$, $\eta^2=.04$] differed significantly between the high and low individualism groups. High individualism participants used more dominating and neglect styles than low individualism participants. No significant differences were found on the integrating and emotional expression styles between the high and low individualists. In addition, the results (see Table 9) indicated that the differences between the high collectivism group and the low collectivism group on the styles of third-party help [F (1,257) = 6.07, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$] and obliging [F (1,257) = 4.88, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .02$] approached significant level. Participants with a high level of collectivism used more third-party help and obliging than participant with a low level of collectivism. However, no significant differences were found on the avoiding and compromising styles between the high and low collectivists.

Table 8. Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables by Individualism (American and Chinese)

| | American | | | | Chinese | | | |
| | High Individualism | | Low Individualism | | High Individualism | | Low Individualism | |
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Avoiding	2.87	.77	2.87	.67	2.26	1.04	2.26	1.06
Integrating	4.36***	.42	3.64***	.59	1.98	.82	1.92	.84
Dominating	3.12	.74	3.21	.82	3.18**	.69	2.90**	.80
Third Party Help	2.28	1.08	2.25	1.02	3.43***	.70	2.30***	.66
Emotional Expression	2.88	.87	2.77	.90	3.46	.67	3.47	.71
Neglect	1.79**	.69	2.13**	.94	2.34**	.89	2.0**	.74
Obliging	3.85***	.49	3.01***	.62	3.29***	.64	2.49***	.58
Compromising	3.95***	.47	3.20***	.63	4.02	.64	4.05	.60

Note: The *, **, *** symbol indicates a significant difference between the two groups.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 9. Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables by Collectivism (American and Chinese)

| | American | | | | Chinese | | | |
| | High Collectivism | | Low Collectivism | | High Collectivism | | Low Collectivism | |
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Avoiding	2.85	.82	2.89	.63	2.21	1.08	2.31	1.03
Integrating	4.16**	.60	3.91**	.61	1.93	.85	1.97	.82
Dominating	3.18	.75	3.15	.80	3.14*	.81	2.94*	.71
Third Party Help	2.33	1.10	2.20	.99	2.98*	.92	2.71*	.84
Emotional Expression	2.79	.93	2.87	.84	3.40	.74	3.52	.65
Neglect	1.83*	.76	2.06*	.87	2.13	.94	2.18	.73
Obliging	3.52	.71	3.42	.67	2.98*	.84	2.78*	.61
Compromising	3.69	.69	3.53	.64	4.06	.53	4.02	.68

Note: The *, **, *** symbol indicates a significant difference between the two groups.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Individual-level analysis. Hypothesis 4 predicted that Chinese students involved

in romantic relationships would report a higher level of interdependent self-construal and

a lower level of independent self-construal than their American counterparts. The results

of the ANOVA (see Table 10) revealed that independent self-construal differed

significantly between the two groups [F (1, 517) = 70.65, $p <$ .001, η^2=.12]. An

examination of the mean scores between the two groups showed that the Chinese

respondents (M=3.55, SD= .64) expressed a lower level of independent self-construal

than the American respondents (M=4.00, SD= .55).

However, the results (see Table 10) revealed no significant difference between the

two groups for interdependent self-construal [F (1, 517) = 1.32, $p >$ .05, η^2=.003]. The

analysis found that Chinese participants (M=2.88, SD= .79) and American participants

(M=2.81, SD= .67) expressed equal level of interdependent self-construal. Therefore,

Hypothesis 4 was partially supported.

Table 10. Means and Standard Deviations for Independent and Interdependent Self-
Construal between Americans and Chinese

	Independent		Interdependent	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
American	4.00.	.55	2.81	.67
Chinese	3.55	.64	2.88	.79

In addition, two paired t-tests were conducted to examine the level of independent

and interdependent self-construal within each national group. The results showed that

American participants were significantly more independent (M =4.00, SD= .55) than

interdependent (M =2.81, SD= .67), [t (259) = 5.10, $p <$ .001]. Similarly, Chinese

participants were significantly more independent (M =3.55, SD= .64) than interdependent (M =2.88, SD= .79), [t (258) = 10.61, p< .001].

     In order to test the hypotheses on personality traits, the independent self-construal and the interdependent self-construal were recoded into two groups respectively, based on the mean scores. The mean score on the independent self-construal was M = 3.78 *(SD* = .64). Students who scored higher than the mean score were classified as high independent self-construal *(N* = 299); students who scored lower than the mean score were labeled as low independent self-construal *(N* = 220). The same was true with the interdependent self-construal. The mean score for the interdependent self-construal was M = 2.85 *(SD* = .73). Individuals who scored higher than the mean score were recoded as high interdependent self-construal *(N* = 230); individuals who scored lower than the mean score were recoded as low interdependent self-construal *(N* = 289).

     Hypothesis 5 predicted that students with a higher level of independent self-construal would use more dominating, neglect, emotional expression, integrating, and compromising styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those with a lower level of independent self-construal. The results of the ANOVA (See Table 11) indicated that the conflict styles of dominating [F (1, 517) = 11.21, p<.01, η^2=.02], emotional expression [F (1, 517) = 18.50, p<.001, η^2=.04], compromising [F (1, 517) = 11.58, p<.01, η^2=.02], and integrating [F (1, 517) = 34.65, p<.001, η^2=.04] differed significantly between the high and low independent self-construal groups, while the style of neglect [F (1, 517) = .95, p>.05, η^2=.003] yielded no significant difference between these two groups.

An examination of the mean scores between the high and low independent self-construal groups indicated that participants with a high level of independent self-construal (M= 3.19, SD= .77) used more dominating than those with a low level of independent self-construal (M= 2.97, SD= .75); participants with a high level of independent self-construal (M= 3.29, SD= .95) used more emotional expression style than those with a low level of independent self-construal (M= 2.96, SD= .67); participants with a high level of independent self-construal (M= 3.91, SD=.69) used more compromising style than those with a low level of independent self-construal (M= 3.70, SD=.65); and participants with a high level of independent self-construal (M= 3.21, SD=1.27) used more integrating style than participants with a low level of independent self-construal (M=2.69, SD=1.22), which supported most predictions of Hypothesis 5.

