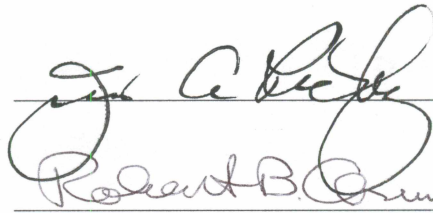EXPLORING CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES: USE OF

SELF CONSTRUAL AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES AMONG

STUDENTS IN THE U.S. AND LATVIA

By
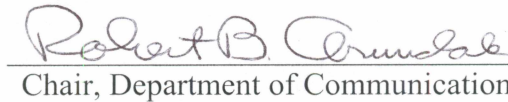
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EXPLORING CROSS-CULTURAL DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES: USE OF

SELF CONSTRUAL AND CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STYLES AMONG

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A

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty

of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Linda Bergsone, B.B.

Fairbanks, Alaska

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Abstract

In this study 87 students from the U.S. and 111 students from Latvia responded to the questionnaire concerned to their perception of conflict management styles and self construal in conflict situations with close friends. The goal of the study was to explore the use of the key variables cross-culturally. Several key findings resulted. First, findings revealed that in both cultures in conflict situations with close friends used more cooperating conflict style than dominating and avoiding. Second, the study showed that U.S. Americans used more independent self construal and Latvians used more interdependent self construal. Third, this study finding showed that in the U.S. American sample independent self construal relate to use of the cooperating conflict style and in the Latvian sample interdependent self construal related to use of the cooperating conflict style.

Additionally in this study was found that conflict management questionnaire items in both cultures loaded similarly in dominating and avoiding. Cooperating items in both cultures loaded differently. Last, was no similarities found in factor loadings between U.S. Americans and Latvians. This study attributed for farther exploration of conflict management style and self construal use and understandings cross-culturally.

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Acknowledgments

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Chapter 1

Completing my bachelor's degree in business management and visiting/living in a number of different countries has increased my interest in communication between individuals from different cultures, specifically in how their cultural differences and similarities influence their conflict communication. Since I have been at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, I have spent a great deal of time thinking about intercultural communication errors that can be a source of conflict between members of different cultures. More specifically I have been thinking about how to predict and resolve conflict situations more effectively between members of different cultures. It is important to understand the conflict situations that occur between individuals within cultures and how these conflict situations are managed before we can try to understand broader cultural conflict (Gudykunst, 2003). Deeper understanding of this phenomenon may allow better prediction and management of conflict situations, potentially reducing the number and severity of cross-cultural conflict situations.

Due to increased globalization (Hill, 2009) where countries open their borders for international businesses as well as travelers and workers from different countries, the future will see an increased number of countries and organizations within these countries with greater cultural diversity within their environments. According to globalization101.org (Investment, Retrieved in October 15, 2009), in 1982 the flow of direct global investment was $57 billion while in 2007 direct global investment reached $1.5 trillion. This shows that more and more companies are now investing their incomes in ways that lead to some employee expatriation to different countries (Hill, 2009). But

with increased globalization there has also been increased resistance to outsiders that has developed into ethnic and racial conflicts (Huntington, 1996). Because of increased cultural clashes it is important that more research is performed on understanding conflict. Ting-Toomey et al. (2001) states that working through conflict productively is an important aspect in an ever changing and diverse society.

This study explored self construal and conflict management style use in two countries. Gudykunst et al. (1996) showed that individual self construal is a better predictor of individual behavior in conflict situations than cultural Individualism and Collectivism (I-C). Individualism refers to a culture where individuals value their own goals over the goals of their group (Samvoar, Porter & McDaniel, 2009; Varner & Beamer, 2005). Samvoar et al. (2009) also states that in individualistic cultures individuals' loyalty to their groups is weak, and that these individuals are flexible to adapt to new situations, possibly changing their membership to different groups. Collectivist cultures are cultures where individuals value the goals of their group over their own goals. Cultural I-C has been used as a predictor of individual behavior for some time in the past, though it is considered less valuable today. In this study I explored the application of self construal and conflict management styles in a cross-cultural context (Latvia and the U.S.).

The results of this study add more to understanding the applicability and use of self construal and conflict management styles in cross cultural studies. Also, this study expands the understanding of the relationship between the two variables within two cultures individually, as well as the similarities and differences between the two cultures.

First, self construal and conflict management theories and studies are discussed. Second, the review of the current literature ends with this study's research questions. Third, research methods for this study are discussed in order to collect the data in a reliable manner. Furthermore, the results of the study are presented. The last chapter considers the findings and conclusions, limitations, and future research in order to have deeper understanding of differences among students in the U.S. and Latvia.

1.1 Review of the Literature

As the world is becoming more connected due to the number of individuals that travel or move to work in different countries, researchers around the world acknowledge the importance of understanding different cultures and the issue of cultural conflict. This study is designed to deepen the understanding of self construal and conflict management style application and their involvement in interpersonal conflict situations between close friends, compared cross-culturally. First, a brief understanding of friendship cross-culturally is discussed. Then the development of several types of self construal is explained, as well as the use of a measurement scale in cross-cultural studies. Next, the development and use of conflict management models in intercultural studies is laid out. Finally, three research questions are presented.

1.1.1 Cross-cultural characteristics of friendship

"Friendship is a unique interpersonal relationship" (Sias, et al., 2008, p 2). "What it means to have and be a friend changes, depending on your gender, age, culture, religion, social status, and history of past friendships "(Blieszner & Adams, as cited in

Stewart et al., 2005). Wood (2004), and Baxter and Montgomery (1996) state that most friendships are voluntary (p. 269).

Friendship and the understanding of friendship is constructed and re-constructed through individuals' everyday interactions with others around them (Sigman, 1995) beginning the day they are born. But the primary interaction system of most individuals is through the family system that is socialized in a particular culture (Ting-Toomey, 1996; Wood, 2004) or ethnic group where certain cultural, ethnical norms, values, beliefs, etc., already exist.

Collier and Bornman (1999), when comparing five ethnic groups in South Africa, found different expectations of values, norms, and symbols in friendship. Furthermore, Wood (2004) states that in communication with friends, Westerners are more focused on disclosure in order to build trust, where in Asian cultures individuals focus less on verbal communication and rely more on non-verbal communication and actions in order to build trust in close relationships.

1.1.2 Self Construal

Before self construal was developed as a research tool, many intercultural and cross-cultural studies used cultural I-C in order to explore the differences of individual behavior and communication among cultures. In general previous research presents Individualistic cultures as cultures where individuals mainly value their own goals over the goals of the group, where as Collectivistic cultures are referred to as cultures where individuals value their group roles over their individual goals (Cai & Fink, 2002). Previous studies have analyzed individuals in the U.S., China, Japan, Mexico, and

individuals from a few European countries, such as Germany and Norway. Studies have showed that U.S. Americans, Norwegians, and Germans are highly associated with individualistic characteristics; Chinese, Japanese, and Mexican individuals are associated with collectivistic characteristics. Even though countries are categorized simply as one or the other, there are differences among individualistic cultures and among the collectivistic cultures (Oetzel et al., 2001; Trafimow et al., 1991).

