

Comparing Conflict Management and Avoiding among Ethnic Chinese, Japanese, and Americans: Interpersonal and Organizational Settings

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Abstract

This paper presents an introduction to cross-cultural studies on interpersonal and organizational conflict styles. It addresses the typologies of *collectivist-individualist* and *interdependent-independent*, focusing on two styles of conflict management in particular: integrating and avoiding. The studies under review primarily concern participants identified as Chinese or Japanese. Other Asians, as well as Americans, are also reviewed for the purpose of comparison. At the same time, in discussions about East versus West, or group-values versus individual-values, several researchers suggest not to overgeneralize. Whether evaluating cross-culturally or intra-culturally, the research and opinions covered in this paper, and elsewhere, convey interactions that are far more complex in real life than such dichotomies as Asian/non-Asian or individual/collective.

keywords: conflict avoidance, conflict management, face concerns, organizational psychology, cross-cultural psychology

Introduction

The purpose of this review is to compare interpersonal conflict styles across selected cultures, primarily ethnic Chinese, Japanese, and Caucasian American. The paper will move through three principle topics: (a) to see how well the collectivist-individualist and interdependent-independent typologies hold up in various social psychological experiments; (b) to spot some potential pitfalls or contradictions when using these constructs; and (c) to see how much the constructs contribute to a discussion on interpersonal conflict styles, particularly the avoiding style.

For sometime, the avoiding style of conflict management has been addressed within the Asian context. However, in their study of interpersonal conflict styles among managers in four countries, Onishi and Bliss (2006) remarked that “characterizations of an ‘Asian’ or

‘Eastern’ approach to management masks important differences that exist in the behavioral orientation of managers from various Asian nations” (p. 204). Such masking, typically in the form of East-versus-West, tends to undervalue complex and dynamic interpretations. As additions or alternatives to a collectivist-individualist simplification, consider the following frameworks:

- cultural intelligence (Chen, Wu, & Bian, 2014)
- cross-cultural competence (Chiu, Lonner, Matsumoto, & Ward, 2013)
- interpersonal flexibility (Cheng, Wang, & Golden, 2011)
- personal identity (Kwok-bun & Wai-wan, 2011)
- individual cognitive style (Zhang, Sternberg, & Rayner, 2011)
- languages and logics (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2013)
- affect (Garris, Ohbuchi, Oikawa, & Harris, 2011)
- shame and face (Oetzel, Garcia, & Ting-Toomey, 2007)
- organizational philosophies and practices (Steers, Sanchez-Runde, & Nardon, 2010)

With such varied frameworks in mind, the current paper will examine some of the research from social psychology, including four comparative studies that address topics such as face concern and conflict avoiding. Though several of the conclusions support the general trends reported in collectivist-individualist findings, a number of variations go deeper into, or even traverse, a few commonly accepted boundaries. Most of the studies entail self-report results. For variation, cultural background and the dynamic approach to conflict management are mentioned.

Cultures and Philosophies

Despite a resistance to treating culture as a major topic of cogitation in Western analytic philosophy (Prinz, 2011), literature from the social sciences and humanities, particularly in regard to Asia (e.g., Chang, 2006; Chiu et al., 2014; Hong, Fang, Yang, & Phua, 2013), addresses the role that culture plays in numerous areas, including its influence on conflict management. At the same time, Tweed and Conway (2006) warned against blanket generalizations about cultural differences, which “may capture something accurate about reality, but if taken as literal monolithic statements, such statements tend to be crude at best” (p. 134). Likewise, Hwang (2006) suggested that “too much emphasis on cultural uniqueness amounts to a kind of ethnocentrism in reverse” (p. 74).

More fundamentally, the very term *culture* remains contentious, particularly among anthropologists (Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht, & Lindsay, 2006). Cultures exist in the plural, as do maths and logics. In this sense, within their respective macros of East and West, cultures share underlying characteristics, though individual cultures themselves, and their many cultural variables, traverse vertical and horizontal boundaries, creating subcultures within subcultures. In terms of management, this can operate at the level of micro-cultures, such as teams working within organizations (West, Tjosvold, & Smith, 2005). On this micro-plane, in a review of several studies regarding shared mental models, Guastello (2009) concluded that coordination among work-group members is greatly enhanced if the members have a

shared mental model of their tasks, procedures, and group processes.