However, the mean scores between the two groups revealed that the tendency of using the neglect style was equal between the high independent self-construal participants (M= 2.02, SD= .84) and those with low independent self-construal (M= 2.10, SD= .83) in romantic relationships. Thus, this hypothesis was partially supported.

Hypothesis 6 predicted that students with a higher level of interdependent self-construal will use more avoiding, obliging, third-party help, integrating, and compromising styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those with a lower level of interdependent self-construal. The results of the ANOVA (See Table 12) indicated that the conflict styles of obliging [F (1, 517) = 4.00, p<.05, η^2=.01], third-party help [F (1, 517) = 95.72, p<.001, η^2=.16], and integrating [F (1, 517) = 4.06, p<.05, η^2=.01] differed significantly between the high and low interdependent self-construal

groups, while the avoiding [F (1, 517) = .16, p>.05, η^2=.00] and compromising [F (1, 517)

= .14, p>.05, η^2=.00] styles showed no significant differences between these two groups.

Table 11. Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables by Independent Self-Construal (Overall)

	High Independent		Low Independent	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Avoiding	2.60	.92	2.52	1.0
Integrating	3.21***	1.27	2.69***	1.22
Dominating	3.19**	.77	2.97**	.75
Third Party Help	2.43**	1.03	2.70**	.96
Emotional Expression	3.29***	.95	2.96***	.67
Neglect	2.02	.84	2.10	.83
Obliging	3.24**	.80	3.07**	.72
Compromising	3.91**	.69	3.70**	.65

Note: The *, **, *** symbol indicates a significant difference between the two groups.
* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001.

The mean scores between the high and low interdependent self-construal groups

indicated that participants with a high level of interdependent self-construal (*M*=3.24,

SD=.76) used more obliging style than those with a low level of interdependent self-

construal (*M*=3.11, *SD*=.78); participants with a high level of interdependent self-

construal (*M*=2.99, *SD*=1.01) used more third-party help style than participants with a

low level of interdependent self-construal (*M*=2.19, *SD*=.86), supporting some

predictions of Hypothesis 6.

However, the result of integrating style was in the reverse direction as predicted.

Participants with a low level of interdependent self-construal (*M*= 3.09, *SD*=1.27) used

more integrating style than those with a high level of interdependent self-construal

(*M*=2.87, *SD*=1.27). In addition, the mean scores between the two groups revealed that

the tendency of using the avoiding style is equal between the high (*M*= 2.59, *SD*= .95)

and low (*M*= 2.55, *SD*= .95) interdependent self-construal participants, and the tendency

of using the compromising style is also equal between the high (*M*=3.81, *SD*=.68) and

low (*M*=3.83, *SD*=.67) interdependent self-construal participants in romantic

relationships.

Table 12. Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables by Interdependent Self-Construal (Overall)

	High Interdependent		Low Interdependent	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Avoiding	2.59	.95	2.55	.95
Integrating	2.87*	1.27	3.09*	1.27
Dominating	3.17*	.79	3.04*	.75
Third Party Help	2.99***	1.01	2.19***	.86
Emotional Expression	3.19	.86	3.12	.85
Neglect	2.24***	.90	1.91***	.75
Obliging	3.24*	.76	3.11*	.78
Compromising	3.81	.68	3.83	.67

Note: The *, **, *** symbol indicates a significant difference between the two groups.
* *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001.

In the American sample, the results of the ANOVA (see Table 13) revealed that

the conflict styles of dominating [$F(1, 258) = 4.26$, *p*<.05, η^2=.02] differed significantly

between the high and low independent self-construal groups. High independent self-

construal participants used more dominating style than the low independent self-construal

participants. No significant differences were found on the styles of neglect, emotional expression, integrating and compromising. The results of the ANOVA (see Table 14) also indicated that the conflict styles of integrating [F (1, 258) = 15.70, p<.001, η^2=.06], obliging [F (1, 258) = 36.58, p<.001, η^2=.12] and compromising [F (1, 258) = 37.33, p<.001, η^2=.13] differed significantly between the high and low interdependent self-construal groups. High interdependent self-construal participants used more integrating, obliging and compromising styles than low interdependent self-construal participants. There were no significant differences found on the avoiding and third-party help styles between the high and low interdependent self-construal groups.

In the Chinese sample, the results of the ANOVA (see Table 13) showed that the conflict styles of emotional expression [F (1, 257) = 73.29, p<.001, η^2=.59] and compromising [F (1, 257) = 37.58, p<.001, η^2=.13] differed significantly between the high and low independent self-construal groups. High independent self-construal participants used more emotional expression and compromising styles than low independent self-construal participants. No significant differences were found on the styles of neglect, dominating and integrating. In addition, the results (see Table 14) indicated that the differences between the high and low interdependent self-construal groups on the styles of third-party help [F (1,257) = 118.16, p < .001, η^2 = .59] and obliging [F (1,257) = 16.50, p < .001, η^2 = .06] approached significant level. Participants with a high level of interdependent self-construal used more third-party help and obliging styles than those with a low level of interdependent self-construal. However, no significant differences were found on the avoiding, integrating and compromising styles.