Kim et al. (1996) also state that cultural I-C previously was conceptualized as two categories, one dimension with two extremes. The individuals were categorized as individualistic or collectivistic, attaching the characteristics of these two extreme categories. Characterizing the individualistic extreme, people highly value dominating and seek to accomplish their self interests, while in the collectivistic extreme, people value society and act to accomplish goals of the social collective (Kim et al., 1996). Kim (1994) in her study showed that people who fall in extreme individualistic or collectivistic dimensions are hard to find. Her study showed that "individualistic" and "collectivistic" appeared as two dimensions along which individuals varied. Also Kim et al. (1996) state that if the terms are considered as binary extremes then there are four types of individuals instead of two. This study also showed problems in applying the categories of "Individualistic" or "Collectivistic" to all individuals in the same culture.

The findings of previous studies illustrate that not only do cultures differ but also individuals within cultures differ from each other, as for example, in their personalities; (Kim, et al., 1996). Kim et al. (1996) state that stereotypical cultural distinctions should be studied taking into account cultural and individual level characteristics. Triandis

(1989) proposed "self" concept as a mediating variable between the individual and culture. Self is partly constructed through interactions with groups; cultural context has a direct effect on an individual's definition of self (Kim, et al. 1996; Wood, 2004). Kim et al. (1996) state that understanding self as a mediating variable may allow us to be more specific about the role of self in regulating preferences for individual behavior and communication preferences.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) state that individuals assign actions to others based on their cultural assumptions of separation and connection between self and others. Also they state that self construal is one's self-image, and that each individual's "self" consists of universal and distinct characteristics across cultures. Markus and Kitayama (1991) explain that an individual's conception of self may affect the individual's understanding of the world. Also these researchers in the same year identified that the concept of self is not only influenced by culture, but also by the individual's gender, race, religion, social class, as well as the individual's particular social and developmental history.

Gudykunst et al. (1996), Oetzel (1998), and Oetzel et al. (2001) found that cultural I-C has a direct influence on some individual communication behaviors, but self construal is a better predictor of individual conflict due to its focus on the individual, rather than on broader cultural characteristics. As a result of these findings, this study used self construal instead of cultural I-C to identify the individual behaviors in conflict situations in different countries/cultures.

1.1.3 Independent and Interdependent Self Construal

Markus and Kitayama (1991) divided self construal into two dimensions, independent and interdependent. Individuals with independent self construal view themselves as unique individuals with unique feelings, cognitions, and motivations, emphasizing separation from others. Independent-self construal tasks are to promote one's goals, express self, and "say what is on your mind." Using both dimensions, Ellis and Wittenbaum (2000) found that self promotion was positively associated with independent self construal. Kim et al. (1996) states that orientation to independent self construal lead to the individual's need to pursue personal "self-actualization" or "self-development," and these inner characteristics or traits are the primary regulators of the individual's behavior. Other studies using two dimension self construal show that independent self construal was a better predictor of task effectiveness than relationship effectiveness where as interdependent self construal was a better predictor of relationship effectiveness. Kühnen, Hannover, and Schubert (2001) found individuals who enacted independent self construal were often not affected by context.

Interdependent self construal is described as an individual who emphasizes the importance of connectedness with others through relationships. Ellis and Wittenbaum (2000) refined this connection indicating that individuals with interdependent self construal were positively associated with the promotion of others. Another interdependent self construal key factor is that individuals act upon how they perceived the thoughts, feelings, and actions of others (p.227). The important task for individuals with interdependent self construal is to fit in with the group and to act in an appropriate

way to reach in-group goals. Kim (1994) in her study found that individuals with interdependent self construal were more attentive and sensitive to others than those with independent self construal. Individuals with interdependent self construal are more attentive to indirect communication and also to nonverbal communication than those with independent self construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Kim et al. (1996) state that a result of interdependent self conception may be meeting the needs and goals of others. It does not mean that individuals with interdependent self-construal do not have a conception of their own traits, but rather that these internal traits are not the primary source of these individuals behavior. Harb and Smith (2008) offer the idea that individuals who in most situations enact interdependent self construal may have difficulty in describing themselves without contextual and situational references. Another characteristic of individuals who in a majority of situations enact interdependent self construal is that their behavior is influenced by their desire to maintain harmony and appropriateness in any relationship (Kim et al., 1996). Singelis and Brown's (as cited in Harb, & Smith, 2008) findings show that interdependent self construal behavior was more influenced by contextual characteristics than the behaviors of individuals with independent self construal and individuals with less interdependent self construal.

Cross et al. (2002) state that interdependent self-construal in Asian cultures is defined in terms a person's position in a group, social position, and responsibilities to others, where as in Western cultures, according to Triandis (1989), loyalty for persons with interdependent self-construal is voluntary and may change over a period of time. Cross et al. (2002) explain that in a Western cultural context individuals are more likely

to include individual relationships in the self, than particular in-groups. Recognizing the possible differences of interdependent and independent self construal in different cultures, the goal of this study is to look at overall differences in self construal between Latvian and U. S. American students.

Gudykunst (1996) states that each individual has both independent and interdependent self construal and depending on the situation, individuals use one or the other self construal. Markus and Kitayama (1991) state that each individual has one dominant self construal and that dominant self construal is largely influenced by cultural individualistic and/or collectivistic values. Hardin et al. (2004) states that Western European cultures like the United States are more likely influenced by individual focused cultural values where the majority of individuals' dominant self construal is independent self construal. Asian and Hispanic cultures have been more likely influenced by collectivistic or group values that would explain individuals' orientation to interdependent self construal in most situations.

Previous studies have shown not only that cultural I-C is multidimensional but also that self construal has multiple dimensions. Hardin et al. (2004) using Singelis's Self Construal Scale (SCS) found six dimensions (factors) of self construal. From six dimensions/factors four seemed to represent specific aspects of independence and two represented Interdependence. The four factors that represent independence are Autonomy/Assertiveness, Individualism, Behavioral Consistency, and Primacy of Self; these represent specific types of Independence and the labeled factors that represent Interdependence are Relational Interdependence and Esteem for Group.

Triandis et al. (1990) state that interdependent and independent self construal can co-exist, instead of being "independent" or "interdependent," individuals can simultaneously maintain high interdependent and high independent self construal or simultaneously maintain low interdependent and independent self construal. Kim et al. (1996) confirms that independent and interdependent self construal are bi-dimensional instead of bi-polar. Kim et al. (1996) state that because individuals have potential for both self construal types, a conceptualization including both dimensions would be more precise. Kim et al. (1996) in her study shows that individuals with high independent and interdependent self construal are more likely to be free of cultural pressure and that they would enact less stereotypical conversation strategies. These individuals would also be more adaptive in cross-situational scenarios. In sum Kim et al. (1996) state that individuals with both interdependent and independent self construal are more likely to be concerned with relational and task concerns. Kim et al. (1996) present four types of self construal, where each type consists of a level with two dimensions. The four types of self construal are (a) bicultural, where individuals are high on independent and interdependent self; (b) interdependent, where individuals are low in independent and high on interdependent self; (c) independent, where individuals are high in independent and low in interdependent self construal; and (d) marginal, where individuals are low in both interdependent and independents self construal. Kim et al. (1996) found that individuals who had tendencies of identifying themselves as interdependent and independent self as well as individuals who identify themselves as interdependent self are more adaptive in

intercultural conversation settings than those who identify themselves with independent or marginal self construal.