At the same time, at the broader philosophical level, the often-discussed differences between East and West typically amount to little more than comparing elements of Chinese Confucianism and Western rationalism, with little mention or comprehension of other traditions, such as Indian philosophies or the non-secular bureaucratic practices of Southeast Asia. This scenario presents a construct dilemma for several reasons, not the least of which is that Western thought and science have undergone numerous cultural shifts and reconstructions throughout history, particularly in the last century (Okasha, 2002). The same holds true for Confucianism (Hwang, 2006), where the brands can range from classical forms still prevalent in China, to the Neo-Confucianism that emerged in Korea and Japan only a few centuries ago. Even without these shifts, as if philosophies could somehow remain static and monolithic, Wong (2011) argued that doing comparative philosophy is still tremendously difficult, because Eastern and Western societies are both significantly complex and heterogeneous.

In this light, instead of a simplistic East-versus-West cultural or philosophical polarity, as typically seen in the opening sections of management textbooks and even academic papers, Wong (2011) emphasized a more informative framing, one of comparing the longstanding notion of Chinese wisdom against Western systematic argumentation. In the Chinese context, the guiding force (or wisdom) includes practicing discretion, adhering to set principles, and adapting to particular situations. Compared to Western approaches toward negotiation, persuasion, and problem solving, which are characterized by arriving at axiomatic truths to convert others to a position, Chinese philosophy “portrays a way of life in a vivid fashion so as to invite the audience to consider its adoption” (p. 13). Going a step further, though some argumentation does exist in Chinese philosophy, Taoist thought in particular recommends a way of life that explicitly cannot be argued for.

By comparison, argumentation, rhetoric, and Western logics represent the core of formal Western thought. As such, today’s parameters for organizational cross-cultural competence (Van Driel & Gabrenya, 2012), as well as for collective intelligence (Sulis, 2009), are dominated by Western classical decision theories, conflict styles, and outcomes emphasizing rationality. Considering the collective-individualist typology for a moment, it might be easier, therefore, to view Confucian-influenced cultures as accommodating or morphing, to meet circumstances and navigate conflicts, whereas Western approaches tend toward making points, focusing on tasks, and managing conflicts more directly.

Organizational Frameworks

In addition to general cultural trends, perhaps equally important are the specific business and organizational frameworks situated within cultures. Steers, Sanchez-Runde, and Nardon (2010) stated that the actual business practices of different cultures impact how individuals from those cultures manage conflict. According to Chen (2001), Chinese-influenced business management styles take their strength from flexibility, a network of connections, and negotiation skills. On the other hand, in an empirical study of Chinese conflict-management

styles, Ma (2007) concluded that even though a collectivist conflict-management model tends to hold true among Chinese people, “no relationship is found between conflict style and conflict-resolving behaviors during business negotiations” (p. 17). Such a result echoes a broader sentiment from a multi-Asian study on conflict management, in which Onishi and Bliss (2006) warned that “much management research treats Asians as culturally homogeneous” (p. 203). The researchers concluded that while “Asians generally have a greater tendency to avoid conflict than do Westerners” (p. 218), management styles vary significantly across national and cultural boundaries, leaving no clearly defined East Asian style of management. In addition, as more industries globalize and cross-cultural awareness becomes more important, a number of authors, across disciplines, have noted the emerging differences between the younger and older generations of managers.

Conflict Styles: Collectivists and Individualists

Despite the complex and rich development of literature on management and conflict styles in Asia, and the current paper’s focus on expanding the conversation beyond simple dichotomies, the traditional collectivist-individualist typology remains a useful and convenient departure point for discourse. Chen, Peng, and Saporito (2002) categorized collectivists as those typically considering the self as interconnected and interdependent with members of their same group, whereas individualists are those who view the self as autonomous and independent. In other words, “collectivists, relative to individualists, are more embedded in their various ingroups and have stronger social identification with these ingroups” (p. 571). Accordingly, collectivists tend to strongly define themselves based on group identity, where the collectivist self is bound by moral obligations and social relationships. In terms of preserving these “strong relational bonds” (translated from the Chinese word *guanxi*; see Chen & Chen, 2012), Tjosvold, Poon, and Yu (2005, p. 343) stated that such bonds are considered crucial for conducting both personal and professional business. This often leads to avoiding direct ways of working, in order to preserve these important interpersonal relationships.

