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Acculturation effects on culture and conflict style

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ACCULTURATION EFFECTS ON CULTURE AND CONFLICT STYLE

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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ABSTRACT

Acculturation Effects on Culture and Conflict Style

By

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In light of globalization, it is ever more valuable to understand how culture influences the way people manage conflict. Opportunities for individuals from varied cultural backgrounds to interact, and therefore conflict, are inherently greater because the technologies, economies, and livelihoods of people of many countries are increasingly interdependent. The purpose of this study was to examine factors influencing people’s individualistic-collectivistic culture tendencies and conflict styles, and investigate acculturation as a moderating factor between individualism-collectivism and conflict style among foreign nationals living within the United States. In addition to acculturation, variables that could affect acculturation were also measured, including media use, religiosity, and biological sex. The data revealed statistically-significant relationships for media-use, religiosity, acculturation, and race on individualism-collectivism and conflict styles, and supported the idea that acculturation is a moderating factor between individualism-collectivism and conflict style, although this relationship was only significant among those who preferred the dominating conflict style.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Conflict is possible any time humans communicate. The pervasiveness of conflict within human interaction is reiterated in Cupach’s and Canary’s (1997) observation that, “When people interact and form relationships, disagreements inevitably emerge” (p. xiii). Conflict itself has been described as “an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources, and interference from others in achieving their goals” (Hocker & Wilmot, 1991, p. 12). More specifically, conflict results from “the perceived and/or actual incompatibility of values, expectations, processes, or outcomes between two or more parties over substantive and/or relational issues” (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 360). The latter definition of conflict brings to light the fact that culture plays a large part in what a person perceives as being right and wrong, and that a person might be more prone to conflict after perceiving that his or her “cultural rules” are being violated by another. Keesing (1974) elaborates on these “cultural rules” by defining culture as a person’s “theory of the code being followed, the game being played, in the society into which he [or she] was born” (p. 89). He further characterizes culture as “a system of knowledge, shaped and constrained by the way the human brain acquires, organizes, and processes information and creates ‘internal models of reality’” (p. 89).
The opportunities for individuals from varied cultural backgrounds to interact, and therefore conflict, are also greater due to the fact that we live in an increasingly globalized world where technologies, economies, and livelihoods of people from many countries are inextricably linked. An example of the growing ethnic diversity within the United States alone is exemplified by the 1990 U.S. Bureau of the Census estimate that ethnic minorities will likely constitute 50 percent of the U.S. population by the year 2050. Moreover, as individuals from very different backgrounds interact more frequently, intensities of conflict are also likely to heighten. Kahane (1993) notes that "some of the most intense political and legal disputes in multicultural societies hinge not only on struggles over scarce resources, but on deep conflicts of cultural values and understandings" (p. 5). In light of globalization, it is ever more valuable to understand how culture influences the way individuals manage conflict.

The purpose of this study is to examine factors influencing people's individualistic-collectivistic culture tendencies and conflict styles, and to find whether or not acculturation is a moderating factor between individualism-collectivism and conflict style among foreign nationals living within the United States. This will be accomplished by not only measuring acculturation, but also by measuring variables that affect acculturation, including a person's media use, religiosity, and biological sex.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conflict Style

An accepted definition of conflict style is "the patterned responses or characteristic mode of handling conflict across a variety of communication episodes" (Kim, Hye-ryeon, Kim, & Hunter, 2004, p. 200). One measure researchers use to predict conflict behavior is with Pruitt and Rubin's (1986) dual-concern model. This model assists in predicting one of five conflict behaviors based on assessing a person's high or low-level of concern about one's own outcomes, followed by assessing the level of the same person's concern for other people's outcomes (see Figure 1). The five conflict styles described by the model include: integrating, avoiding, obliging, dominating, and compromising.

*Integrating*

A person who has a high concern for both his or her own interests and the other person's interests will most likely use an integrating style to resolve the conflict. Characteristics of this style include a willingness to openly exchange information, constructively address differences, and to make a true effort to find a mutuallyacceptable solution (Cai & Fink, 2002). This direct, cooperative style includes behaviors like "analytic remarks (such as descriptive, disclosive, qualifying, and soliciting statements)
and conciliatory remarks (such as supportive statements, concessions, and statements showing acceptance of responsibility)” (Gross & Guerrero, 2001, p. 205). The integrating style is often considered within Western culture to be the “optimal response” to conflict because the individual meets the expectations of the other person while still achieving his or her desired objectives (Gross & Guerrero).

Avoiding

On the other hand, if an individual has neither concern for his or her own interests, or for the other party’s interests, that individual will most likely employ an avoiding conflict style. Behaviors associated with this indirect and uncooperative style include physically or psychologically removing oneself from the scene of the conflict, “being indirect and evasive, changing and/or avoiding topics, employing noncommittal remarks, and making irrelevant remarks or joking as a way to avoid dealing with the conflict at hand” (Gross & Guerrero, 2001, p. 207). A person will most likely use this non-confrontational style when he or she perceives small or little benefit from pursuing the conflict or if it is unlikely the other party will make adequate concessions (Cai & Fink, 2002).

Obliging

Like avoiding, the obliging conflict style is also non-confrontational. One who uses this conflict style would likely have little concern for his or her own interests, but concern for the other person’s interests is high. Behaviors associated with this indirect and cooperative style include “passively accepting the decisions the partner makes, making yielding or conceding statements, denying or failing to express one’s needs, and explicitly expressing harmony and cooperation in a conflict episode” (Gross & Guerrero,
2001, p. 206). Cai and Fink (2002) comment that people might use this conflict style when a top priority is preserving the relationship. Therefore, a person using this conflict style emphasizes similarities rather than differences, and tends to concede to others’ concerns while giving up his or her own interests and needs (Cai & Fink). However, people don’t usually use the obliging conflict style if they fear appearing weak to others (Cai & Fink).

**Dominating**

The dominating conflict style is the most confrontational and, per the dual-concern model, represents a high concern for one’s own interests while having a low concern for the other’s interests (Cai & Fink, 2002). One using this style would also be considered direct and uncooperative (Gross & Guerrero, 2001). Characterized by the employment of threats, put downs and an unwillingness to change from an initial position or idea, the dominating conflict style focuses on “defeating the opponent” (Cai & Fink, p. 69). People are more likely to use the dominating conflict style when perceiving that the other party would be willing to yield, as well as think that the risk of using the dominating style will not likely result in alienating the other party (Cai & Fink).

**Compromising**

The final conflict style addressed in the dual-concern model is compromising, which reflects a moderate concern for both one’s own interests and for the other party’s interests (Cai & Fink, 2002). This style is also considered to be moderately direct and cooperative (Gross & Guerrero, 2001). A person using the compromising conflict style generally makes a modest effort to divide resources in an equitable fashion, but doesn’t necessarily pursue the best solution to satisfactorily meet the needs for each party (Cai &
Fink). Cai and Fink add that people often resort to compromising “when aspirations are not high enough to affect problem solving, or when pressures exist, such as time limitations or high costs of prolonging the conflict” (p. 70).