Table 13. Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables by Independent Self-Construal (American and Chinese)

| | American | | | | Chinese | | | |
| | High Independent | | Low Independent | | High Independent | | Low Independent | |
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Avoiding	2.80*	.69	2.98*	.76	2.26	1.05	2.27	1.05
Integrating	4.08	.62	3.96	.62	1.87	.76	2.07	.92
Dominating	3.25*	.78	3.05*	.77	2.99	.77	3.09	.74
Third Party Help	2.10**	1.0	2.51**	1.08	2.84	.85	2.82	.94
Emotional Expression	2.78	.88	2.91	.88	3.90***	.39	2.82***	.52
Neglect	1.87	.81	2.07	.85	2.15	.84	2.17	.83
Obliging	3.48	.73	3.45	.65	2.83	.76	2.94	.68
Compromising	3.66	.71	3.53	.60	4.22***	.51	3.77***	.67

Note: The *, **, *** symbol indicates a significant difference between the two groups.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 14. Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables by Interdependent Self-Construal (American and Chinese)

| | American | | | | Chinese | | | |
| | High Interdependent | | Low Interdependent | | High Interdependent | | Low Interdependent | |
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Avoiding	2.85	.73	2.90	.72	2.24	.96	2.29	1.14
Integrating	4.16***	.59	3.86***	.61	1.94	.80	1.96	.86
Dominating	3.13	.73	3.22	.83	3.15*	.75	2.91*	.76
Third Party Help	2.16	1.06	2.41	1.02	3.52***	.58	2.17***	.56
Emotional Expression	2.84	.90	2.82	.87	3.47	.64	3.47	.75
Neglect	1.83*	.71	2.11*	.94	2.43***	.86	1.89***	.71
Obliging	3.68***	.59	3.18***	.72	3.05***	.75	2.70***	.66
Compromising	3.81***	.62	3.33***	.63	4.05	.60	4.02	.64

Note: The *, **, *** symbol indicates a significant difference between the two groups.
* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Additional Conflict Management Style Preference Analysis

Furthermore, in order to better understand Chinese and American students'

preferences for the conflict management styles in romantic relationships, post-hoc

analyses were conducted. Eight more univariate one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA)

tests were conducted between the two cultural groups. American and Chinese participants

differed significantly in their preferences for all the eight conflict management styles (see

Table 15), including the styles of avoiding [F (1,517) = 58.89, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$],

integrating [F (1,517) = 1052.93, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .67$], dominating [F (1,517) = 4.04, p

$< .05$, $\eta^2 = .008$], third-party help [F (1,517) = 44.13, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .08$], emotional

expression [F (1,517) = 83.64, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .14$], neglect [F (1,517) = 8.24, $p < .01$, η^2

$= .02$], obliging [F (1,517) = 91.92, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .15$], and compromising [F (1,517) =

57.47, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$]. American students preferred the avoiding, integrating,

dominating and obliging styles significantly more than Chinese did; Chinese students

preferred the third-party help, emotional expression, neglect and compromising styles

more than Americans did (see Table 15).

Paired *t*-tests were used to examine preferences for the romantic conflict

management styles within each cultural group. Twenty-eight paired *t*-tests were

conducted with the significance level set to .025 within each group. American

participants chose integrating (*M*=4.03, *SD*=.62) as the most preferable romantic conflict

management style, followed by compromising (*M*=3.61, *SD*=.67), obliging (*M*=3.47,

SD=.69), and dominating style (*M*=3.17, *SD*=.78). The fifth preferable styles were

avoiding (*M*=2.87, *SD*=.72) and emotional expression (*M*=2.83, *SD*=.88) (no significant

difference between the two styles). The sixth was third-party help (*M*=2.27, *SD*=1.05),

and the least preferable one was neglect (*M*=1.95, *SD*=.83). For the Chinese sample,

compromising (*M*=4.04, *SD*=.62) was the most favorable romantic conflict management style, followed by emotional expression (*M*=3.47, *SD*=.69) and dominating (*M*=3.03, *SD*=.76). The fourth preferable styles were obliging (*M*=2.87, *SD*=.73) and third-party help (*M*=2.83, *SD*=.88) (no significant difference between the two styles). The next were avoiding (*M*=2.26, *SD*=1.05) and neglect styles (*M*=2.16, *SD*=.83) (no significant difference between the two styles). The least favorable conflict management style chosen by the Chinese participants was integrating (*M*=1.95, *SD*=.83), the opposite to the American students' choices (see Table 15).

Table 15. Means and Standard Deviations of Conflict Management Styles (American and Chinese)

	American		Chinese	
	Mean	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Avoiding	2.87***	.72	2.26***	1.05
Integrating	4.03***	.62	1.95***	.83
Dominating	3.17*	.78	3.03*	.76
Third Party Help	2.27***	1.05	2.83***	.88
Emotional Expression	2.83***	.88	3.47***	.69
Neglect	1.95**	.83	2.16**	.83
Obliging	3.47***	.69	2.87***	.73
Compromising	3.61***	.67	4.04***	.62

Note: The *, **, *** symbol indicates a significant difference between the two groups, *$p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Correlation Analysis

To explore more about the relationship between individualism-collectivism, independent-interdependent self-construal, and conflict management styles in romantic relationships, Pearson correlation statistics were conducted.

In the overall sample, correlation coefficients indicated that individualism was positively and significantly correlated to avoiding, integrating, dominating, obliging and compromising styles. As the level of individualism increased, so did avoiding (r=.17, p<.01), integrating (r=.60, p<.01), dominating (r=.14, p<.01), third-party help (r=.14, p<.01), obliging (r=.81, p<.01), and compromising (r=.09, p<.05). Meanwhile, individualism was negatively and significantly correlated to emotional expression, which means as individualism increased, emotional expression (r= -.21, p<.01) decreased. In addition, correlation coefficients showed that collectivism was positively and significantly correlated to the styles of third-party help (r=.13, p<.01), obliging (r=.11, p<.05), and compromising (r=.14, p<.01), while negatively and significantly correlated to the styles of avoiding (r= -.09, p<.05) and neglect (r=.10, p<.05).

For the correlations between the personality traits and conflict management styles in the overall sample, on one hand, the coefficients revealed that independent self-construal was positively and significantly correlated to integrating (r=.25, p<.01), dominating (r=.14, p<.01), emotional expression (r=.27, p<.01) and compromising (r=.15, p<.01) styles, and was negatively and significantly correlated to the third-party help style (r= -.17, p<.01). On the other hand, the correlation coefficients reported in this study indicated that interdependent self-construal was positively and significantly related to the styles of dominating(r=.11, p<.05), third-party help (r=.51, p<.01), neglect (r=.24, p<.01) and obliging (r=.11, p<.05). However, there were no significant negative correlations found between interdependent self-construal and the conflict management styles (see Table 16).