At the same time, Chen et al. (2002) warned that the value of such relationships is more ideal than practiced. Though collectivists tend to form identity and values from their ingroup relationships, they are far less likely than individualists to show concern or moral obligation to members of any outgroup. Taken one step further, persons from collectivist cultures, more often than persons from individualist cultures, tend to exploit members not considered part of their particular ingroup. Phrased conversely, in comparison to collectivists, people from individualist cultures tend to demonstrate higher regard and concern for strangers and less exploitation of them. As a result, though collectivist and individualist cultures share common features, including opportunism, exploitation, and modes of conflict management, each tends to develop and operate differently depending on the respective cultures themselves and their members.

In terms of intercultural (cross-cultural) conflict specifically, Ting-Toomey and Takai (2006) explained that such conflict typically occurs when cultural membership differences lead to

communication discrepancies in worldviews and values. Since culture is a learned system of meanings set within a complex framework, the authors added that such discrepancies can also include mismatched expectations in potential instances of conflict. Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) described such conflict as emotionally threatening interactions that entail perceived or actual incompatibility of factors, which can include goals, face orientations, and conflict styles.

It is worth pausing here to mention some potential confusion regarding terminology, particularly to the reader unaccustomed to non-Western—in this case, Japanese and Chinese—cultural behavior and communication. In popular psychology, terms such as *competition*, *assertion*, and *aggression* are sometimes confused with one another. This can also happen with terms such as *avoiding*, *ignoring*, and *passivity*. It must be noted that the terms within these constructs do not share equivalency. Assertiveness does not equal confrontation. Likewise, competition does not equal conflict. As such, conflict-avoiding strategies do not equal non-competitive strategies. As discussed in much of the literature, and apparent from historical readings, both ethnic Chinese and Japanese can be indirect, non-confrontational, and even avoiding, yet still firmly competitive.

In a literature review on cross-cultural conflict resolution, Lather, Jain, and Shukla (2011) identified several of the major definitions, challenges, and implications of the term *conflict*, including the fact that its meaning is understood differently by different people. In the collectivist context, Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) defined the term as any fighting, unpleasant dispute, contradictory struggle, or even unharmonious situation. Comparatively, in the individualist frame, Lather et al. (2011) accepted the meaning of conflict as any disagreement or undesired condition that prevents an individual from reaching his or her goals.

Conflict Resolution Versus Conflict Management

As for addressing conflict itself, while the standard approach speaks of conflict resolution or extinguishment, from the viewpoint of organizational contingency (Chen, Zhao, Liu, & Wu, 2012) the usefulness or harm of conflict depends on how it is handled. Hence, as noted by Iqbal and Fatima (2013), in the evolution of businesses and organizations there has developed distinct positions of conflict “resolution” and conflict “management.” In this latter view, conflict presents both beneficial and debilitating outcomes (Jehn, 1995; Jehn & Mannix, 2001). As such, the stance moves away from a general, perhaps naive position of conflict “annihilation,” to one of trying to diminish individual counterproductive conflicts.

As for managing conflict, Ting-Toomey and Oetzel (2001) described collectivist (interdependent) styles as being more compromising, obligating, or avoiding than individualist (independent) styles. At the same time, though acknowledging this two-dimensional approach as informative, these authors and others (e.g., Cai & Fink, 2002; Tweed & Conway, 2006), have also criticized its limited explanatory power. As such, the study of cross-cultural communication has developed a five-category framework for discussing interpersonal conflict management. These five factors can be defined, proceeding

from least confrontational to most confrontational, as *avoiding*, *obliging*, *integrating*, *compromising*, and *dominating*.

In one well-known test of this typology, Cai and Fink (2002) conducted a study of 188 graduate students from 31 countries, all of whom were living or studying in the United States. Measuring along the five-category framework, the researchers discovered that the most preferred style among these individuals, regardless of culture, was integrating, followed by obliging and avoiding, and then compromising and finally dominating. The underlying message was that conflict styles, regardless of collectivist or individualist, are multidimensional, so much so that “the relationship of culture to conflict style preferences may not be valid” (p. 67).