Figure 1. Dual-Concern Model, Adapted from Pruitt and Carnevale (1993)

**Culture and Conflict Style**

As mentioned previously, “culture” is often used to describe a person’s perception of society’s “system of knowledge” or the “code of conduct” people within a group generally follow (Keesing, 1974). Thus, although “culture” is often considered as something shared by a group, it is still accepted, followed, and expressed at the individual level, for “no one individual knows all aspects of the culture and each person has a unique view of the culture” (Gudykunst, 1997, p. 329). In addition, people typically do
not possess just one culture, but are rather “embedded within a variety of sociocultural contexts or cultures (e.g., country, ethnicity, religion, gender, family, etc.)” (Kim et al., 2004, p. 199). After perceiving and processing these cultural contexts, a person might then associate them with a set of ideas and practices that define how to be a “good” person (Kim et al.). Being a “good” person in a culture is also expressed by the way one handles conflict. For example, as mentioned before, the integrating conflict-management style is often considered to be the “optimal response” to conflict in Western culture because both parties achieve their desired objectives (Gross & Guerrero, 2001). However, the dominating conflict style is usually frowned upon by most cultures because the uncooperative nature of achieving a goal at the expense of another person is neither considered effective nor appropriate (Gross & Guerrero). The current study examines the influences that different aspects of culture have on conflict style. These cultural influences include: individualism-collectivism, acculturation, media use, religiosity, and biological sex. Each of these variables will be addressed in the following sections and their inclusion in this investigation justified.

**Individualism-Collectivism and Conflict Style**

Individualism-collectivism is “the major dimension of cultural variability isolated by theorists across cultures” (Gudykunst, 1997, p. 331). As such, it is used regularly within cross-cultural research because each culture’s conflict styles can often be inferred based on what the culture values more: the individual or the group. In individualistic cultures, the goals, needs, and rights of the individual take precedence over the goals, responsibilities, and obligations of the group (Cai & Fink, 2002; Gudykunst). People of
individualistic cultures also tend to belong to more specific *ingroups* (e.g., family, religion, university, social clubs, or work group) than people of collectivistic cultures. Triandis (1988) describes *ingroups* as “groups of people about whose welfare one is concerned, with whom one is willing to cooperate without demanding equitable returns, and separation from whom leads to discomfort or even pain” (p. 75). In addition, individualist cultures tend to be universalistic, applying the same value standards to all (Gudykunst). The cultures of Western countries such as the United States, Great Britain, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, Israel, Italy, New Zealand, Netherlands, Norway, and Switzerland are typically considered to be individualistic (Hofstede, 1980, 1984, 1991). Collectivists, on the other hand, “value the goals, responsibilities, and obligations of the group over the goals, needs, and rights of the individual” (Cai & Fink, p. 70). Collectivists also have fewer ingroups and, because they generally define themselves in terms of their relationships, will give greater consideration to those in their ingroups than will individualists (Cai & Fink). It is not surprising that, given that collectivists are more selective of their ingroups than individualists, people in collectivistic cultures tend to be particularistic in their views of each group, applying different value standards to ingroups and outgroups (Gudykunst). Countries such as China, Taiwan, Brazil, Columbia, Egypt, Korea, Japan, Greece, India, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan, Panama, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Venezuela, and Vietnam are often associated with possessing collectivistic cultures (Hofstede, 1980, 1984, 1991).

Several studies link individualistic-collectivistic cultures with conflict style preferences. “Despite somewhat inconsistent findings,” comment Cai and Fink (2002),
“the results of [some of] these studies have led to the generalization that collectivists are more likely to be non-confrontational whereas individualists are more likely to be confrontational” (2002, p. 71). For example, Triandis et al. (1988) found that the Japanese were likely to avoid confrontation by letting the needs of the group take precedence over their personal needs, which neatly fits into the description of collectivistic behavior. The researchers also discovered that such collectivistic behavior contributed to the Japanese’s use of conflict management strategies such as approval-seeking that protected the needs of the group over those of the individual (which fits into the obliging, integrating, and compromising sections of the dual-concern model).

The inconsistencies in the research of individualism-collectivism and conflict style, however, are numerous and unavoidable. First, Lee and Rogan (1991) discovered information that appears to conflict with the general characterizations of individualists and collectivists: Americans, generally characterized as individualists who do not shy away from conflict, were less confrontational in conflict than Koreans, who are usually considered to be collectivists (which is associated with being less confrontational than individualists) (Hofstede, 1980, 1984, 1991). In fact, the researchers found that Koreans used avoiding less as the power increased of those with whom they were in conflict, while Americans’ use of avoiding did not change based on the other party’s power. In a different study, Ting-Toomey et al. (1991) discovered that collectivistic cultures from Asia differed significantly in their preferences of avoiding and obliging, raising the question of whether or not conflict styles such as avoiding truly means a low concern for both one’s own and the other’s outcomes. Specifically, the researchers found that Chinese and Taiwanese respondents preferred avoiding more than participants from
Japan, Korea, and the United States. Respondents from China, Taiwan, and Japan were found to be more obliging than those from the U.S. and Korea. Kirkbride, Tang, and Westwood (1991) found that individuals in collectivistic cultures might consider the avoiding conflict style as appropriate, even though avoiding supposes a low concern for the other and does not fit neatly the general characterization of collectivists. Specifically, their findings indicate that after compromising, Hong Kong Chinese next preferred to use the avoiding conflict style. Finally, Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, and Lin (1991) found that people from the collectivistic culture of Taiwan used greater amounts of compromising, avoiding, integrating, and obliging conflict styles than U.S. respondents.

As can be seen by the studies above, it is quite difficult to pinpoint a trend in how an individual’s individualistic or collectivistic cultural tendencies directly predict any of the five conflict styles of the dual-concern model among typically assumed individualistic and collectivistic cultures. However, these studies might also indicate that, in the changing times associated with technological advances and globalization, cultures are homogenizing in terms of individualism-collectivism and conflict styles. Therefore, it might be appropriate to examine more closely just how much one’s culture, specifically one’s tendencies towards individualism or collectivism, affects one’s conflict style, as predicted by the dual-concern model.

One of the only studies that specifically addresses individualistic-collectivistic culture directly in relation to conflict styles within the dual-concern model is that of Cai and Fink (2002). Instead of characterizing people’s individualistic-collectivistic tendencies based on ethnicity per Hofstede (1980, 1984, 1991), as previous researchers had done, Cai and Fink measured each person’s individualism-collectivism using the
Rahim Organizational Conflict Inventory-II (ROCI-II), and compared the results with measurements of each person’s conflict styles. Within a multicultural group of graduate students in a Midwestern U.S. university, the researchers found that, among people of both individualistic and collectivistic cultures, “the integrating style was generally the most preferred, obliging and avoiding were next, followed by compromising and dominating” (p. 81). Thus, although the authors argued that individualists would score highly on the dominating conflict style, this contention was not supported. They also found that avoiding was preferred more by individualists than by collectivists—contrary to previous findings indicating that collectivistic Asians generally preferred the avoiding conflict style. In addition, Cai and Fink found that collectivists preferred compromising and integrating more than individualists. They also discovered that individualists and collectivists interpreted avoiding, integrating, obliging, and compromising differently, while interpretation of the dominating conflict style was similar. Finally, the authors found that integrating and compromising appeared to mean the same things to both individualists and collectivists, and avoiding and obliging appeared to mean different things. This study, combined with the studies described previously, contributes to the existing uncertainty about a clear relationship between individualism-collectivism and conflict style and leads to the following research question about individualism-collectivism and conflict styles in a multicultural sample:

RQ1: What is the relationship between conflict style preferences and individualism/collectivism among U.S. and international students?
Acculturation and Conflict Style

One potentially very important variable Cai and Fink (2002) did not address within their study of the relationship between individualism-collectivism and conflict style was acculturation. Acculturation “refers to changes in people’s social and work activities as well as their thinking patterns, values, and self identification” (Wong-Reiger & Quintana, 1987, p. 346). Such changes are not only influenced by social institutions such as schools, religion, and home and family, but also by “individual factors such as age, intelligence, personality, education, occupation, and motivation” (Mavreas & Bebbington, 1990, p. 942). The degree of acculturation experienced by non-native people living in the host nation might also depend on “the prestige the migrant status carries with it, on the explicitness and complexity of the new culture, and on the distance between the cultures” (p. 942). Within their study of Muslim immigrants’ acculturation to the United States, Alkhazraji, Gardner, Martin, and Paolillo (1997) found that individualistic-collectivistic tendencies also affected acculturation levels. Contrary to their original hypothesis that individualistic Muslims would find it easier to acculturate to the U.S. individualistic culture, they discovered that Muslims who were collectivists tended to have higher acculturation levels than those who were individualists. The researchers speculated that this might have been the case because “immigrants with more collectivistic values expressed a greater willingness to accept these cultures, presumably because they are, by definition, more oriented toward and likely to gravitate toward other people and the collective, regardless of the culture” (p. 252, emphasis in original).
Cueller, Arnold, and Maldonado (1995) offered a more detailed description of the complex psychosocial phenomenon of acculturation by defining it in terms of changes within three levels of functioning: behavioral, affective, and cognitive. They stated,

The behavioral level includes many types of behaviors, including verbal behavior or language. Language development obviously includes aspects beyond the behavioral and is understood to include cognitive aspects and related processes. Also at the behavioral level are customs, foods, and such cultural expressions as the music one chooses to listen to or dance to. At the affective level are the emotions that have cultural connections. For example, the way a person feels about important aspects of identity, the symbols one loves or hates, and the meaning one attaches to itself are all culturally based. At the cognitive level are beliefs about male/female roles, ideas about illness, attitudes toward illness and fundamental values. (p. 281)

Acculturation entails an “embracing” of many aspects of a culture or cultures different to one’s primary culture. As a result, most acculturation scales reflect various cultural facets. Many scales measuring acculturation of immigrants and sojourners to the United States, for example, will “ask about length of residence in the United States, English-language use and proficiency, observance of cultural traditions, and adherence to cultural beliefs” (Snowden & Hines, 1999, p 37).

Time in the host country might initially appear to be an appropriate indicator of acculturation to that country because the more exposure a person has to another culture,
the more opportunities he or she will have to be exposed to and internalize that culture’s rules and norms. Time in the host country and acculturation levels are positively correlated in several studies. Kim’s (1978) study on Korean immigrants to the United States, for example, led to the finding that the time Korean immigrants spent in the host country had, at least initially, a positive relationship with acculturation levels. In this study, communication ties with the host country steadily increased with time, then leveled out, which is also the time when ties with members of the same ethnic group increased. More recently, Alkhazraj et al. (1997) found that the “number of years lived in the United States was negatively related to Muslims’ willingness to retain their original national culture,” which “suggests that Muslim immigrants become less inclined to hold onto their cultural customs and practices with the passage of time” (p. 252).

It is also important to note, however, that other research indicates conflicting results linking length of stay in the host country and acculturation, supporting the idea that factors other than length of stay more heavily influence one’s acculturation (Bang, Hall, Anderson, & Willingham, 2005; Cai & Fink, 2002; Melkote & Liu, 2000). For example, the results from Kirkbride, Tang, and Westwood’s (1991) study supported Tang and Kirkbride’s (1986) earlier finding that, although the majority Hong Kong Chinese favored compromising and avoiding behaviors, British expatriates living in Hong Kong still preferred more assertive conflict-management behaviors. In their 2000 study of the effects of the Internet in Chinese people’s acculturation to the United States, Melkote and Liu found that, over time, “Chinese immigrants may integrate in terms of broad American behaviors but not American values” (p. 495). These examples highlight that there are cultural elements within people that will not necessarily change with extended
time in another country. Within the United States, in fact, this finding has led some researchers to promote a change in language to describe the diverse U.S. population—although the United States is commonly referred to as a “melting pot” of people, they say it is rather more like “a ‘salad,’ in which each group retains its own flavor and yet contributes to the whole” (Martin & Nakayama, 2003, p. 22).

In sum, the aforementioned studies do not give clear indication of a relationship between conflict style and acculturation. However, some studies indicate that collectivists may acculturate more easily to an individualistic culture of a host nation than individualists within a host nation that shares an individualistic culture. In addition, the time a person spends in the host country might, at least initially, have a positive correlation with acculturation levels. This information leads to the following research questions and hypothesis:

RQ2: What is the relationship between conflict style preferences and acculturation?

RQ3: What is the relationship between time in the host country and acculturation levels?

RQ4: Does acculturation moderate the relationship between individualism/collectivism and conflict style?

H1: Collectivism is positively correlated with acculturation levels for international students.

Media, Acculturation, and Conflict Style

A very influential aspect on a person’s acculturation is arguably the media, as they play an important part in disseminating a culture’s norms and values (Clement,
Several studies have shown that media exposure from television and newspapers influences the acculturation process (Barnett, Oliveira, & Johnson, 1989; Chaffee, Nass, & Yang, 1990; Driedger & Redekop, 1998; Payne & Peake, 1977). Further, Bandura (2001) argues that “much of the social construction of reality and shaping of public consciousness occurs through electronic acculturation” (p. 271). Electronic acculturation occurs through mediums such as the television, the computer, and the radio (Ziegler, 2007). One indication of the prevalence of electronic mediums within young people’s lives comes from Prensky (2001), who estimated that, in their lifetimes, college students have spent more time watching television (20,000 hours) and playing video games (10,000 hours) than reading books (5,000 hours). In another study conducted in 1995, “21 percent of Arabic-speaking households in France had invested in satellite receivers, compared with 4 percent of the general population,” and just “a year later the number of Arabic-speaking households with satellite dishes was believed to have doubled” (Hargreaves & Mahdjoub, 1997, p. 461). Some researchers use Cultivation Theory and Social Learning Theory to link recurring media exposure to acculturation, given both theories affirm that “media acts as socializing agents and thus may influence the construction and perpetuation of social constructs” (Pike & Jennings, 2005, pp. 83-84). As Ziegler notes, in the extremely fast-changing mediated environment in which people live today, “the world is no longer predominantly defined by parents, schools, and peers, but by faceless people in the virtual world of cyberspace” (p. 76). This observation highlights just how pervasive and influential mass media are in people’s lives, taking a prominent place in influencing people’s values and perceptions—and in short, influencing people’s cultures.
Traditionally, mass media have been thought to “play an important role in deepening interethnic understanding and facilitating cultural adaptation of ethnic minorities through the symbolic environment they create and sustain” (Liu, 2005, p. 366). Gordon (1964), for example, stated that mass media (and public schools) exert “overwhelming acculturation powers over immigrants’ children” (pp. 244-245). Ultimately, “the underlying assumption is that access to, exposure to, and use of the mass media of the dominant group influences [sic] ethnics and migrants in their processes of learning about and taking part in the dominant society” (Subervi-Velez, 1986, p. 72). This was the predominant view of media before electronic media became interactive and accessible to almost every social class of people.