In the American sample, individualism was found positively and significantly correlated to the styles of integrating (r=.77, p<.01), obliging (r=.82, p<.01), and compromising (r=.69, p<.01). Meanwhile, it was negatively and significantly correlated to neglect (r= -.28, p<.01). Collectivism was found positively and significantly correlated to the styles of integrating(r=.29, p<.01), obliging (r=.18, p<.01) and compromising (r=.23, p<.01). While the coefficients also indicated that collectivism was negatively and significantly correlated to avoiding (r= -.13, p<.05) and neglect (r= -.20, p<.01) styles. For the variable of self-construal, the correlation coefficients revealed that the independent self-construal was positively and significantly correlated to the integrating(r= .17, p<.01) and dominating (r= .22, p<.01) styles, while was negatively and significantly correlated to the third-party help(r= -.15, p<.05) style. The interdependent self-construal was positively and significantly correlated to the styles of integrating(r= .28, p<.01), obliging (r= .41, p<.01), and compromising (r= .29, p<.01). The coefficients also showed that the interdependent self-construal was negatively and significantly correlated to the styles of third-party help (r= -.18, p<.01) and neglect (r= -.20, p<.01) (see Table 17).

In the Chinese sample, the correlation coefficients revealed that individualism had positive and significant correlations to the styles of dominating (r= .23, p<.01), third-party help (r= .80, p<.01), neglect (r= .33, p<.01 and obliging (r= .72, p<.01). However, there were no negative and significant correlations found between individualism and conflict management styles for the Chinese participants. In addition, the correlation coefficients showed that collectivism was positively and significantly correlated to the styles of dominating (r= .13, p<.05) and third-party help (r= .20, p<.01). No negative and

significant correlations were found between collectivism and the conflict management styles. For the self-construal, the correlation coefficients indicated that independent self-construal was positively and significantly correlated to the emotional expression ($r=.97$, $p<.01$) and compromising ($r=.50$, $p<.01$) styles, and was negatively and significantly correlated to the integrating ($r=-.23$, $p<.01$) style. The results also showed that interdependent self-construal was positively and significantly correlated to the styles of dominating ($r=.26$, $p<.01$), third-party help ($r=.96$, $p<.01$), neglect ($r=.40$, $p<.01$), and obliging ($r=.29$, $p<.01$). No negative and significant correlations were found between interdependent self-construal and the conflict management styles in the Chinese sample (see Table 18).

Table 16. Correlations among Individualism-Collectivism, Self-Construal and Conflict Management Styles (Overall)

	AV	IG	DO	TP	EE	NE	OB	CP	IN	CO	ID	IT
Avoiding (AV)	1.00	.38**	.07	-.08	-.02	.05	.13**	-.15**	.17**	-.09*	.06	.02
Integrating (IG)		1.00	.07	-.27**	-.33**	-.17**	.43**	-.25**	.60**	.02	.25**	-.07
Dominating (DO)			1.00	.13**	-.02	.41**	.13**	-.01	.14**	.02	.14**	.11*
Third Party Help (TP)				1.00	.08	.37**	-.01	.13**	.14**	.13**	-.17**	.51**
Emotional Expression (EE)					1.00	.06	-.18**	.28**	-.21**	-.03	.27**	.03
Neglect (NE)						1.00	-.01	-.02	-.04	-.10*	-.04	.24**
Obliging (OB)							1.00	.07	.81**	.11*	.08	.11*
Compromising (CP)								1.00	.09*	.14**	.15**	-.03
Individualism (IN)									1.00	.19**	.20**	.31**
Collectivism (CO)										1.00	.01	.08
Independent Self-Contrual (ID)											1.00	-.04
Interdependent Self-Contrual (IT)												1.00

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (Two-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (Two-tailed)

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Table 17. Correlations among Individualism-Collectivism, Self-Construal and Conflict Management Styles (American)

	AV	IG	DO	TP	EE	NE	OB	CP	IN	CO	ID	IT
Avoiding (AV)	1.00	-.04	-.00	.06	.24**	.10	-.07	.03	-.05	-.13*	-.10	-.08
Integrating (IG)		1.00	-.01	-.12	.05	-.30**	.36**	.41**	.77**	.29**	.17**	.28**
Dominating (DO)			1.00	.15*	.01	.37**	-.01	.02	-.02	-.08	.22**	-.09
Third Party Help (TP)				1.00	-.03	.35**	.00	.05	-.04	.04	-.15*	-.18**
Emotional Expression (EE)					1.00	-.04	-.03	.06	.02	-.05	.01	-.03
Neglect (NE)						1.00	-.14*	-.17**	-.28**	-.20**	-.11	-.20**
Obliging (OB)							1.00	.48**	.82**	.18**	-.04	.41**
Compromising (CP)								1.00	.69**	.23**	.08	.29**
Individualism (IN)									1.00	.28**	.09	.44**
Collectivism (CO)										1.00	.16**	.30**
Independent Self-Contrual (ID)											1.00	.20**
Interdependent Self-Contrual (IT)												1.00

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (Two-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (Two-tailed)

Table 18. Correlations among Individualism-Collectivism, Self-Construal and Conflict Management Styles (Chinese)

	AV	IG	DO	TP	EE	NE	OB	CP	IN	CO	ID	IT
Avoiding (AV)	1.00	.35**	.07	-.03	.01	.10	.06	-.12	.02	-.04	-.04	-.03
Integrating (IG)		1.00	.01	-.04	-.14*	.03	.10	-.30**	.03	-.00	-.20**	-.05
Dominating (DO)			1.00	.18**	.03	.47**	.21**	.01	.23**	.13*	.03	.26**
Third Party Help (TP)				1.00	-.03	.35**	.24**	.05	.80**	.20**	-.01	.96**
Emotional Expression (EE)					1.00	.08	-.07	.36**	-.05	-.07	.97**	-.02
Neglect (NE)						1.00	.22**	.05	.33**	-.02	.09	.40**
Obliging (OB)							1.00	-.04	.72**	.12	-.07	.29**
Compromising (CP)								1.00	-.02	.03	.50**	.04
Individualism (IN)									1.00	.30**	-.05	.79**
Collectivism (CO)										1.00	-.08	.21**
Independent Self-Contrual (ID)											1.00	.00
Interdependent Self-Contrual (IT)												1.00

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (Two-tailed).