Ting-Toomey et al. (2001) also presented four types of self construal using Kim et al. (1996) model as a basis, (p.92). The four construal types are: bi-construal: where the individual has high independent and interdependent self construal, independent: where the individual has high independent and low interdependent self construal, interdependent self construal: with characteristics of low independent and high interdependent self construal, and ambivalent self construal: characterized by individuals with low independent and low interdependent self construal. Ting-Toomey et al. (2001) in this study was looking at connections between the four types of self construal and conflict management styles in individual and acquaintance situations. They found that individuals who were bi-construal, independent, or interdependent used integrating and compromising more than ambivalent types, also they found that bi-construal types use dominating more than interdependent and ambivalent types. Also, in this study they found that both interdependent and independent levels of self construal co-exist and that individuals with high interdependent and high independent self construal use a more diverse range of conflict styles to manage conflict situations than those individuals who have a high interdependent self construal and low independent self construal. Lastly this study showed that individuals who are high in at least one of the self construal dimensions are going to use direct conflict approaches more than passive ones. They conclude that the individuals' strength in identity provides them with confidence in communicating directly in conflict situations. In order to measure individuals self

construal this study will use Ting-Toomey et al. (2001) four dimensions of self construal. Ting-Toomey et al. (2001) approach to self construal is more sensitive than Markus and Kitayama's (1991) model as it indicates two dimensions for each level for a total of four types of self construal.

Gudykunst (1996) and Oetzel (1998) both suggest that the situation influences the individual's use of self construal. Ting-Toomey and Takai (2006) state that in addition to situational variables, relational and status difference factors also influence the choice of individual, independent, and interdependent self construal use, which will more likely influence individual behavior in conflict situations (as cited in Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006). In order to avoid some of the variations in individual situations, relations, and status, the current study is focused only on students. Tasks are to promote one's goals, express self, and "say what is on your mind." Also this study explored the applicability of the self construal scale cross-culturally. Herb (1999), Redford (2001), and Schäfermeier (2004) in applying Singelis's self construal measurement cross-culturally showed low reliability (as cited in Harb & Smith, 2008). This study will explore the Gudykunst self construal scale's applicability cross-culturally. Next it is important to explore the conflict styles that have been used in previous research in order to understand the most effective conflict model for this study.

1.1.4 Conflict Management Style

Conflict has been defined as a perceived contradiction of goals, values, expectations, processes or outcomes between at least two interdependent individuals (Martin & Nakayama, 2007; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2006). Whenever differences are

perceived between two or more individuals conflict can occur. Ting- Toomey states that conflict is dependent upon the situation and culture where it occurs (as cited in Bierbrauer & Klinger, 2005). Putnam and Wilson (1982) state that conflict management is determined by behavioral choices that individuals make rather than characteristic styles of individuals. Putnam and Wilson (1982) state that conflict behavior is more dependent on the situation, (e.g., nature of the conflict and relationships between the participants) than the individual (e. g., personality).

Attribution theory (as cited in Littlejohn, 1996) tries to explain how individuals bring meaning to an interpersonal conflict situation and then enact this meaning in behavior. The attribution theory of conflict states that individuals' perceptions and their inferences of others' motivation for behavior influence their understanding of the conflict situation. This understanding then influences the individuals' behavior in attempting to resolve the conflict. Sillars's (as cited in Littlejohn, 1996) attribution theory of conflict suggests three conflict management strategies that individuals generally use, based on their perception and inferences regarding the conflict situation: avoiding, cooperating, and competing.

There have been a number of models of conflict styles used in order to explain differences in individuals' approaches to conflict management. Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2003) states that the most used conflict models are the five-style and three-style models. The five-style and three style conflict management models are based on dual model principles (Rahim, 1983). The dual model tries to predict individual conflict management style based on high or low level of concern for self and concern for others (Cai & Fink,

2001). The five resulting conflict management styles are: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. Integrating is also known as collaborating. Integrating results when individuals are willing to exchange ideas openly and address ideas constructively, making every effort to reach a solution that is mutually accepted (Cai & Fink, 2002). Cai and Fink (2002) state that individuals using the integrating conflict style have a high concern for self and other outcomes and are involved in problem solving.

Next, when individual concern for self is low and concern for others is high, the dual model predicts that the individual is going to use the obliging conflict style (Cai & Fink, 2002). This conflict style is also known as accommodating or yielding. Using this kind of conflict style suggests that the individual is concerned about preserving relationships with other individuals. Emphasizing commonalities instead of differences, individuals preserve the relationships. At the same time because of deemphasizing differences there is a tendency to agree with others instead of expressing one's own concerns (Cai & Fink, 2002).

The next one of the dual model conflict styles is dominating; this conflict style is sometimes called the competing or contending conflict style. Individuals who use this conflict style have high concern for self and low concern for others' outcomes. Using this type of conflict style, individuals are not willing to move from their initial positions. The tactics that are used are more forceful, like threats and put-downs. The use of this type of conflict style results in a win-lose solution (Cai & Fink, 2002).

The fourth type of conflict style in the dual model is avoiding, also known as inaction or withdrawing. This conflict style is used when individuals have a low concern for self and for others' outcomes. The source of using this type of conflict style can be found either in low benefit for persuading or when the other party is not showing any effort to change their position (Cai & Fink, 2002).

The last conflict style in the dual model is compromising. This conflict style is likely be used by individuals who have moderate concern for their own and others' interests. In this situation individuals are not fully involved in persuading multiple goals (Cai & Fink, 2002) and therefore are not exploring the possibilities that could maximize multiple parties' outcomes.

Even though this model has been used in understanding individual conflict management styles based on concern for self and others, it has limited utility in intercultural and cross-cultural settings (Oetzel, Soumia & Kirschbaum, 2007). Cai and Fink (2002) in an intercultural study found that only one conflict style was understood the same way by all individuals in the study: dominating. This suggests that individuals in different cultures may see the same behavior and make different inferences about the intentions of others.

The three-conflict style model is a variation of the dual model, and has been presented in different forms in previous research. Putnam and Wilson (1982) divided conflict styles into the categories: (a) control, forcing, dominating; (b) solution-oriented, issue-oriented, or integrating; following (c) non-confrontational, smoothing, or avoiding. Ting-Toomey, Oetzel, and Yee-Jung (2001) combined eight conflict styles into three

based on concern for self and others. First, integrating and compromising were combined together and labeled as cooperating. Interestingly Cai and Fink (2002) found that integrating and compromising were not understood differently by individuals from different countries. Next dominating, expressing, and neglect were combined in one, and lastly avoiding, obliging, and third party help were combined.