However, recent research reveals that the increased availability and interactivity of media today can also decrease, or at least stifle, acculturation among immigrants and sojourners (Lievrouw, 2001; Melkote & Liu, 2000). Several studies indicate that “ethnic media enhance pluralism by facilitating the development of consciousness of a different ethnic community because they help in maintaining ethnic ties” (Melkote & Liu, p. 501). Given the current pervasiveness of the Internet, satellite television, and other relatively easily accessible electronic media, minorities can have regular access to the information, values, ideas, and ideologies originating from their home countries. Access to these media, however, also potentially complicates full immersion into the host culture. For example, Melkote and Liu found that newcomers to the United States rely on the Internet not only to ease their ‘cultural shock,’ but also to find tips on how to live in the new host country. The researchers found that the greater dependence Chinese immigrants to the United States had on the Chinese Internet to ease their “transcultural stress,” the “lower
degree of acculturation to American values such as those related to health and physical appearance, relationship between parents and children and values related to sexual matters and religion” (p. 500). Further, the study revealed that it is possible for Chinese Internet users to “maintain the Chinese values and reject American values while acculturating to American everyday behaviors” (pp. 501-502). Thus, it seems that there is a difference between adopting values and adopting behaviors.

Media such as the Internet also allow minorities more easily to find one another and communicate within the host country, thus maintaining ties to their ethnic cultures. Hirji (2006) found this to be the case when studying how Internet news services affected Canadian Muslims during the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. He observed that, during a time when most American and Canadian news sources were “minimizing expressions of dissent in regard to military action in Afghanistan and the role of North American foreign policy in the developing world,” Canadian Muslims found a “safe-harbor” within diasporic media over the Internet where they could voice their opposing views and maintain their Muslim identities and communities (p. 136). According to Hirji, diasporic media, or media that allow immigrants to maintain ties with others from their native countries, have historically been viewed “as indicators of immigrants’ and minorities’ unwillingness to integrate into the host society” (2006, p. 127). Through the Internet, Canadian Muslims were able to maintain a separate identity—and possibly took a step back from fully integrating into the Canadian majority culture.

In a similar vein, when studying how information and communication technologies (ICTs) like the Internet and World Wide Web encourage social integration or separation, Lievrouw (2001) argued that “ICTs are used to support separate social
'spaces' for ethnic, religious or other groups” and “may contribute to social fragmentation or a turning away from the integrating forces of modern society” (p. 11). She further commented that ICTs allow people at any time to turn to subcommunities that support similar values and beliefs. As a result, people can coexist in the same physical environment while living in different information environments. Lievrouw asserted that, from a traditional functionalist point of view, environmental “strains would either compel groups to integrate, coordinating their members’ actions and interests; or they would lead to fragmentation or separatism if members cannot negotiate their differences” (p. 17).

Based on the past research about media and acculturation, the following hypotheses are presented:

H2: There is a relationship between conflict style preferences and media use (U.S. and non-U.S. media) among international students.

H3: There is an association between media use (U.S. and non-U.S. media) international students use most and their acculturation levels.

H4: The greater the use of English-language media from the United States among international students, the greater the likelihood they will be individualists.

Religiosity, Acculturation, and Conflict Style

Religion, a type of culture in itself, also offers followers a set of values and boundaries that tell them who to associate with and what behavioral rules to follow. For instance, “religious teaching has been identified as a facilitator of intolerance toward people with HIV or those in HIV risk groups” (Jenkins, 1995, p. 132). Religiosity is an important element in some people’s lives, and particularly for some immigrants to
America, since a “decline of ethnic neighborhoods in urban areas” has led to a shift “to the ethnic church as the institutional setting for ethnic interpersonal communication” (Jeffres, 1983, p. 241). Therefore, one might also infer that an immigrant to the United States who is highly religious might choose a place of worship that offers him or her the opportunity to integrate with others of both the same religious convictions and of the same ethnic background. This could result in a lower rate of acculturation than one who is not religious and does not associate with others of the same ethnicity in a religious setting.

While little research has been done on the relationship between religiosity and conflict style, several studies examine the relationship between religiosity and acculturation, with some concluding that immigrants who are devoted followers of certain religions are less prone to accept the U.S. culture. This, in turn, would also suggest lower acculturation to the American culture. For example, in Alkhazraji’s et al. (1997) study of Muslim immigrants working in the United States, the researchers concluded that “the subjects’ religious beliefs were found to be negatively related to acceptance of the U.S. national culture, whereas the degree to which they actively engaged in religious practices was positively related to their retention of their original national culture” (p. 253). This finding indicates that, in particular, Muslim immigrants who are very religious and living in the United States will likely have low U.S. acculturation scores. The researchers hypothesized that this is due to the fact that Muslims who have more ingrained religious beliefs find it hard to resolve inconsistencies between the U.S. culture and their beliefs. The authors suggest that, in this case, being very religious is the result of Muslims’ desires to retain their original culture. Based on
this information relating religiosity to acculturation, the following research question and hypothesis are offered:

RQ5: What is the relationship between conflict style preferences and religiosity?

H5: As religiosity decreases among international students, their U.S. acculturation scores will increase.

Biological Sex, Acculturation, and Individualism-Collectivism

Previous studies offer insights into the relationship between biological sex and acculturation and biological sex and conflict style (Alkhazraji et al., 1997; Brewer, Mitchell, & Weber, 2002; Johnson, 1996; Kim et al., 2004; Mortenson, 1999; Zalabak & Morley, 1984). Several studies support the premise that men generally acculturate better than women. Alkhazraji et al. (1997), for example, found that men and more educated Muslim immigrants to the United States were more accepting of U.S. culture than women and less educated Muslims. In two other studies, Burnam et al. (1987b) and Espin (1987) found that Hispanic men acculturate more quickly than Hispanic women.

In regard to the relationships between biological sex and conflict style and gender and conflict style, past research yields conflicting results (Shockley-Zalabak & Morley, 1984). When studying gender types in relationship to conflict management styles, Brewer, Mitchell, and Weber (2002), found that “masculine individuals were highest on the dominating conflict style, whereas feminine individuals were highest on the avoiding style, and androgynous individuals were higher on the integrating style” (p. 78). In another study, however, Kim et al. (2004) determined that, after studying a group of multiethnic undergraduate students at a university in Hawaii, participants’ biological sex
did not have any significant main effect of conflict management styles. As can be seen from these studies, “sex” and “gender” are often measured differently. While sex is typically measured by checking a box (male/female), gender is often measured via an instrument examining degrees of femininity or masculinity (e.g., BSRI) (Bem, 1974). Yet, although gender and biological sex can be conceptualized as different constructs, sex is implicit in gender (Canary & Emmers-Sommer, 1997). Within this study, biological sex will be assumed to imply gender as well.