Though the Cai and Fink (2002) study is informative, it is important to remember that it only involved participants residing within a single nation, hence the results should not be readily generalized to subcultures or other nations. Along these lines, in a study designed to test face-negotiation theory, Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2003) administered a questionnaire to 768 participants from universities in four countries: China, Japan, Germany, and the United States. The dependent variables were the conflict styles of *avoiding*, *integrating*, and *dominating*, thus a three-dimensional framework. The questionnaire was presented in the following format: (a) self-construal items, (b) face concern items, (c) conflict behavior items, and (d) demographics. The results of this study confirmed one of Oetzel and Ting-Toomey’s (2003) hypotheses, that face concerns play an important role in mediation regardless of culture. The findings also contradicted previous studies concerned with the collectivist-individualist typology. Most notably, the researchers discovered much higher levels of independence and dominating among members from collectivist cultures. Oetzel and Ting-Toomey suggested that because of the young nature of the participants involved, these results might be more a product of age than culture.

Conflict Avoidance

In a study on interpersonal conflict preferences among Japanese university students, Nakatsugawa and Takai (2013) focused on the Japanese model of avoidance strategy, which is commonly used to keep conflict non-explicit or non-salient. In a presentation entitled, “Rethinking interpersonal conflict strategies: Is *avoiding* really that bad?” Takai (2014, p. xx) claimed that the skillful management of conflict in everyday relationships “is the key to interpersonal harmony.” Takai discussed this position in direct opposition to the dual concern model of conflict resolution (Blake & Mouton, 1964), a longstanding main device in Western law and business (Cai & Fink, 2002; Wang, Fink, & Cai, 2012). In earlier research on the topic, Rahim (2002) extended this model to broader organizational situations where the optimal mode involved high concern for self and high concern for others. However, Nakatsugawa and Takai (2013), Peng and Tjosvold (2011), Ting-Toomey (2007), and Wang et al. (2012) have challenged this notion, by stating that the dual concern integration model is too narrow. Takai (2014) argued that avoidance also has its virtues, such as promoting group harmony and reducing the risk of conflict escalation among its members.

Nakatsugawa and Takai (2013) have suggested that Japanese tend to follow this pattern of avoidance in personal matters.

On the other hand, when it comes to organizational conflict management, Onishi and Bliss (2006) painted a different picture. In a survey-study comparing the *avoiding*, *integrating*, and *competing* conflict styles, among organizational managers from Japan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, and Thailand, the top choice among all four was *integrating*. At the same time, in terms of circumstances regarding when to use the *avoiding* or *competing* styles, the Japanese managers reported much higher uses of both, meaning their use was more varied depending on the situation, the individual, or the individual group. In other words, in certain organizational settings, Japanese managers reported a far higher preference for competing, and even an almost nonuse of avoiding, which sits in opposition to their reported behavior in matters of personal conflict.

On this point, therefore, it is important to keep clear the distinction between (a) avoidance strategies in interpersonal conflict and (b) avoidance strategies in management settings. In trying to understand such strategies, a commonly used approach has been Ting-Toomey's face-negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 1988, 2005; Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998). In short, the theory argues that people in all cultures try to maintain and negotiate face during all types of communication, which becomes particularly problematic in situations of uncertainty (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). Cultural, individual, and situational variables influence the use and selection of interpersonal conflict strategies, which Oetzel and Ting-Toomey claimed are related to three primary groupings of conflict style: (i) control, forcing, or dominating; (ii) solution-oriented, issue-oriented, or integrating; and (iii) nonconfrontational, smoothing, or avoiding.

According to Peng and Tjosvold (2011), interpersonal conflict avoidance is particularly popular in many Asian countries, in order to maintain harmonious relationships, whereas individualist cultures tend to promote open confrontation in order to advance goals. At the same time, the downsides of avoidance strategy potentially include stifling levels of conformity, fear of change and adaptation, xenophobia (Faulkner, Schaller, Park, & Duncan, 2004), and difficulties in identifying and solving problems (Fryer & Fryer-Bolingbroke, 2011; Mokyr, 1991; Rudowicz, 2003; Sheldon, 2011). In a lengthy thesis involving Chinese employees on such matters, Yan (2007) concluded that conflict avoidance itself is a "multifaceted phenomenon" (p. 72), one concerning a range of behaviors that can lead to both positive and negative outcomes. Conversely, the upsides of open conflict can be exactly the opposite, including rapid and sometimes optimal problem solving.

Comparative Studies

The following four studies represent a brief, mixed selection on the topic of conflict management, both personal and organizational.