For the current study the five style model is combined into three. Integrating and compromising are combined under cooperating, based on findings of Cai and Fink (2002). Avoiding and obliging are combined under the category avoiding the last style is dominating.

1.1.5 Self Construal and Conflict Management Styles

Self construal and conflict management style have been connected in communication theories and research. One of the theories that uses these two concepts is the effective intercultural workgroup communication theory by Oetzel (2005). The theory explains the workgroup as a system with inputs, processes, and outputs. Independent and interdependent self construal in this theory is used as one of the input variables that can affect the workgroup process. Conflict styles are used as one of the aspects of the workgroup process, where workgroup processes affect the outcome the workgroup reaches. Oetzel (1998) in his theory used Putnam's presentation of conflict management styles: avoidance, cooperation, and competition. He found that interdependent self construal is a better predictor of the cooperating and competing conflict management styles than cultural I-C. Oetzel (1997, Oetzel and Bolton-Oetzel, 1998) found that European-Americans reported more independent self construal characteristics than

interdependent. Also in the same study Oetzel found that interdependent self construal was associated with the cooperating conflict style and independent self construal was associated with the competing conflict style.

Another communication theory connecting independent and interdependent self construal and conflict styles is the face-negotiation theory by Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998). In this theory self construal, individual's national culture, power distance, and situational features like relational closeness affects the individuals' use of face (self-face; other-face, mutual-face). Face is the individuals' social image that they present to others. It follows then that face affects individuals' choice regarding the conflict management style they enact in their perceived conflict situations. Oetzel et al. (2001) state that facework is learned through individuals' socialization in a particular culture or ethnicity. Through individual everyday interaction with others around them in their particular culture or ethnic group, they construct an understanding of what are appropriate and effective ways of managing conflict situations. Supporting research indicates that self construal has an indirect effect on conflict management styles (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003). Oetzel et al. (2001) found that self concern has the strongest effect on face and facework. It shows that independent self construal is positively associated with dominating facework. Also in the same study Oetzel et al. (2001) found that interdependent self construal is positively associated with integrating and avoiding facework. Lastly, this study showed that relational closeness affected only a few behaviors.

This cross-cultural study explored the similarities and differences between European-Americans and Latvians in their use of self construal and conflict management styles. Extensive research on European-American use of self construal and conflict management styles shows that European-Americans use more independent self construal (Oetzel and Bolton-Oetzel, 1997; Oetzel, 1998; Oetzel and Ting-Toomey, 2003) in conflict situations use more dominating and competitive conflict styles (Cai & Fink, 2002; Gabrielidis et. al. 1997; Oetzel 1998) and less avoiding. Gabrielidis et al. (1997) found that U.S. Americans are not competitive in interpersonal conflict situations, but in many other situations they are competitive. Few studies have looked at individuals in Europe in their use of self construal and conflict management using measurement scales that are used in the U.S. Oetzel (2003) found that Germans use defending behavior in conflict situations more than U.S. Americans. Kolstan and Horpestad (2009), using Singelis's Self Construal Scale, found that most Norwegians were associated with independent self construal. This study explored individuals from Latvia as another country that represents Europe. There are no previous studies done that have explored Latvian use of self construal and conflict management styles.

1.1.6 Research Questions

RQ1: To what degree do U.S. Americans differ from Latvians in their use of conflict style?

RQ2: To what degree do Latvians differ from U.S. Americans in their use of self construal?

RQ3: How does self construal affect the use of conflict styles among U.S. Americans and Latvians?

Chapter 2

Methods

The purpose of this study was to develop deeper understanding of the affect of self construal on individual conflict management style use in interpersonal relationships with friends. Another goal of this study was to seek greater understanding of cultural differences and similarities in the use and construction of self construal and conflict management styles. Specifically, this includes Latvian and U.S. individuals' similarities and differences in the ways they see themselves and how these perceptions of self affect their behavior in conflict situations with their close friends.

2.1 Philosophical Perspective

A philosophical perspective guides research, and provides readers with an understanding of what knowledge is for the researcher and how the knowledge is obtained. It is necessary to design research with a clear understanding of the philosophical perspective employed. First, epistemology and its relation to the research process are presented. Then the paradigm guiding the methodology is presented, followed by a description of the methodology. Finally the methods used for data gathering are described.

2.1.1 Epistemology. Epistemology is the philosophy of knowledge, involving discussion of what knowledge is and how it is obtained (Kvale, 2009). Epistemology addresses both the scope of knowledge and the possibilities of knowledge (Hamlyn, 1995, as cited in Crotty, 1998). This is important in science (Crotty, 1998), as science

involves the development of knowledge. Both the theoretical perspective and the methodology are would reflect the researcher epistemology (Crotty, 1998).

Objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism are epistemological frames. A good deal of previous research on this topic has been based on an objectivistic perspective. Objectivism presents knowledge as out in the world, independent from individuals. Positivism is one theoretical approach consistent with objectivism (Crotty, 1998). Consistent with these beliefs, the current study is grounded in the objectivist perspective, and in the assumptions of positivism.

2.1.2 Methodology. In describing his/her methodology, the researcher describes design choices and argues for their value in achieving the research purpose (Crotty, 1998). Collecting data at one point in time in two different cultures, allowed for the comparison of measurements of the variables across the cultures. Comparisons were made using standard statistical tests and these comparisons were examined more carefully by exploring participants' responses to the survey items through interpretation of the factor dimensions for conflict management styles and self construal.

2.2 Data Collection and Analysis

2.2.1 Sample and procedures. Student volunteers were requested from medium sized universities in Latvia and the U.S. The convenience sample size was 198 students from Latvia and the U.S. There were 87 students from a medium sized northwest university in the U.S. sample, and 111 students from multiple medium sized universities in Latvia. The common characteristics of participants were that they were traditional students in the 18-23 age range. Also, all participants were citizens of the country in

which they lived and studied. Participants from U.S. sample were drawn from two public speaking courses in the general education curriculum of the university.

The data were collected in two different ways in the two countries. The U.S. American students received questionnaires (see Appendix B) in their communication class. Latvian students responded to the questionnaire electronically via surveymonkey.com. In order to reach the Latvian students two professors from Latvian universities were contacted through email. The professors were informed about the study, provided the location of the questionnaire and asked to volunteer to distribute an email to their students requesting participation. Second, in order to reach more students from a variety of universities in Latvia, a Latvian networking website (draugiem.lv) was used. Close to 400 individuals who were part of the discussion group "Study in USA" on this website were contacted. Each individual received an email (see Appendix A) with a short description of the purpose of the email, a description of the study, and information about the location of the questionnaire (surveymonkey.com). The questionnaire for the Latvian participants was posted on surveymonkey.com in Latvian.