Finally, previous studies also seem to support a link between biological sex and individualistic-collectivistic tendencies (see the review by Fischer & Manstead, 1990). For example, Hofstede (1980) found that women tend to be more collectivistic than men. In another study of sex, communication values, and cultural values within both the Euro-American and Chinese students at a large Midwestern university, Mortenson (2002) also found that, “across both cultures, men were more individualist than women, and women were more collectivist than men” and collectivism was higher among both Chinese men and women than American men and women (p. 66).

Not entirely surprising, however, are contrasting studies demonstrating men to be more collectivistic than women. For example, when comparing sex, origin (U.S. vs. non-U.S.), and individualism-collectivism, Cai and Fink (2002) found a significant relationship ($N = 186; r = -.247, p < .001$) between individualism-collectivism and sex, revealing that the majority of the female graduate students, regardless of ethnicity, were individualists, while the majority of male graduate students, regardless of ethnicity, were collectivists. Specifically, 30 of 62, or about 48 percent, of non-U.S. females in Cai and Fink’s sample were individualists and 14 of 33, or about 42 percent, of U.S. females were
individualists. Conversely, 37 of 66, or about 56 percent, of non-U.S. males were collectivists, and 10 of 25, or 40 percent of U.S. males were collectivists. Although more investigation is needed, these results indicate that there might be a significant link between sex and individualistic-collectivistic tendencies specifically among students studying in the United States.

The aforementioned studies on the relationships between biological sex, acculturation, conflict style, and individualism-collectivism lead to the final research questions and hypotheses:

RQ6: Does biological sex relate to individualism-collectivism such that female students are more individualistic and male students are more collectivistic?

H6: Male international students will have higher acculturation levels than female international students.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Procedures

Data were collected via convenience-sample. Specifically, students in undergraduate-level communication courses, as well as students in both graduate and undergraduate hotel administration courses from a large southwestern American university, took an online survey supported by Survey Monkey (see APPENDIX I). The College of Hotel Administration was specifically chosen as a place to recruit survey participants because of the large number of international students there taking courses. The researcher visited several classes, discussed the nature of the study, and read the subject disclaimer form (see APPENDIX I) to the students. A hard-copy of the subject disclaimer form containing the survey’s URL and password to access the survey was distributed to all interested students. The researcher also drafted an e-mail that the Office of International Students and Scholars sent to all international students within the university (see APPENDIX II).

Once at the survey site on Survey Monkey, participants could read the subject disclaimer form advising them that clicking “NEXT” to proceed indicated that they read the form, were over 18 years of age, and wished to partake in the survey. Otherwise, if he or she disagreed, the participant could simply exit the program. The next page of the
survey reiterated that the participant could exit out of the survey at any time without penalty to him/her and without the responses being saved if they exited before clicking the “SUBMIT” button at the end of the survey. If the participant clicked “NEXT,” he or she would then continue on to the survey itself. For the remainder of the survey, participants clicked their responses with the computer mouse. They had the option to skip any question that they did not wish to answer. Among both the communication and hotel administration students, undergraduates received extra credit for their participation, while graduate students who completed the survey were given the chance to win a $25 gift certificate to a coffee shop. Upon completing the survey, participants clicked the “SUBMIT” button to submit their survey. They then received a screen with a receipt that they could print and submit to their instructor for extra credit (undergraduate students) or for the chance to win a gift certificate (graduate students and international students). Similarly, after completing the survey, international students who were solicited via email from the Office of International Students and Scholars printed out a confirmation page, turned it in to the Office of International Students and Scholars, and were entered in a drawing to win a $25 gift card to a coffee shop.

Demographic information was collected from each participant. Data gathered included the participant’s age, religion, graduate or undergraduate status, time in the United States, country of permanent residence, and racial group. Other areas measured throughout the survey included individualism-collectivism, conflict style, acculturation, religiosity, and media use. Finally, all participants were notified verbally during the consenting process and/or by writing in the online subject disclaimer form that their responses would remain anonymous. At no time during the course of the survey was any
personally identifying information gathered and linked to the survey results (e.g., name, home address, etc.).

Instruments

Media Use

All respondents were given the opportunity to report their media use. Questions included, “How much time in a day do you estimate you spend consuming the following (to the best of your knowledge) American media in English?” and “How much time in a day do you estimate you spend consuming the following media in a language other than English, or consuming non-American media?” After each question was a list of media ranging from the Internet to books, for which the respondents were asked to report the number of hours and/or minutes in a day they estimated they spent consuming the media.

Religiosity

Religiosity was assessed using a modified version of the Religious Orientation Scale by Allport and his colleagues (Allport, 1959; Allport & Kramer, 1946; Allport & Ross, 1967). The ROS originally contained questions that assessed two different dimensions of religious commitment: intrinsic religious orientation and extrinsic religious orientation (Ghorpade, Lackritz, & Singh, 2006). Ghorpade et al. (2006) modified the ROS, which can be found in its entirety in Genia (1993, p. 285), by only using the Intrinsic Religious Orientation scale, and both adding and deleting questions from it. Specifically, the authors “dropped three items (14, 15, and 16, all of which make references to particular religious associations) . . . and added three items classified by [Allport] as extrinsic, but which, when slightly modified and reverse coded, provide
measures of intrinsic religiosity,” the result was a 9-question “pure IRO scale” in which items were measured by a Likert-type scale to which the respondents indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) (p. 55). In this study, the Likert-type scale was reversed, where 1 = strongly agree and 7 = strongly disagree. The authors used the IRO scale for two primary reasons. First, results from the combined measurement of extrinsic and intrinsic orientations “have not been fruitful from a methodological perspective” (2006, p. 52). Second, the modified IRO scale provided a more distinct and reliable measurement of religiosity. Donahue (1985) commented that “intrinsic religiousness serves as an excellent measure of religious commitment, as distinct from religious belief, church-membership, liberal-conservative theological orientation” (p. 415). Further, Donahue argued that IRO provides an excellent measure of religious commitment “and it is related to locus of control, purpose of life, and lack of anxiety” (Ghorpade, Lackritz, & Singh, p. 53). In addition, because individuals with higher levels of IRO find a “master motive” in religion and thus their needs “are brought into harmony with the religious beliefs and prescriptions,” “this would suggest that IRO is an independent force, something that individuals arrive at by themselves, and hence free of ethnic, denominational, and gender influences” (pp. 52-53). Reliability of the modified IRO in Ghorpade et al.’s study was .93 (Cronbach’s alpha). In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha was a satisfactory .86.

**Individualism-Collectivism**

Individualism-collectivism was measured with a modified version of the original individualism-collectivism (INDCOL) scale by Hui and Triandis (1986). The original INDCOL scale consisted of “66 Likert-type scale items used to assess an individual’s
level of collectivism by measuring attitudes and behaviors toward six relational domains (e.g., co-worker, neighbors) (Cai & Fink, 2002, p. 74). Cai and Fink reduced the number of items to 11 by first deleting 22 items that “lacked clarity or face validity,” followed by assessing the remaining 44 items “for internal consistency and parallelism using confirmatory factor analysis” and reducing three subscales to a single scale (p. 74). Each item is measured by a Likert-type scale to which respondents indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). In this study, the Likert-type scale was reversed, where 1 = strongly agree and 7 = strongly disagree.