Comparative one: Social face and avoiding among Chinese employees. Whether in the case of Chinese (Peng & Tjosvold, 2011), Japanese (Ohbuchi & Atsumi, 2010), or simply

collectivist (Ting-Toomey & Kurogi, 1998), the prevailing argument is that persons from these cultures tend toward protecting the face of themselves (*self-face*) and that of others (*other-face*). The primary reason is to avoid threatening highly valued social and business relationships. In a study on Chinese employees and their Chinese and Western managers, Peng and Tjosvold (2011) stressed that conflict inevitably involves perceptions of differences and potential threats to positive self-image.

In the same study, Peng and Tjosvold (2011, p. 1034) proposed four major avoiding strategies:

- (1) *yielding* (agree and comply with the other's decision to end the conflict)
- (2) *delay* (postpone taking an immediate action and wait for a better opportunity to discuss conflict)
- (3) *outflanking* (work through a third party to resolve the conflict)
- (4) *passive aggression* (take indirect, subtle actions against the other).

The researchers' design made primary use of an interview structure known as the Critical Incident Technique (CIT). The participants consisted of 132 Chinese employees who worked for Chinese or Western managers in Beijing or Hong Kong. Each interview lasted between thirty to sixty minutes, and the entire collection process took four months.

In their analysis, Peng and Tjosvold (2011) converted their qualitative data into quantitative. The most significant findings showed that concerns over *other-face* somewhat positively related to *delay* and *yielding*, whereas *self-face* more positively related to *passive aggression*. In addition, other-face and self-face positively correlated with each other, which the researchers interpreted as support for their speculation that Chinese people are concerned about both the social face of themselves and of others.

From both their analyses, Peng and Tjosvold (2011) also concluded that the Chinese employees favored the avoiding strategies when dealing with Chinese managers more than with Western managers. According to the researchers, such a trend indicated two possibilities: the Chinese employees seemed more flexible with Western managers, and/or the employees believed Western managers did not care as much about social face.

Comparative two: Distress and face among Chinese students. Psychological distress and face concern were the focus of Mak, Chen, Lam, and Yiu (2009). The researchers made use of two individual sample groups. The first consisted of 385 undergraduate students attending one of the University of California schools. Of this number, 194 self-identified as Chinese Americans and 191 as European Americans. The second group involved 362 undergraduates from Mainland China and Hong Kong, of which 192 came from South China Normal University and 170 from the Chinese University of Hong Kong.

In both groups, Mak et al. (2009) measured psychological distress by using the Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI). The researchers also measured face concern by employing the Loss of Face Scale (LOF). From the statistical analysis, face concern was significantly

related to psychological distress in both sample groups. The researchers also concluded that face concerns themselves were higher among the Chinese American students than their counterparts. In other words, even though face concerns contributed to distress regardless of culture, the Chinese American students tended to be more concerned with face itself, suggesting they might be more prone to face-concerned stress.

In terms of the reliability of such studies, Ho and Lau (2011) warned that self-report measures concerning social anxiety among Asian Americans might not be as accurate or as revealing as commonly believed. In their own study, the researchers concluded that the measurements of self-reported social anxiety incorporated some cultural bias toward the Western constructs of self and individual. They also concluded that self-reported social anxiety symptoms did not correlate well with indices of social-emotional functioning, thus drawing further attention to the reliability of self-report anxiety symptoms for Asians.

Comparative three: Flexibility among Chinese and Caucasian students. Cheng, Wang, and Golden (2011) looked at the role of culture on interpersonal flexibility, between Chinese university students in Hong Kong and Caucasian students in the United States. Both groups were administered the Interpersonal Flexibility Questionnaire (IFQ) and a revised Self-Construct Scale (SCS). In their analysis, Cheng et al. (2011) indicated two findings: (a) a statistically significant association between cultural priming and interpersonal flexibility; and (b) a statistically significant effect of cultural priming on context-dependent information processing. Very briefly, the conclusion from this was that the Chinese students tended to report greater interpersonal flexibility than their Caucasian American counterparts.

In further analysis, Cheng et al. (2011) also looked for differences in strategy deployment across interpersonal situations. The three categories were

- (1) primary approach responses (handling a problem directly)
- (2) secondary approach responses (changing one's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors associated with the problem)
- (3) avoidance responses (avoiding changes in the problem and oneself).