Before the Latvian version of the questionnaire was published on surveymonkey.com, several steps were taken to ensure that the translation of the questionnaire was valid in relation to the English version. First, the translation of the questionnaire was done by a professional translator in Latvia who specializes in translating social science texts. After the questionnaire was translated I, the researcher and native Latvian speaker, went through the translated questionnaire to review the translation and made some changes. Then, both the original questionnaire in English and

the translated copy in Latvian were sent to Dr. Aija Zobena of the Social Science

Department at the University of Latvia. Additional changes to the translated Latvian copy

were made after receiving suggestions from Dr. Zobena and the Latvian questionnaire

was reviewed again. Then the questionnaire was posted on the hosting website, where it

was subjected to a limited review by four Latvian associates prior to publishing. This

review of the questionnaire was to check whether the questions were easy to understand

without using scientific level verbiage, and to provide a final check for grammar and

spelling correctness. After receiving their feedback, the questionnaire was finalized and

published.

 2.2.2 Measures. Self construal is a self-image variable, indicating how individuals

see themselves as connected to or separated from others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). To

measure self construal Gudykunst et al. (1996) scale was used. One of the independent

self construal questions were: "I should be judged on my own merit," and one of the

interdependent self construal questions were, "It is better to consult others and get their

opinions before doing anything." Ting-Toomey, Oetzel and Yee-Jung's (2001) finding

that independent and interdependent self construal can co-exist, led to their identification

of four types of self construal. This study uses Oetzel, Ting-Toomey, and Yee-Jung's

(2001) approach to utilizing Gudykunst's scale. The four types of self construal were

created by first identifying a median for both interdependent and independent self

construal and then creating all possible pairings of the two levels of each. The resulting

types are labeled bi-construal, independent, interdependent, and ambivalent self

construal. These items were measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= "Strongly

Disagree"; 5="Strongly Agree"). Gudykunst (1996), using Cronbach's alpha, showed that Self Construal Scale's reliability ranged from .73 to .85.

Conflict management style is defined as individual behavior in conflict situations that is influenced by perception of the conflict situation and of self in the particular situation. For this study three styles, cooperating (integrating and compromising), dominating, and avoiding (avoiding and obliging), were used from Rahiim's five style model (Rahiim, 1983). Previous research using Rahiim's model effectively collapsed these categories into three easily distinguishable styles (Ting-Toomey, Oetzel, & Yee-Jung, 2001), providing a greater likelihood that a dominant style can be determined for each participant. One of the items that assessed integrating was "I try to work with my friends to find solutions that satisfy our expectations;" dominating: "I exert pressure on my friends to make decision in my favor," and avoiding: "I usually avoid open discussion of differences of my friends."

Chapter 3

Results

The data are presented with an overview of descriptive statistics, scale reliabilities, and correlations among the key variables by sample (U.S. Americans and Latvians). Results for research question one and two are presented to compare the key variables across cultures. Results for research question three explore the interaction between self construal and conflict management style within and across the two cultures.

3.1 Data Overview

General demographics that represent the U.S. American and Latvian samples are presented in Table 1 distributed by gender, culture, citizenship, and age. With a total of 87 participants, in the U.S. American sample, 46 (53%) were female and 41(47%) were male, showing an almost equal distribution of gender. From the 111 Latvian participants 89 (80%) were female and 22 (20%) were male. The Latvian sample did not have an equal distribution of gender, which could be a limitation of this study. In regard to culture, all participants in the U.S. American sample identified themselves with the U.S. American culture, and interestingly, three Latvians in the Latvian sample identified themselves with the U.S. culture, even though they also identified themselves as citizens of Latvia. Finally, age range was similar across cultures. Eighty percent of the participants in each culture were in the bottom half of the age range (U.S. sample ranged 18-20 years; Latvian sample ranged 19-21 years).

Table 1 – Demographic Descriptive Statistics

	U.S. Americans		Latvians	
	Frequency	Percent	Total number	Percent
Gender:				
Female	46	52.9%	89	80.2%
Male	41	47.1%	22	19.8%
Cultural Identification:				
U.S. American	87	100%		
Latvian			108	97.3%
Citizenship:				
U.S. American	87	100%		
Latvian			111	100%
Age:				
18	23	26.4	6	5.4
19	32	36.8	37	33.3
20	16	18.4	27	24.3
21	8	9.2	25	22.5
22	5	5.7	11	9.9
23	3	3.4	5	4.5
Participants:	87	100	111	100

3.2 Correlations Among Key Variables

Next, Table 2 presents correlations in the U.S. American sample among key variables. The significant correlations for the key variables lie between "low correlation; definite but small relationship" and "moderate correlation; substantial relationship" (Keyton, 2006). Significant weak positive correlations were found between independent self construal and the dominating conflict management style, as well as between interdependent self construal and the integrating conflict management style. A weak positive correlation was found between independent self construal and the integrating conflict management style. The strongest correlation found was a moderate positive

correlation between interdependent self construal and the avoiding conflict management

style. Cronbach's alphas were acceptable for all variables (see Table 2).

Table 2. - U.S. American Sample: Correlations Among Variables With Descriptive

Statistics.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Independent Self Construal					
2. Interdependent Self Construal	.000				
3. Dominating	.243*	-.014			
4. Cooperating	.396**	.277*	.093		
5. Avoiding	-.021	.429**	-.036	.179	
N	87	87	86	84	84
M	4.27	3.68	3.07	3.99	3.21
SD	.386	.458	.763	.435	.527
Minimum/ Maximum	3.08 4.92	2.17 4.67	1.20 4.60	1.00 5.00	1.83 4.83
Cronbach's Alpha	.759	.751	.799	.864	.797

*p<.05; **p<.01

Table 3 presents correlations and descriptive statistics among key variables for the

Latvian sample. Weak significant positive correlations were found between

interdependent self construal and both the Cooperating conflict management style and the

avoiding conflict management styles. Independent self construal was moderately

correlated with the dominating conflict style the cooperating conflict management style.

Cronbach's alpha in Table 3 indicates the Latvian sample showed good reliability

for the conflict management styles: dominating was .880, cooperating .837, and avoiding

.757. On the other hand, Cronbach's alpha for independent self construal was low, only

.579, and for interdependent self construal .660. Even though the Cronbach's alphas were

low in this sample which is a limitation, the two self construal dimensions were used for this exploratory study.

Table 3 *Latvian Sample: Correlations Among Variables and Descriptive Statistics*

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Independent Self Construal					
2. Interdependent Self Construal	.047				
3. Dominating	.309**	-.186			
4. Cooperating	.271**	.442**	.004		
5. Avoiding	-.089	.344**	.151	.292**	
N	111	111	101	101	101
M	3.96	3.69	3.17	3.99	3.45
SD	.339	.365	.859	.434	.447
Minimum/ Maximum	3.00 4.69	2.58 4.50	1.00 5.00	2.45 4.82	2.42 4.33
Cronbach's Alpha	.579	.660	.880	.837	.757

**$p<.01$

3.3 Results by Research Question

3.3.1 Research Question One. The first research question focused on the extent to which U.S. Americans differ from Latvians in their use of conflict management styles in conflict situations with close friends. A t-test revealed significant difference between U.S. Americans and Latvians in their use of the avoiding conflict management style in conflict situations with close friends, $t(84)= .0575$, $p < .05$. Additionally, descriptive statistics revealed that both cultures used the cooperating style more frequently (U.S. American = 81 %, Latvian = 76.5 %) than avoiding or dominating.