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (Two-tailed)

Chapter 5

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the effects of cultural-level and individual-level factors, especially the role of individualism-collectivism and self-construal, on the preferences of conflict management styles among Chinese and American young adults within the context of romantic relationships. Two sets of hypotheses were proposed. The first set of the three hypotheses was developed to predict the relationship between the cultural differences (individualism-collectivism) and the preferences of romantic conflict management styles. The second set of another three hypotheses was formulated to predict the relationship between the personality trait differences (independent and interdependent self-construal) and the choices of romantic conflict management styles.

Implications

This section presents the interpretations of the findings from this study. Based on the various statistical analyses, the following implications are offered.

Conflict management style preferences. Regarding romantic conflict management styles, results showed that American participants preferred integrating style the most, followed by compromising, obliging, dominating styles. The next preferred styles were avoiding and emotional expression (no significant difference between the two styles), followed by third-party help. The least preferred one was neglect. For the Chinese group, participants preferred compromising style the most, followed by emotional expression and dominating. The next preferred styles were obliging and third-party help (no significant difference between the two styles), followed by avoiding and

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neglect (no significant difference between these styles). It was interesting to note that the least used style by Chinese participants, integrating, was American participants' most preferable style. In addition, the most preferred styles for American and Chinese students, integrating and compromising respectively, are associated positively with both self- and other- concern (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Thus, it is likely that within the romantic relationship context, a narrow social group consisted of only the two romantic parties, students prefer the management styles taking both people into consideration in that those styles may help to resolve the conflict directly and quickly.

The comparison of romantic conflict style preferences between American and Chinese students indicated that Americans preferred the styles of avoiding, integrating, dominating and obliging significantly more than Chinese did, whereas Chinese preferred third-party help, emotional expression, neglect, and compromising styles more than Americans did.

Individualism-collectivism. The first hypothesis predicted that Chinese students involved in romantic relationships would express more collectivism and less individualism than their American counterparts. Findings in this study revealed a significant difference between the American and the Chinese groups regarding participants' endorsement of individualism. Chinese participants expressed less individualism than American participants in romantic relationships, which supported the first part of Hypothesis 1. However, the second prediction was not supported. The analysis indicated that no significant difference was found between the two groups for collectivism. Thus, Chinese and American participants were equally collectivistic. In addition, results showed that Americans were equally individualistic and collectivistic in

this study, and Chinese participants were more collectivistic than individualistic. These findings failed to support Hofstede's (1980) cultural argument which suggested the United States was a highly individualistic culture (i.e., individual freedom and welfare is more important than group welfare), and the argument that individuals from North America are mostly individualistic (Farver, Welles-Nystrom, Frosch, Wimbarti, & Hoppe-Graff, 1997). However, the results were consistent with the popular belief that collectivism is more prevalent than individualism in Asian cultures (e.g., Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001), and Chinese culture is collectivistic (i.e., group welfare take preference over individual wishes and needs) (Hofstede, 2001).

There are several explanations for these findings. First, individualism-collectivism should be considered as two distinct constructs rather than a uni-dimensional construct. Individuals can develop both individualism and collectivism simultaneously. According to Triandis (1995), people's individualistic and collectivistic attitude can be activated as a function of situational and relational contexts, and individual's collectivistic cognition tends to be stimulated in a narrow social group (i.e., family) and less activated in a larger group (i.e., workplace). Since this study was conducted within the context of romantic relationships, a narrow social group consisting of only the romantic partners, it is possible for the American participants, who were regarded as predominately individualistic, tended to be more collectivistic.

Second, previous research has indicated that Americans differed in their endorsement of individualism and collectivism. Vandello and Cohen's study (1999) found that people across the United States developed different levels of individualism and collectivism according to the regional variation. The results also showed that collectivist

tendencies were strongest in the Deep South of the United States (the whole state of Florida was included into this group in the study), where the American data were collected in this research. Thus, this may be a reason why the American participants expressed a high level of collectivism.

Individualism-collectivism and conflict management styles. The second hypothesis predicted that students who express more individualism would use more dominating, integrating, emotional expression, and neglect styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those who express less individualism. The third hypothesis predicted that students who express more collectivism will use more avoiding, compromising, obliging, and third-party help styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those who express less collectivism.

The results indicated an influence of culture-level factor, individualism-collectivism, on the participants' choices of romantic conflict management styles. In the overall sample, participants expressed a higher level of individualism used more dominating and integrating styles than participants who expressed a lower level of individualism, which partially supported Hypothesis 2. This result was consistent with the argument that members of individualistic cultures tend to use more dominating conflict strategies and more substantive outcome-oriented strategies (i.e., integrating) (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). However, the results also showed that the students with a low level of individualism used more emotional expression than students expressed a high level of individualism. Emotional expression focuses on the use of emotions during the conflict interaction. Individuals who use emotional expression strongly rely on their feelings to guide conflict responses (Ting-Toomey et al., 2000). This finding contradicts

Oetzel and Ting-Toomey's (2003) study, which showed that individualists tended to be expressive of their own feelings, concerns, and interests and they were more concerned about asserting their own face interest (i.e., emotional expression). However, it may be due to the fact that the present study was conducted within the context of romantic relationships, in which emotion could be a very important factor during conflict. As a result, in addition to the effect of culture, the situational and relational contexts also influenced participants' choices of conflict management styles. Finally, no significant difference was found for the neglect style between the high and low individualism groups. This style was also at the bottom of preferences of conflict management styles for both American and Chinese participants. It seems that romantic partners prefer more positive and active conflict resolution styles rather than open aggressive behavior with the goal to hurt or harm the other person's image.