When analyzing the modified INDCOL scores, the researchers then divided the score into three groups of participants: midrange, collectivists and individualists. Midrange scores were classified as the middle 25 percent of scores, while those with higher scores (greater or equal to 60) were defined as collectivists. Individualists, on the other hand, were defined by the lowest scores, less than or equal to 54. Because the Likert-type scale used in this study was opposite from that used in Cai and Fink’s study (1 = strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree), participants who had scores that ranged from 11-28 were labeled collectivists, 29 through 33 were labeled midrange, and 34 to 77 were labeled as individualists in order to correspond with the range of conflict-style preference scores used by Cai and Fink. Reliability of the INDCOL scale in the Cai and Fink study was a moderate .76 (Cronbach’s alpha). In the present study, Cronbach’s alpha was an acceptable .73. In addition, the researcher separately calculated the Cronbach’s alphas for both the international students and U.S. students to ascertain if the INDCOL scale reliabilities for each group were comparable. A low reliability score for international students in particular might have indicated they did not adequately understand the
statements associated with the INDCOL survey. However, in this study, reliabilities for the U.S. and international students’ INDCOL scores, respectively, were not concerning.

Conflict Style

Conflict style was measured by the ROCI-II (Rahim, 1983), which is composed of 35 Likert-type items that assess the five styles for handling conflict. Based on an evaluation of the validity for the subscales of the ROCI-II, Cai and Fink (2002) deleted six items, resulting in the 29-item ROCI-II used in this study. Each of the conflict styles was represented in the ROCI-II by five to seven items. In this study, participants responded to each item using a Likert-type scale, indicating their degree of agreement or disagreement (1 = strongly agree; 7 = strongly disagree). Incidentally, this Likert-type scale’s anchors are the converse from that used by Cai and Fink in their (2002) study. By responding in agreement, the participant demonstrated his or her preference for the conflict style addressed in the particular item. In Cai and Fink’s study, the Cronbach’s alpha for avoiding was .84, .75 for compromising, .84 for dominating, .81 for integrating, and .83 for obliging. In the present study, the Cronbach’s alpha was .90 for the overall scale. Cronbach’s alphas for the subscales were .83 for avoiding, .86 for compromising, .84 for dominating, .86 for integrating, and .85 for obliging.

Acculturation

Acculturation was measured with a modified version of the Psychological Acculturation Scale, which, in its original form, consists of 10 items that “relate to individuals’ psychological response to differing cultural contexts” (Tropp, Erkut, Coll, Alcarcon, & Vasquez-Garcia, 1999, p. 355). Tropp et al. used this scale to assess the acculturation of Latinos and Puerto Ricans, both U.S.-born and immigrants, to the United
States. Stevens, Pels, Vollebergh, and Crijnen, (2004) modified the PAS when measuring Moroccan immigrant acculturation to the Netherlands by reducing the 10 items to two sets of six confirmative items; one set was Dutch-centric and the other set was Moroccan-centric. Participants responded to both sets using a three-point Likert-type scale, which assessed respondents’ “emotional attachment and belonging” to the two aforementioned cultures (1 = Disagree, 2 = Neutral; 3 = Agree) (p. 692). This study applied Stevens et al.’s items to the United States culture. Also, Likert-type scale used in this study was reversed, where 1 = agree and 3 = disagree. In Stevens et al.’s study, the Cronbach’s *alpha* was .85 for the Dutch PAS and .73 for the Moroccan PAS. In the present study, the Cronbach’s *alpha* for all students was .85, .74 for international students, and .84 for U.S. students.

**Data Analysis**

This section offers insight into how each research question and hypotheses were tested. Research Question One asks, “What is the relationship between conflict style preferences and individualism/collectivism among U.S. and international students?” The predictor variables are U.S. and international students and their individualism-collectivism scores, while the criterion variable is conflict style. RQ1 was measured by doing a Pearson correlation to compare respondents’ scores from the ROCI-II and the INDCOL scale.

Research Question Two asks, “What is the relationship between conflict style preferences and acculturation?” The predictor variable is acculturation among all respondents and the criterion variable is conflict style. RQ2 was measured by using a
Pearson correlation to compare respondents’ scores from the ROCI-II and the modified PAS.

Research Question Three asks, “What is the relationship between time in the host country and acculturation levels?” The predictor variable is time international students have spent in the United States and the criterion variable is their level of acculturation. RQ3 was measured by using a Pearson correlation to compare the number of years respondents spent in the United States and their modified PAS scores.

Research Question Four asks, “Does acculturation moderate the relationship between individualism/collectivism and conflict scores?” To test RQ4, a General Linear model (GLM) was performed. Individualism-collectivism is the predictor variable (INDCOL score), acculturation is the covariate, and the five conflict styles (ROCI-II) are the criterion variables. The omnibus Wilks’ Lambda was used to assess the multivariate effect of individualism-collectivism and acculturation on the criterion variables and post-hoc LSD tests will be performed on significant findings. The significant multivariate effect was followed by calculating ANOVA to assess univariate effects and parameter estimates.

Research Question Five asks, “What is the relationship between conflict style preferences and religiosity?” The predictor variable is religiosity, and the criterion variable is conflict style. RQ5 was measured by conducting a Pearson correlation between respondents’ religiosity scores and individualism and collectivism scores.

Research Question Six asks, “Does biological sex relate to individualism-collectivism such that female students are more individualistic and male students are more collectivistic?” The predictor variable is the sex of the person and the criterion
variable is individualism-collectivism. RQ7 was measured by conducting independent sample t-test between biological sex and individualism-collectivism scores.

Hypothesis One argues, “Collectivism is positively correlated with acculturation levels for international students.” The predictor variable is collectivism and the criterion variable is acculturation amongst international students. H1 was measured by conducting a Pearson correlation between collectivist international students and their PAS scores.

Hypothesis Two argues, “There is a relationship between conflict style preferences, ethnicity of origin, and American media use.” The predictor variable is the ethnic (international) and U.S. media use, while the criterion variable is conflict style. H2 was measured by conducting Pearson correlations between the ROCI-II scores with the number of hours in a day they spent viewing different types of media (U.S. and non-U.S. media).

Hypothesis Three argues, “There is an association between what types of media (e.g., radio, television, computer) international students use most and their acculturation levels. The predictor variable is media use and the criterion variable is acculturation level. H3 was measured by conducting a Pearson correlation between media use and PAS scores.

Hypothesis Four argues, “The greater the use of English media from America among international students, the greater likelihood they will be individualists.” The predictor variable is the number of hours a day international students use English media from America and the criterion variable is individualism-collectivism. H4 was measured by using Pearson correlations to compare the number of hours a day international
students spent viewing various English-language media from America with their individualism-collectivism scores.

Hypothesis Five argues, “As religiosity decreases among international students, U.S. acculturation scores increase. The predictor variable is religiosity and the criterion variable is acculturation. H5 was measured by calculating a Pearson correlation between respondents’ religiosity scores and their acculturation scores.