To more fully explore both cultures, a series of t-tests were run to compare females and males across cultures. Statistically significant difference was found (t (124) = -2.27, p < .05). The Latvian female students had greater levels of the avoiding conflict management style in conflict situations with close friends (M = 3.469, SD = .436) than the U.S. American female students (M = 3.266, SD = .546). There were no differences found among male students in these two cultures indicating that difference among females drives the overall difference on avoiding.

Next, differences between the genders within the two cultures were explored. The U.S. American sample showed significant difference between females and males in their use of the dominating (t (84) = - 2.711, p < .05) and cooperating (t (87) = 2.552, p < .05) conflict management styles. Males (M = 3.302, SD = .682) were more dominating then females (M = 2.871, SD = .782), while females (M = 4.103, SD = .410) reported significantly greater levels of cooperating behaviors than males (M = 3.868, SD = .433) did. The Latvian sample revealed statistical difference between males and females in their use of dominating in conflict situations with close friends (t (99) = -2.669, p < .05). Males (M = 3.620, SD = .701) showed more dominating behaviors than females (M = 3.064, SD = .862).

The results for research question one revealed significant difference regarding conflict management style among students in the U.S. and Latvia. Latvians showed greater acceptance for use of avoiding in conflict situations with close friends. Looking at deeper cultural differences, results revealed that U.S. American female students have greater acceptance of cooperating behaviors than Latvian female students. A similarity

between the two cultures was found; males in both cultures showed greater acceptance for use of a dominating conflict style then females did.

Finally, factor analysis was run in order to explore the use of management styles in each culture. First, the primary loading had to be at least .50 and the primary loading had to be .15 greater than any other loading on the same item to be included in the factor. Second, at least three items were required for each factor. Four factors were found in the U.S. American sample and five in the Latvian sample. The items that populated the four factors for the U.S. American sample were: (1) six items related to the concept of working together, integrating; (2) four items that focused on dominating; (3) three items focusing on avoiding conflict communication; and (4) three items focused on finding middle ground in different opinion situations. Five factors in the U.S. American sample loaded with fewer than three items. The items in these five factors focused on agreeing with friends suggestions and going along, avoiding conflict situations, accomplishing personal relationships with friends, bending over backwards to accommodate, and looking for middle course or compromise.

Factor analysis in the Latvian sample revealed four factors with at least three items loading. The factors in the Latvian sample were populated by: (1) eight items related to finding middle ground or working together to find compromise; (2) six items focused on dominating; (3) four items related to avoiding, specifically keeping disagreement to one's self; and (4) three items dealing with active accommodation to friends and satisfying their wishes. Three additional factors loaded with fewer than three

items. The items involved were avoiding conflict situations, interacting to reach solution, and going along with suggestions of friends.

The differences and similarities found between the U.S. American students and the Latvian students in their responses to items regarding conflict management styles in conflict situations with close friends were examined. In both samples the highest loading levels were in the cooperative approach (integrating / compromising). Looking deeper, the U.S. American sample emphasized integrating in the sense that out of seven items, the five highest loadings were in integrating while only two items represented compromise. All items related to working together to find a solution, often seeking the best possible solution for both sides. In the Latvian sample more items represented compromising than integrating, five of eight items related to compromising. Overall, all items in the Latvian sample related to looking for middle ground through a give and take process in conflict situations. This suggests that different patterns of responses to items regarding managing conflict situations with close friends even within a cooperative approach.

The second factor focused on dominating behaviors and shared three items. The Latvians' added an item focused on exerting pressure on friends to make decision in one's favor. Overall, the data suggest that there are similarities in the U.S. Americans' and the Latvians' patterns of responses to items assessing of the dominating conflict style. The third factor overall represented avoiding conflict for in both samples. The additional item in avoiding for the Latvian sample was: "I usually avoid open discussions of differences with my friends." The inclusion of this item suggests that Latvians are less

comfortable with acknowledging differences openly with another through discussion. The fourth factor in each sample was distinct. In the U.S. American sample the last factor included item related to finding middle ground in disagreement, where as in the Latvian sample the factor was more focused on trying to satisfy the wishes of friends.

3.3.2 Research Question Two. The second research question focused on exploration of U. S. American and Latvian student differences in their use of self construal. First, t-tests were run to explore the differences between the individuals from each culture in their use of independent and interdependent self construal. T-test revealed significant difference between these two groups in their use of independent self construal (t (196) = 6.099, p < .05). The U.S. American students (M = 4.275, SD = .386) showed significantly higher use of independent self construal then the Latvian students (M = 3.960, SD = .339). Furthermore gender differences were explored among the individuals from these two cultures. T-tests revealed statistically significant difference between females across cultures. The U.S. American female students had a greater degree of independent self construal than Latvian student females (t (133) = 6.114, p < .05). The U.S. American students had greater degree of independent self construal (M =4.34, SD= .365) than the Latvian female students (M= 3.94, SD = .394). Also statistically significant difference was found between U.S. American male students and Latvian male students in their use of self construal (t (60) = 2.035, p < .05). U.S. American males (M = 4.201, SD = .400) had a greater level of independent self construal then Latvian male students (M = 4.035, SD = .246). Lastly, gender differences within each culture were explored. No

significant difference was found in the use of self construal within the U.S. American

sample or the Latvian sample males and females.

Next, Ting-Toomey, Oetzel, and Yee-Jung's (2001) approach was used to explore

self construal use in more detail across the two cultures. All individuals were divided into

four types of self construal based on the median score for independent and interdependent

self construal across both samples. The median for independent self construal was 4.076,

and for interdependent self construal 3.75. Frequencies showed that individuals in the

U.S. American sample showed greater acceptance for independent self construal (N = 30,

34 %) and bi-construal (N = 28, 32%) than for ambivalent (N = 15, 17 %) and

interdependent (N = 14, 16 %) self construal. In the Latvian sample the highest frequency

was for interdependent self construal 35% (N = 35), then ambivalent 25% (N = 25),

independent 22% (N = 22), and finally 18% (N = 19) bi-construal. U.S. Americans

showed greater indication of independent self construal, while Latvians saw themselves

as more interdependent.

Factor analysis was run in order to explore the differences and similarities among

the individuals in both cultures in their understanding of self construal. Again the primary

loading had to be at least .50 and the primary loading had to be .15 greater the any other

loading on the same item. Secondly, at least three items were required per factor. In the

U.S. American data, four factors loaded with three items. The first factor that loaded with

three items for the U.S. American sample was related to independence, specifically,

uniqueness of the individual. Next factor in the U.S. American sample (four items) was

related to interdependence, both consulting and considering others. Furthermore in the

U.S. American sample, the third factor surprisingly presented two items from interdependent self construal and one from the independent self construal sub scale. The interdependent items suggested support for group while the independent item suggested wanting personal responsibility. The last factor in the U.S. American sample was again related to both self construals, independent and interdependent. Two items that related to interdependent self construal suggested commitment and responsibility for the group, while the independent self construal item represented taking responsibility for one's own actions. The remaining four factors loaded with fewer than three items in each. One of these factors, interestingly had one interdependent item that related to consulting others before making decision, and an independent item related to not supporting group decisions if they are wrong. The other three factors related to self focus, self reliance, and to relationships.