The results also indicated that participants with a higher level of collectivism used more obliging and third-party help styles in romantic conflict management than participants with a lower level of collectivism, which partially supported Hypothesis 2. This finding was consistent with the argument that the accommodating/obliging and third-party help styles have been associated with collectivistic culture (Oetzel, 1998; Trubisky et al., 1991). However, no significant differences were found for the styles of avoiding and compromising between the high and low collectivism groups. As suggested in Trubisky et al.'s (1991) research, avoiding is normally associated with collectivistic cultures. In this study, however, it was negatively correlated with collectivism, which contradicted the former research. In addition, according to Oetzel (1988), the compromising style is associated with assertiveness and directness, and the individualists

tend to use assertive, active, and competitive strategies for resolving conflicts (Itoi, Ohbuchi, & Fukuno, 1996; Trubisky et al., 1991). The findings, however, showed that compromising was Chinese participants' most preferable and American participants' second favorable style, and in fact, both groups scored high for collectivism. Thus, these results do not support the previous research findings. Again, the possible reason could be the certain context involved in this study, romantic relationships. The narrow social groups involved fewer considerations for individuals' social status, public image, face-concerns, and so forth. Young people would like to adopt a certain conflict management style simply because it worked quickly and well.

Self-construal. Hypothesis 4 predicted that Chinese students involved in romantic relationships would report a higher level of interdependent self-construal and a lower level of independent self-construal than their American counterparts. The results supported the hypothesis that Chinese participants indicated less independent self-construal than the American participants. However, a surprising finding was that Chinese were *equally* interdependent as Americans, and both the American and Chinese groups were more independent than interdependent. Gudykunst et al. (1996) argued that independent self-construal is associated with people of individualistic cultures, whereas interdependent self-construal is associated predominately with people of collectivistic cultures. Although these findings for American participants were consistent with the individualistic cultural values, results for the Chinese participants indicated the complexity of contemporary Chinese cultural values and the interplay between individualism and collectivism. Cao (2009) indicated a tendency of transition from collectivism to individualism in China and the possible factors promoting this shift such

as economic development, the reform and opening-up, the influence of education, the influence of mass media, etc. Therefore, it is not unexpected to find that Chinese participants reported a higher level of independent self-construal, which suggested a transition of the cultural values in the Chinese society.

Self-construal and conflict management styles. Hypothesis 5 predicted that students with a higher level of independent self-construal would use more dominating, neglect, emotional expression, integrating, and compromising styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those with a lower level of independent self-construal. Except for the neglect style, which showed no significant difference between the high and low independent groups, the results for other styles supported the hypothesis. These findings were also consistent with Markus and Kitayama's (1991) results. Similarly to the results of individualism, it is possible that participants in romantic relationships do not prefer the neglect style, which was regarded as a negative and aggressive way to resolve the conflicts.

The last hypothesis in this group (Hypothesis 6) predicted that students with a higher level of interdependent self-construal would use more avoiding, obliging, third-party help, integrating, and compromising styles when in conflict with their romantic partners than those with a lower level of interdependent self-construal. The results showed that participants with a higher level of interdependent self-construal used more obliging and third-party help styles, thus part of Hypothesis 6 was supported. In addition, no significant differences were found for the avoiding and compromising styles between the high and low interdependent self-construal groups. These findings were similar to Hypothesis 3. Thus, Hypothesis 6 was consistent with Gudykunst et al.'s (1996)

argument for the relationship between collectivism and interdependent self-construal. However, integrating, the most preferable style among the American students, was found to be used more by the low interdependent self-construal group. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), the integrating style is associated positively with both self- and other-concern. Thus, it is reasonable to expect that American participants, who scored high for collectivism (indicating other-concern) and for independent self-construal (indicating self-concern), preferred the integrating style the most.

In summary, no significant differences were found on the preference for the neglect style between the high/low individualism and the high/low independent self-construal groups. Similarly, there were no significant differences on the preference for the styles of avoiding and compromising between the high/low collectivism and high/low interdependent self-construal groups. These results may suggest that in addition to the cultural and individual factors, the situational and relational contexts may also have a strong influence on people's choices of conflict management styles. According to the rankings of romantic conflict management styles preferences for both nations, within the context of romantic relationships, young people tended to choose the styles which work quickly and well (i.e. compromising, integrating) rather than passive and aggressive styles which may hurt each other and ruin the relationship (i.e., avoiding and neglect).

Contributions

This study contributed several innovations in the field of intercultural and interpersonal communication, especially in the area of conflict management studies.

First, instead of only comparing the preferences of conflict management styles between the two different nations, the present study used eight recoded groups, high/low

individualism, high/low collectivism, high/low independent self-construal, and high/low interdependent self-construal. Its findings should help researchers better understand the influence of culture and personality on individuals' choices of conflict management styles.

Second, this study was conducted within the context of romantic relationships. There are abundant studies comparing conflict management style preferences between American and Chinese. Many, however, were not conducted within a specified situational and relational context, or focused more on the workplace, family, friends, and so forth than the romantic context. Deeply influenced by the Confucius philosophy, Chinese people tend to use indirect and implicit ways to express themselves, especially for romantic feelings. Chinese prefer to keep their love in heart rather than speak it out. Thus, it is not surprising that there was a lack of research related to the romantic conflict styles in China. The current study was designed to fill this gap.

Third, the results from this study showed some differences for the individualism-collectivism and independent-interdependent self-construal constructs between Americans and Chinese from previous findings. Since this study was conducted among young college students, it suggests transitions of cultural values and personality traits in both American and Chinese societies through the development of globalization.

Limitations

There are also limitations to this study. First, the data collected in this research were based on the self-reported responses for a recalled conflict situation. Thus, it is possible that the participants' responses may not match the actual behaviors. And the answers might be based on the participants' subjective perceptions at that moment.

Second, the research did not include specific cultural and ethnic backgrounds for the American participants. The United States has a quite diverse population, especially for the southern coastal region, where the American data were collected in this study. A lot of the American participants had complicated cultural and ethnic backgrounds (e.g., different origins, races, nationalities, permanent residency). As a result, the participants were asked about their nationality and only those indicated themselves as "Americans" were included in the study. This would inevitably influence the participants' responses of cultural values and personality traits.