Hypothesis Six argues, “Male international students will have higher acculturation levels than female international students.” The predictor variable is sex and the criterion variable is acculturation level. H6 was measured with an independent sample t-test between biological sex and PAS scores.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Sample

The final sample consisted of 574 individuals. Ages ranged from 18 years to 52 years, with the average age being \( M = 21.61 \) years, \( SD = 4.889 \). Three-hundred-forty-three participants were women and 231 were men. Five-hundred-thirty-five students were undergraduates and 39 students were graduates. The sample consisted of 478 U.S.-citizen students and 93 international students. International students identified themselves based on their designation by the university. Typically, international students are non-U.S. citizens studying temporarily in the United States. The student sample represented 34 different countries of permanent residences (Macao, Taiwan, and American Samoa were considered separate countries in this study). Countries included Nepal, Iran, Canada, and Brazil. South Korean representation dominated the sample with 27 responses, followed by Japanese students with 13 responses. Among the international students, time spent in the United States ranged from less than a year to 17 years, with the average time in the United States being \( M = 4.19 \) years, \( SD = 3.513 \). The average time U.S. students spent in the United States was \( M = 19.52 \) years, \( SD = 6.176 \). Regarding religious affiliation, 321 students (55.9%) of the entire sample reported being Christian, 49 (8.5%) were Catholic, 19 (3.3%) reported being Buddhist, 19 (3.3%) were Jewish, six
(1.0%) were Hindu, six (1.0%) were Muslim, four (0.7%) were Agnostic, three (0.5%) were Mormon, three (0.5%) were Atheist, and one person (0.2%) in each of the following religions designated his or her primary religion as: Greek Orthodox, Navajo, Sikh, and Jehovah’s Witness. One-hundred thirty-one respondents (22.8%) reported “none.” Finally, seven respondents (1.2%) chose not to give their religious preference. Because respondents had the opportunity to write in their religious preference after checking the “other” box, additional religions (listed above) were added to this final report of religious preferences. The racial demographic of the sample consisted of 257 students (53.8%) reporting being White/Caucasian, 50 (10.5%) as Asian, 61 (12.8%) as Hispanic/Latin American, 46 (9.6%) as Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 38 (7.9%) as Black/African American, 16 (3.3%) as Biracial, five (1.0%) as Middle Eastern, and three (0.6%) as Native American. Five-hundred respondents said they have family living in the United States while 65 said they did not.

**Individualism-Collectivism and Conflict Style**

Research Question 1 asked about the general relationship between conflict style preferences and individualism-collectivism. Overall, the combined sample of U.S. and international students appeared to favor the integrating conflict style (lower scores = more agreement with the tenets of the particular conflict style) (integrating: $M = 2.49, SD = .927$; compromising: $M = 2.80, SD = .867$; obliging: $M = 3.36, SD = 1.06$; avoiding: $M = 3.51, SD = 1.14$; dominating: $M = 3.79, SD = 1.26$), as well as tended to be more individualistic ($M = 36.18, SD = 9.56$). Because the researcher labeled 1 = strongly agree to 7 = strongly disagree in the Likert scales of the survey, a score of 34-77 equated with being highly individualistic (corresponding with Cai and Fink’s INDCOL-score range of

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11-55), and the scores ranging from 11-28 equated to being highly collectivistic (corresponding with Cai and Fink’s INDCOL-score range of 60-77). Therefore, higher INDCOL scores in this study equated to a greater tendency to be individualistic. In this study, scores ranged from 11-74. When converting participants to categories, as Cai and Fink did, 114 (21.3%) participants scored within the collectivistic range, 92 (17.2%) were midrange, and 330 (61.6%) were individualists.

For international students, 16 (19.27%) were collectivists, 11 (13.25%) were midrange, and 56 (67.46%) were individualists. The data for the international-student sample indicated a significant correlation between INDCOL and compromising scores ($r = .266, p < .017$) and INDCOL and integrating scores ($r = .290, p < .009$). Again, because of the rating scale used in this study, lower ROCI-II scores for each conflict style denoted a higher tendency to choose that conflict style. Hence, as INDCOL scores increased toward individualism, international students’ preferences to compromise and integrate decreased.

In the U.S.-student sample, 98 students (21.63%) were collectivists, 81 (17.88%) were midrange, and 274 (60.48%) were individualists. Positive correlations existed between INDCOL and obliging scores ($r = .132, p < .006$), INDCOL and compromising scores ($r = .216, p < .0001$), and INDCOL and integrating scores ($r = .248, p < .001$). This demonstrates that as INDCOL scores increased towards individualism, the preference to oblige, compromise, and integrate decreased. Finally, negative correlations existed between INDCOL and avoiding scores ($r = -.207, p < .0001$) and between INDCOL and dominating scores ($r = -.164, p < .001$) for the U.S.-student sample.
Consequently, as INDCOL scores increased towards individualism, the tendency to prefer avoiding and dominating conflict styles increased as well.

**Acculturation and Conflict Style**

Research Questions 2, 3, 4, and Hypothesis 1 all address acculturation, conflict style, and the relationship between the two. Research Question 2 asks about the relationship between conflict-style preference and acculturation. One significant correlation appeared between a conflict style preference and acculturation. In this study, low PAS scores correlated to higher acculturation levels. As PAS scores increased among the combined U.S. and international student sample, the dominating score increased ($r = .086, p < .045$). This indicates that a higher acculturation level also correlated with the tendency to prefer the dominating conflict style, thus supporting RQ2. Another positive correlation appeared between U.S. students' acculturation levels and the obliging conflict-style preference ($r = .101, p < .032$), signifying that U.S. students who preferred the obliging conflict style also tended to be more acculturated. No significant correlations appeared between acculturation and preferred conflict styles among international students.

Research Question 3 asks if there is a relationship between time in the host country (the United States) and acculturation levels. A Pearson correlation conducted between all respondents and their PAS score showed a negative correlation ($r = -.440, p < .01$), indicating that acculturation levels increased as time in the U.S. increased. However, when making a more detailed look at the differences between the U.S. and the international groups of students, a significant correlation only existed between U.S. students’ time in the U.S. and their acculturation levels ($r = -.286, p < .01$). This finding

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supports the idea that length of time in the U.S. does not significantly increase international students' acculturation levels.

Research Question 4 asks whether or not acculturation is a moderating factor between individualism-collectivism and conflict style. To test this, the researchers created a multivariate general linear model (GLM) using data collected from the combined U.S. and international student sample. Similar to the procedures followed in Cai and Fink (2002), participants' scores on the INDCOL were categorized as "collectivist" if their scores were 11-28, "midrange" if their scores were 29-33, and "individualist" if scores were 34-77. Participants' individualism-collectivism scores were entered as the predictor, acculturation as the covariate, and each of the conflict styles as criterion variables (integrating, obliging, avoiding, dominating, and compromising). These variables were tested to see if there was an impact on the different responses to conflict. The omnibus Wilks' $\Lambda$ was used to determine if individualism-collectivism was significantly related to the dependent variables. A significant main effect for individualism-collectivism was demonstrated in the multivariate model, but the moderating effect of acculturation in the multivariate model was non-significant (see Table 1). Numerous main effects in univariate follow-up tests were demonstrated for individualism-collectivism on the various conflict styles (see Table 2). Acculturation appeared to moderate the relationship between individualism-collectivism and the conflict style of dominating, $F [1, 458] = 5.63$, $eta^2 = .010$, $p < .018$. For individualism-collectivism, post-hoc LSD tests indicated that individuals who were collectivist in nature were more obliging ($M = 3.13$) than individuals who were individualistic ($M = 3.44$), $p < .011$. Similarly, individuals who were collectivistic were significantly more
compromising ($M = 2.45$) than those who scored midrange ($M = 2.77$) and those who scored as individualistic ($M = 2.89$). Regarding avoiding, interestingly, collectivists were significantly less likely to avoid ($M = 3.74$) than individualists ($M = 3.31$) and midrange participants ($M = 3.66$) were significantly less likely to avoid than individualists. For integrating, collectivists ($M = 2.11$) were more likely to integrate than midrange scorers ($M = 2.42$) and individualists ($M = 2.60$). Finally, collectivists ($M = 4.036$) were significantly less likely to engage in dominating than individualists ($M = 3.67$).