The most significant result indicated that the Caucasian American students were twice as likely to engage in a primary approach response in uncontrollable situations, whereas the Chinese students were more than three-times as likely to engage in secondary responses in the same uncontrollable situations. In other words, the American students indicated a far higher likelihood of trying to directly influence an uncertain situation, whereas the Chinese students indicated a far higher likelihood of adapting to the same situation.

In terms of avoidance responses, while both groups tended toward low levels of avoidance in controllable situations, the Chinese students indicated a 50% higher likelihood of avoiding uncertain situations themselves.

Comparative four: Interpersonal rejection between Americans and Japanese. A study

by Garris, Ohbuchi, Okikawa, and Harris (2011) suggested that avoidance is more than a social phenomenon among interdependent cultures. The act of avoiding itself may function as a means for individuals to avoid personal and social rejection, something that appears in all types of cultures, yet seems to have more of a negative impact on members of collectivist cultures.

To gain a better understanding of how rejection influences human affect across two cultures, Garris et al. (2011) used a two-by-two (Japanese and American; rejected and accepted) factorial design. Participants in the study included American college undergraduates from the University of Kentucky and Japanese undergraduates from Tohoku University in Japan. Both groups were administered seven different measurement tools, including the Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire and the Interdependence/Independence scale.

As Garris et al. (2011) expected, the American group reported higher levels of independence than the Japanese participants. At the same time, the Americans also reported somewhat higher levels of interdependence than expected. Additionally, the Japanese reported substantially higher rejection sensitivity and a greater history of rejection. In terms of affect, American participants reported more positive affect, less negative affect, and less negative social affect. Also as expected, two-way ANOVAs showed that rejected participants, regardless of culture, reported less positive affect and more depressive affect.

Garris et al. (2011) concluded that the higher reporting of rejection by the Japanese participants is consistent with other group-oriented cultures, which itself is consistent with the Japanese reporting a higher need for belonging. From research on emotion and shame in culture, Ho, Fu, and Ng (2004) and Rusch (2004) noted that making a mistake, feeling embarrassed, and being rejected have slightly different connotations and ramifications in Chinese, Japanese, and American perspectives. The findings are consistent with Ohbuchi and Takahashi (1994), in their earlier study between Americans and Japanese, with the Japanese showing a much stronger tendency to avoid conflict in interpersonal settings. In a study involving only Japanese university students, Nakatsugawa and Takai (2013) discovered that avoidance behaviors also have several uses, and are not merely a tool for avoiding conflict. Ohbuchi and Atsumi (2010) noted that one of those uses is “Good member” image.

Conclusion

In this brief review of interpersonal conflict styles, the principal discussion was on the employment of the avoiding strategy. In the introduction to the paper, three aims were stated: (a) to see how well the collectivist-individualist and interdependent-independent typologies measure up in social science; (b) to spot some potential problems with these constructs; and (c) to see how such constructs might contribute to interpersonal conflict management styles.

Overall, the research and opinions discussed throughout the paper tend to support the collectivist-individualist and interdependent-independent constructs as still valid and informative. At the same time, such constructs do not easily reveal the complexities of

inner- and intra-group behaviors. Cross-cultural comparisons, as well as comparing different groups within a single culture, illustrate more-diverse situations than commonly accepted. They also point to many similarities across boundaries, most notably that an integration style of interpersonal conflict management tends to be the leading choice regardless of cultural background.

In terms of conflict avoidance, a strategy that is practiced more in collectivist cultures, the style itself is bound up with other intricacies such as face concerns, fear of rejection, and preserving social and professional relationships, not just avoidance of conflict itself. It is also worth mentioning that conflict avoidance should not be equated with being conflict averse. Despite a common juxtaposition, of avoiding versus integrating, an avoiding style does not necessarily exclude one from being competitive, nor does it preclude one from swinging between avoiding and integrating as needed. The avoiding style is employed differently by different members of cultural groups and subgroups. Likewise, each style can be employed differently, depending on interpersonal or organizational settings.

In summary, more research needs to be conducted on all of the above mentioned, including more-complex modeling of cross-cultural and inner-cultural behaviors and conflict strategies that involve participants from different age groups, not just college students. In the meantime, the two-dimensional typologies discussed still have some usefulness in cross-cultural discussions and understanding.

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