Third, the majority of participants in this research were female in both nations. Since this study was within the context of romantic relationships, gender might be an important factor to predict people's conflict management styles. Several studies have indicated the effects of gender for people's preferences of conflict resolution styles (e.g., Offerman & Beil, 1992; Papa & Natalle, 1989; Sorenson, Hawkins, & Sorenson, 1995).

Suggestions for Future Research

This study served as an initial attempt to probe the influence of individualism-collectivism and self-construal on the preferences of conflict management styles between American and Chinese students. Several directions are suggested for future research in this area.

First, this study only focused on the conflicts in heterosexual romantic relationships. As the development of human society, however, the population of homosexuals is growing rapidly. As a result, more research on the conflicts within the homosexual romantic relationships is needed in the future.

Second, since the study was conducted within the context of romantic relationships, it would be valuable that future studies involve both parties into the research simultaneously, especially cross-cultural couples. The advantage of this method is that the same questions would be administered to both of the romantic partners at the same time. Thus, the researcher would be able to compare their answers to avoid the possible discrepancy between what the respondents report and their actual behaviors, as well as their subjective perceptions in the conflict situations. In addition, the researcher could evaluate the participants' responses based on the same conflict situation. This method could increase the accuracy and reliability of the collected data and provide the researcher with a better understanding of the role of culture and personality.

Third, it would be interesting to investigate the interplay of cultural factors, personality traits, and situational and relational contexts. Since people's behaviors are influenced by their cultural values and personality, it would be insightful to consider the interactions between these two variables. Furthermore, except for individualism-collectivism and self-construal, it would be interesting to examine deeply the influence of situational and relational context on people's preferences of conflict management styles. Besides, some other variables, such as face-concern, family pattern, the length of the relationship and the age of the romantic partners, should also be taken into consideration in the future studies.

Conclusion

This study examined the influence of individualism-collectivism and independent-interdependent self-construal on the preferences of conflict management styles within the romantic context among Chinese and American students. At the cultural level, American

participants were equally individualistic and collectivistic, and Chinese participants were more collectivistic than individualistic. In addition, Americans were more individualistic than Chinese, and were equally collectivistic as Chinese. High individualistic participants used more dominating and integrating styles and high collectivists used more obliging and third-party help styles.

At the individual level, both American and Chinese groups were more independent than interdependent. Americans were more independent than Chinese and were equally interdependent as Chinese. High independent participants used more dominating, integrating, emotional expression, and compromising styles, and high interdependent participants adopted more obliging and third-party help styles.

American students used more integrating, obliging, dominating and avoiding styles than Chinese students, whereas Chinese adopted more compromising, emotional expression, third-party help, and neglect styles than Americans. The different findings in this study for the cultural values and personality traits from the previous studies indicated transitions in both societies. In addition, people's preferences for conflict management styles were not only influenced by their endorsement of individualism-collectivism and different self-construals, but also varied according to the situational and relational context.

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Appendix A: Interpersonal Relationship and Conflict Styles Survey

Dear Participant,

My name is Wuyu Liu. I am a graduate student in the School of Communication at the University of Miami. I am currently doing a study to complete my Master's Degree in Public Relations. The purpose of this study is to understand how people's cultural background and personal traits would influence the conflict management styles they use. In particular, the survey instrument assesses the role of individualism-collectivism and self-construal during conflicts in romantic relationships.

For this project, you must be at least 18 years of age to participate. Your participation in filling out the questionnaire is extremely important to the success of this research study. The questionnaire should take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. Participation in this survey is voluntary and responses are anonymous. You may discontinue participation at any time or skip any question that makes you feel uncomfortable. Refusal to participate will not involve penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you do not wish to participate, please return the blank questionnaire. Your participation in this survey will be confidential. As a way of thanking you for your time and participation, you will receive extra credits.

Thank you for filling out this survey. Your time and efforts are greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact:

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SECTION I Romantic Relationship Status

In this section of the survey, we would like to obtain some basic information about your romantic relationship status. Romantic relationship is defined as "any dating, engaged, or marital relationship between two individuals." This information will help us to interpret and analyze the survey data with accuracy. Please circle the appropriate answer or fill in the blank.

1. Within the last 12 months, have you ever been involved in a heterosexual romantic relationship
   (A) Yes he last 12 months, have you eve

   (B) No he last 12 months, have you ever been invo

2. Are you currently involved in a heterosexual romantic relationship?
   (A) Yes

   (B) No

3. If yes to either 1 or 2, how long have you been in this romantic relationship? (e.g.,   2

   months, 1 year, 1.5 years ...) _____

4. My romantic partner's cultural/ethnic background: _____ (be specific)

5. How often do you have disagreements with your romantic partner? (Circle one only)

   (A) Very seldom
   (B) Once a month
   (C) Twice a month
   (D) Once a week
   (E) Twice or more a week

SECTION II Conflict Management Styles

When filling out the following section, think of a past or current romantic relationship. Please recall a specific situation during the last 12 months when you and your romantic partner fought or had a disagreement. If you are not in a romantic relationship currently, please recall a disagreement you had with a prior intimate other. Conflict is defined in this survey as "any emotionally frustrated disagreement between two conflict partners which involves incompatible goals, wishes, viewpoints, or needs." When you answer each item below, please think of your conflict interactions with the same romantic partner in mind. If you strongly agree with the item, circle 5; if you strongly disagree with the item, circle 1. Feel free to circle any number between 5 and 1 with: 5 =Strongly Agree [SA], 4 =Agree [A], 3 =Neutral [N], 2 =Disagree [D], and 1 =Strongly Disagree [SD].