The Latvian sample produced three factors with a minimum of three items loading. The first factor (three items) related to individual interdependence, specifically, commitment to the group. Within the second factor, all items (three items) related to interdependence, the importance of consulting with others before any action. Next, the third factor (three items) related to independence, specifically to personal agency. In addition, there were seven factors that loaded with fewer than three items. Three factors were populated with two items in each. These three factors related to uniqueness or being different in personality from others, relationship concern, and standing up for one's own values. The last four factors, with one item loading in each,

related to individual evaluations of self, self sufficiency, self sacrificing for friends, and self relevancy.

Comparing factor structure for self construal across cultures was limited due to few shared items. Only one similarity was noticed between the U.S. American and the Latvians samples. The second factor in both samples was slightly similar, with two of the same items present in each sample. The two items that were in the U.S. American and the Latvian sample were: "It is important to consult close friends and get their ideas before making a decision" and "I consult others before making important decisions."

3.3.3 Research Question Three. The last research question focused on the effect of self construal on conflict management styles among U.S. Americans and Latvians. One-way ANOVA analysis was run to test for differences among the four self construal types on each conflict management style.

The results of the first ANOVA revealed that there was no significant difference between the four types of self construal on conflict management style use in the U.S. American sample. Results for the Latvian sample showed a significant difference between groups on each conflict management style: dominating ($F(3,97) = 5.914$, $p < .05$); cooperating ($F(3,97) = 7.609$, $p < .05$); and avoiding ($F(3,97) = 4.754$, $p < .05$). The significant difference was between independent (M = 3.66, SD = .712) and interdependent (M = 2.794, SD = .781) self construal in use of the dominating conflict style. Also significant difference was found for cooperating conflict management between bi-construal (M = 4.320, SD = .283) and both independent self construal (M = 3.859, SD = .545) and ambivalent self construal (M = 3.785, SD = .419). Finally,

significant differences between the avoiding conflict management style was found: bi-construal (M = 3.666, SD = .395) and independent (M = 3.2235, SD = .448) self construal; as well as between independent (M = 3.223, SD = .448) and interdependent self construal (M = 3.547, SD = .413).

Correlation analysis revealed significant relationships between self construal and conflict management styles in the U. S. American and the Latvian samples. Moderate positive correlations in the U.S. American sample indicated correlations between independent self construal and the cooperating conflict management style (r = .396, p < .05, r^2 = .156), and interdependent self construal and avoiding (r = .429, p < .05, r^2 = .184). The Latvian sample indicated correlations between independent self construal and dominating (r = .309, p < .05, r^2 = .095); and cooperating styles (r = .271, p < .05, r^2 = .073). The highest correlations in the Latvian sample were between interdependent self construal and avoiding (r = .344, p < .05, r^2 = .118) and cooperating styles (r = .442, p < .05, r^2 = .195). These findings, although moderate, positively link independent self construal and cooperating in the U.S. American sample and independent self construal and cooperating in the Latvian sample.

Chapter 4

Discussion

The general purpose of this study was to explore certain differences between two cultures. Specifically, the aim of this study was to explore the differences and similarities between U.S. American and Latvian students in their use and understanding of conflict management styles and self construal. First, the similarities and differences between cultures in their use of conflict management styles were explored and then through factor analysis the patterns of responses to items regarding conflict management styles were explored across the items. Second, the similarities and differences between cultures in their use of self construal were explored, and then through factor analysis the patterns in responses regarding self construal items across cultures were explored. Last, comparison was made across cultures for influence of self construal on conflict management styles by exploring participants' use of both key variables.

4.1 Findings and Conclusion

4.1.1 Conclusion One. One can explain the similarities and differences found across cultures if one look at the three styles of conflict management and place them on a continuum moving from avoidance through cooperative approaches to dominating approaches. First, the Latvian students report the use of more avoiding approaches in conflicts with close friends. On the other end of the continuum one sees similar loadings of dominating with slightly greater use of dominating in the Latvian culture. This partly supports Cai and Fink's (2002) findings that meanings for dominating were similarly in different cultures. Interestingly, the predominant style in both cultures was cooperative.

The difference being that the U.S. American students reported this conflict style as more integrative while Latvian students reported it as involving more compromise. The greater reported use of integrating by U.S. Americans when dealing with conflict with their close friends supports Gabrielidis et al. (1997) findings that U.S. Americans are not competitive (dominating) in interpersonal conflict situations.

4.1.2 Conclusion Two. Next, self construal is used differently in the U.S. American and Latvian cultures. The U.S. American students used independent self construal and most of the Latvian students used interdependent self construal. Limited inclusion of the same items in factors for self construal across cultures suggests that there are differences in the development of independent and interdependent self construal in each culture. This supports Cross, et al. (2002) proposition that self construal is enacted differently across cultures.

4.1.3 Conclusion Three. Self construal related to use of conflict management style in both cultures. The cooperating conflict style was used more frequently in both cultures. On the other hand, different self construals are predominantly used in each culture. U.S. Americans used more independent self construal and Latvians used more interdependent self construal in conflict situations with close friends. In both cultures correlations between the cooperating conflict style and self construal were found. The differences between cultures were that in using the cooperating conflict style, the U.S. American students related an independent self construal and the Latvian students an interdependent self construal.

The difference in use of the cooperative management style can be explained by exploring the differences of conflict management style and self construal. Markus and Kitayama (1991) state that independent self tasks are to promote one's goals, express self, and "say what is on your mind" (p. 230). This might explain why the U.S. American students' use more integrating conflict management style; because integrating involves individuals' willingness to openly discuss the issues with others in order to reach the best possible solution for self and other. It is possible that U.S. Americans, with independent self construal are more comfortable expressing self by saying what is on their minds to achieve their self interest.

Markus und Kitayama (1991) state that interdependent self construal defines self in relationships with others; maintain harmony (p. 230). This might explain why Latvians associate themselves with compromising rather than associating with integrating. In compromising, individuals do not maximize multiple parties' outcomes because they have higher concern for relationships with others. The concern for relationships might explain why Latvians used compromising more than integrating.

4.2 Limitations

There are several limitations in this study that should be noted. First, the data were collected through a self-report questionnaire in which participants had to think of times they had conflict situations with close friends and indicate their behavior. There is no guarantee that their close friends perceived their actions the same way. On the other hand, Babbie (1979) states that standardized questionnaires have strength, generalizability of the data.

Another limitation relates to the process of data collection, as data were collected differently in each country. The U.S. American questionnaire was distributed in a classroom environment, giving the respondents the opportunity to ask questions about the study before responding to the questionnaire or to request explanation while filling out the questionnaire. The Latvian participants, on the other hand, had no opportunity for face-to face interaction about the study or questionnaire. I contacted Latvians by email, draudgiem.lv, and telephone and Internet and telephone were the only possible ways they could contact me. Responses to any questions they asked were not as immediate as for the U.S. American sample. No previous study has applied this questionnaire to Latvians; therefore, face-to-face contact might have been important for this sample. Furthermore, because the questionnaire was recently translated into Latvian, direct face-to-face contact with the Latvian sample might have been more crucial than with the U.S. American sample.

Another limitation in the process of collecting the data was the possibility that the context/situational characteristics affected students' attitudes at the time they were responding to the questionnaire. Students in the U.S. American sample responded to the questionnaire in a university setting, the Latvian participants, on the other hand, received a description of the study and link to a the questionnaire via the Internet. Therefore the study had no control over situational factors, such as where and when the Latvians responded to the study. A related limitation may have affected the comparability of the samples. The data from the U.S. American sample was collected at a single university, while data from the Latvian sample were gathered through multiple media, broadening

the sample's characteristics. In both samples individuals who were not in the age group of 18-23 or were not students were dropped in order to have comparable samples.

4.3 Future Research

The high use of the cooperating conflict management style for both U.S. American and Latvian students suggest further research to explore in more depth the ways this conflict management style is perceived and practiced in both cultures. The results of this study also suggest that there needs to be further exploration of relational and situational factors on individual behavior in conflict situations cross-culturally. To enhance cultural understanding of the conflict management construct, we should explore more in detail the behaviors that are enacted between Latvian individuals in order to see if any behaviors occur that do not occur in the dual conflict model. Future research has to create a self construal measurement scale that can be applied in cross-cultural studies, or multiple scales which are culture specific. Qualitative approaches could be used in order to explore the self construal differences among the individuals in different cultures. The qualitative approach can provide a deeper understanding of the construction of the world in each culture that could enhance interpretation and lead to better scale construction.

Finally, it might be useful to collect the data not only using self reporting questionnaires but also observing individual actions in their conflict situations with their close friends. This could give insightful information about individuals' actions rather than basing research on the actions that respondents remember.

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Appendix A

Cover Letter

Description of the study:

You are invited to take part in a study of how people see themselves and how that relates to their communication in conflict with close friends. I am a Master's student in the Department of Communication at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. This study is my thesis project. You are asked to be a part of this study as someone who lives in the country of your citizenship. I am interested in your experiences with conflict situations with your close friends and how you see yourself in conflict situations. Please read this form before you agree to be in this study.

Confidentiality:

Taking part in this project is voluntary. Your name will not be known by the researcher and never connected with your answers on the survey. Although the information is valuable to the study, if there are individual items on the survey that you would prefer to leave blank, you may do so. The information that I get from this research could be used in papers, presentations, and for publication but you will never be personally identified in any way.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

I do not see any risk for you in responding to this study. Taking part in this study will only cause you to spend about 25-30 minutes answering questions. There will be no direct benefits to you for doing so. However, results of this study may provide greater understanding about how close friends manage conflict in your culture.

If you have any questions about this study or the survey, please feel free to contact me, Linda Bergsone through phone: 907-378-0072 or email: lbergsone@alaska.edu, or you may contact my supervisor Dr. Christie Cooper, 907-474-0506, cecooper@alaska.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights in this process, please contact the Research Coordinator in the Office of Research Integrity at 907-474-7800, or by email at fyori@uaf.edu.

Thank you for your time and input!

Appendix B

Exploring Conflict Communication in Two Cultures

There are three different sections in this survey. Please respond to the questions in all sections. Respond to questions according to instructions that are presented before each set of questions. Remember your responses are anonymous. *Thank you* for your time and input.

Section I

Please mark the circle to the left of the appropriate answer.

What is your gender?

- o   Female
- o   Male

What culture do you most identify with?

- o   Latvian
- o   U.S.
- o   Other, if other please specify _____

What is your age right now? _____

With which race do you identify yourself?

- o African American
- o Asian American
- o Caucasian
- o Hispanic American
- o Native American
- o Other, if other please specify _____

What is your primary language?

- o Latvian
- o English
- o Other, if other please specify_____

What is your country of citizenship?

- o The U.S.
- o Latvia
- o Other, if other please specify _____

Section II

Please circle the response that best represents the extent to which the following statements apply to you in conflict situations with your close friends.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Indifferent/ (N) No opinion	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)

	SA	S	N	D	SD
I should be judged on my own merit.					
Being able to take care of myself is a primary concern for me.					
My personal identity is important to me.					

	SA	S	N	D	SD
I consult others before making important decisions.					
I consult with co-workers on work-related matters.					
I prefer to be self-reliant rather than depend on others.					
I will sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my friends.					
I stick with my friends even through difficulties.					
I respect decisions made by my friends.					
	SA	S	N	D	SD
It is better to consult others and get their opinions before doing anything.					
I maintain harmony in the groups of which I am a member.					
I respect the majority's wishes in friendship groups of which I am a member.					
I remain in the groups of which I am a member if they need me, even though I am dissatisfied with them.					
I am a unique person separate from others.					
If there is a conflict between my values and values of groups of which I am a member, I follow my values.					
I try to abide by societal norms in my friendships.					
I try not to depend on others.					
I take responsibility for my own actions.					
I will stay in a group of friends if it needs me, even if I am not happy with it.					
It is important to consult close friends and get their ideas before making a decision.					
It is important for me to act as an independent person.					
I should decide my future on my own.					
What happens to me is my own doing.					

My relationships with others are more important to me than my accomplishments.					
I enjoy being unique and different from others.					
I am comfortable being singled out for praise and rewards.					
I don't support a decision made by my group of friends, when it is wrong.					

Section III

Please select the response that best represents the extent to which the following statements apply to you in conflict situations with your close friends.

5	4	3	2	1
Strongly Agree (SA)	Agree (A)	Indifferent/ (N) No opinion	Disagree (D)	Strongly Disagree (SD)

	SA	A	N	D	SD
I usually accommodate the wishes of my friends.					
I try to work out a compromise that gives both of us some of what we want.					
I try to work with my friends to find solutions that satisfy our expectations.					
I usually avoid open discussion of differences my friends.					
I exert pressure on my friend to make a decision in my favor.					
I try to find a middle course or compromise to resolve an impasse.					
I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.					
I negotiate with my friends so that a compromise can be					

reached.					
I generally try to satisfy the needs of my friends.					
I give in to the wishes of my friends.					
I bargain with my friend so that a middle ground can be reached.					
I exchange information with my friends to solve a problem together.					
	SA	A	N	D	SD
I sometimes bend over backwards to accommodate the desires of my friends.					
I sometimes take a moderate position so that a compromise can be reached.					
I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.					
I use my authority to get decisions made in my favor.					
I try to stay away from disagreement with my friends.					
I avoid conflict situations with my friends.					
I use my expertise to make others decide in my favor.					
I often go along with the suggestions of my friends.					
I try to give and take so that a compromise can be made.					
I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issue can be resolved in the best possible way.					
I collaborate with my friends to come up with decisions acceptable to us.					
I try to satisfy the expectations of my friends.					
I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation.					
I try to keep my disagreement with my friends to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.					

I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my friends.					
I keep disagreement with my friends to myself to prevent disrupting our relationship.					
I try to work with my friends for a proper understanding of a problem.					

Thank You