	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I used my influence to get my ideas accepted.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I proposed a middle ground for breaking up the conflict situation.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I relied on a close friend to help negotiate a resolution to the conflict.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I tried to find a middle course to resolve the impasse.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I said nasty things about my partner to other people.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I used my authority to make a decision in my favor.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I asked a close friend to make a decision about how to settle the dispute between myself and my partner	5	4	3	2	1
8. I used my feelings to determine what I should do in the conflict situation.	5	4	3	2	1
9. Out of anger, I said things to damage my partner's reputation.	5	4	3	2	1

	SA	A	N	D	SD
10. I used my feelings to guide my conflict behaviors.	5	4	3	2	1
11. I said nothing and waited for things to get better.	5	4	3	2	1
12. I worked with my partner to reach a joint resolution to our conflict.	5	4	3	2	1
13. I preferred my partner to be emotionally expressive with me in the conflict situation.	5	4	3	2	1
14. I used my power to win a competitive edge.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I typically go through a close friend to settle our conflict.	5	4	3	2	1
16. I tried to downplay our disagreement and not make waves.	5	4	3	2	1
17. I said and did things out of anger to make my partner feel bad.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I win some and lose some so that a compromise can be reached.	5	4	3	2	1
19. I asked a close friend to help negotiate the disagreement with my partner about his/her behavior.	5	4	3	2	1
20. I tried to satisfy the conflict expectations of my partner.	5	4	3	2	1
21. While in the presence of one's partner, I acted as though he/she does not exist.	5	4	3	2	1
22. I used a "give and take" so that a compromise could be made.	5	4	3	2	1
23. I gave in to the wishes of my partner.	5	4	3	2	1

	SA	A	N	D	SD
24. I sucked it up and held my resentment in silence.	5	4	3	2	1
25. I told my partner that there are problems and suggested that we work them out.	5	4	3	2	1
26. I used my gut feelings to determine whether to trust my partner.	5	4	3	2	1
27. I made sure my partner realized that solving our differences was important.	5	4	3	2	1
28. I tried to satisfy the needs of my partner.	5	4	3	2	1
29. I tried to get us to work together to settle our differences.	5	4	3	2	1
30. I went along with the suggestions of my partner.	5	4	3	2	1
31. I generally kept quiet and waited for things to improve.	5	4	3	2	1
32. I tried to persuade my partner that my viewpoint is right	5	4	3	2	1

SA   A   N   D   SD

SECTION III Individualism-Collectivism

The following section is designed to measure the extent to which individuals relate to others. Read the following statements and mark how much you agree or disagree with the sentence. If you strongly agree with the item, circle 5; if you strongly disagree with the item, circle 1. Feel free to circle any number between 5 and 1 with: 5 =Strongly Agree [SA], 4 =Agree [A], 3 =Neutral [N], 2 =Disagree [D], and 1 =Strongly Disagree [SD].

	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I prefer to be direct and forthright when I talk to people.	5	4	3	2	1
2. My happiness depends very much on the happiness of those around me.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I would do what would please my family, even if I don't like that activity.	5	4	3	2	1
4. To me, winning is everything in my life.	5	4	3	2	1
5. One should live one's life independently of others.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group.	5	4	3	2	1
7. It annoys me when other people perform better than I do.	5	4	3	2	1
8. It is important for me to maintain harmony within my group.	5	4	3	2	1
9. It is important to me that I do my job better than others.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I like sharing little things with my friends or family.	5	4	3	2	1
11. I enjoy working in situations involving competition with others	5	4	3	2	1
12. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many ways	5	4	3	2	1

	SA	A	N	D	SD
13. If a relative were in financial difficulty, I would help within my means.	5	4	3	2	1
14. Some people emphasize in winning; I am not one of them.	5	4	3	2	1
15. I often focus on "my own thing."	5	4	3	2	1
16. When I succeed, it is usually because of my abilities.	5	4	3	2	1
17. To me, pleasure is spending time with others.	5	4	3	2	1
18. I would like to keep my privacy.	5	4	3	2	1
19. I feel good when I cooperate with others.	5	4	3	2	1
20. Before taking a major trip, I consult with most members of my family and many friends	5	4	3	2	1

SECTION IV Self-Construal

The purpose of this section is to understand the degree to which you perceive yourselves as separate from or connected to others in the society you are living in. Read the following statements and mark how much you agree or disagree with the sentence. If you strongly agree with the item, circle 5; if you strongly disagree with the item, circle 1. Feel free to circle any number between 5 and 1 with: 5 =Strongly Agree [SA], 4 =Agree [A], 3 =Neutral [N], 2 =Disagree [D], and 1 =Strongly Disagree [SD].

	SA	A	N	D	SD
1. I respect the decisions made by my partner.	5	4	3	2	1
2. I act as a unique person separate from my partner.	5	4	3	2	1
3. I would stick with my partner even through difficulties.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I would not support a decision made by my partner if I thought it was wrong.	5	4	3	2	1
5. I would stay with my partner if he/she needed me, even if I was not happy with my partner.	5	4	3	2	1
6. It was important for me to act as an independent person from my partner.	5	4	3	2	1
7. I respect the majority of my partner's wishes.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I assert my opposition when I disagree with my partner.	5	4	3	2	1
9. I met the demands of my partner, even if it means controlling my own desires.	5	4	3	2	1
10. In a discussion with my partner, my personal identity was very important.	5	4	3	2	1

SECTION V Demographics

In this section of the survey we would like to obtain some personal information about you.
This information will help us to interpret and analyze the survey data with accuracy.
Please checkmark ("√") the appropriate answer or fill in the blank.
1. Sex: Male _____   Female _____

2. Age: _____

3. Nationality: American_____   Chinese_____   Other: (please specify) _____

4. Education level (check with "√"):

   Freshman _____   Sophomore _____

   Junior _____   Senior _____

   Graduate Student _____   Other: (please specify) _____

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME AND HELP!

Appendix B. Scoring for Instrument

The items on the instruments include the following (in order)

Section/Variable	Item
Section II.	
Conflict Management Styles (1-32)	
Avoiding	11, 16, 24, 31
Integrating	12, 25, 27, 29
Dominating	1, 6, 14, 32
Third Party Help	3, 7, 15, 19
Emotional Expression	8, 10, 13, 26
Passive Aggression	5, 9, 17, 21
Obliging	20, 23, 28, 30
Compromising	2, 4, 18, 22
Section III	
Individualism-Collectivism (1-20)	
Individualism	1, 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 16, 18
Collectivism	2, 3, 6, 8, 10, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20
Section IV	
Self-Construals (1-10)	
Interdependent	1, 3, 5, 7, 9
Independent	2, 4, 6, 8, 10