Table 1
Multivariate Effects for Individualism-Collectivism and Acculturation on Conflict Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Wilks' $\Lambda$</th>
<th>Partial $\eta^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individualism-Collectivism</td>
<td>7.43</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.849</td>
<td>.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acculturation</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.090</td>
<td>.979</td>
<td>.021</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Univariate Effects and Parameter Estimates for Individualism-Collectivism (I/C) on Conflict Styles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>$F$</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>Partial $\eta^2$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I/C on Obliging</td>
<td>4.138</td>
<td>.017</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>.116</td>
<td>.558</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I/C on Compromising</td>
<td>9.995</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.148</td>
<td>.092</td>
<td>1.608</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I/C on Avoiding</td>
<td>6.809</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.118</td>
<td>.124</td>
<td>.951</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I/C on Integrating</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td>.053</td>
<td>.099</td>
<td>.539</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I/C on Dominating</td>
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<td>.138</td>
<td>2.373</td>
<td>.012</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Hypothesis 1 predicts that collectivism is positively correlated with acculturation levels for international students. That is, as INDCOL scores decrease, indicating a greater collectivistic tendency, it is predicted that acculturation scores will also decrease, representing greater self-perceived acculturation. However, the data revealed no significant relationship between INDCOL scores and acculturation levels (r = .142, p < .199). Thus, H1 was not supported.

**Media, Acculturation, and Conflict Style**

Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 all address the expected relationship between media, acculturation, and culture. Hypothesis 2 predicts a relationship between conflict style preferences and media use (U.S. and non-U.S. media) among international students. This hypothesis was supported, but the relationship also appeared among U.S. students when the groups were analyzed separately. First, the data from both groups indicated that the greater the use of U.S. media in both groups, the greater the use of non-U.S. media as well (U.S. students: r = .334, p < .0001; international students: r = .594, p < .001; combined sample: r = .382, p < .001). In addition, t-tests demonstrated that international students and U.S. students used about the same amount of U.S. media (international students: M = 5.08 hours, SD = 2.59; U.S. students: M = 5.15, SD = 1.88). However, international students generally used more non-U.S. media than U.S. students (international students M = 2.90 hours, SD = 2.87; U.S. students: M = .83 hours, SD = 1.91).

In the combined sample of U.S. and international students, hours spent watching non-U.S. media negatively correlated with obliging scores (r = -.127, p < .003), avoiding scores (r = -.106, p < .013), and dominating scores (r = -.154, p < .0001). As mentioned
previously, lower scores in each of the conflict styles suggest a greater preference for that particular conflict style. Therefore, the more non-U.S. media the combined sample used, the more likely those in the sample preferred to use the obliging, avoiding, and dominating conflict styles. Hours spent using U.S. media significantly correlated with dominating scores ($r = -.157, p < .0001$). For the international-student sample, hours spent using both U.S. and non-U.S. media appeared to be negatively correlated to dominating scores (U.S. media: $r = -.269, p < .011$; non-U.S. media: $r = -.387, p < .0001$). Therefore, as international students used more U.S. and non-U.S. media, they tended to prefer the dominating conflict style. For the U.S.-student sample, hours spent using both U.S. and non-U.S. media negatively correlated with both dominating (U.S. media: $r = -.133, p < .035$; non-U.S. media: $r = -.106, p < .024$) and avoiding (U.S. media: $r = -.099, p < .035$; non-U.S. media: $r = -.127, p < .007$). These findings indicate that, as U.S. students consumed more U.S. and non-U.S. media, they also tended to use the dominating and avoiding conflict styles.

Hypothesis 3 predicts that there will be an association between media use (of U.S. and non-U.S. media) and acculturation levels among international students. This hypothesis was also supported. A negative correlation resulted between international students’ acculturation scores and the number of hours spent using U.S. media ($r = -.265, p < .011$). Because lower acculturation scores signify higher acculturation in this study, the results demonstrated that the more international students used U.S. media, the higher acculturation levels they had. Similar results appeared in the U.S.-student sample, where hours spent using U.S. media also correlated negatively with acculturation scores ($r = -.107, p < .020$). Conversely, the U.S. sample also indicated a significant positive
correlation between non-U.S. media use and acculturation scores \( (r = .220, p < .0001) \). Thus, acculturation levels decreased as non-U.S. media use increased.

Finally, Hypothesis 4 predicted a positive relationship between U.S.-media use among international students and their likelihood to be individualistic. This hypothesis was supported, \( (r = .227, p < .038) \). This finding indicates that, as U.S.-media use increased among international students, their INDCOL scores also increased towards the individualistic-culture range. Further, as non-U.S. media use increased among international students, an even greater positive correlation occurred with being more individualistic in nature \( (r = .364, p < .001) \).

**Religiosity, Acculturation, and Conflict Style**

Research Question 5 and Hypothesis 5 both address the impact of religiosity on acculturation and conflict style. First, RQ5 asks if there is a relationship between conflict style preferences and religiosity. After the combined sample of U.S. and international students was analyzed, the data supported a positive correlation between religiosity and avoiding scores \( (r = .099, p < .024) \), indicating that the more religious a respondent was, the more he or she preferred the avoiding conflict style (lower scores for both religiosity and conflict style indicated greater preferences for both).

Second, Hypothesis 5 predicts that a person’s acculturation levels will increase as religiosity decreases. This hypothesis was not supported for international students \( (r = .138, p < .206) \). In fact, contrary to prediction, a significant result existed for U.S. students \( (r = .137, p < .004) \). This supported the idea that as religiosity increased, so did acculturation levels among U.S. students.
Biological Sex, Acculturation, and Individualism-Collectivism

Research Question 6 and Hypothesis 6 address biological sex as compared with conflict style and individualism-collectivism. Research Question 6 asks if biological sex relates to individualism-collectivism such that female students are more individualistic and male students are more collectivistic. The data does not support any differences in individualism-collectivism between male and female students. Independent sample t-tests provide evidence that the mean INDCOL score for both men and women was nearly equivalent (Men: $M = 36.41, SD = 9.85$; Women: $M = 36.03, SD = 9.38$; $t(534) = .452, p < .652$). A 36 INDCOL score signifies that the respondent is more individualistic than collectivistic.

Hypothesis 6 was also not supported. Independent sample t-test results demonstrate that international men and women did not significantly differ in acculturation scores (Men: $M = 1.72, SD = .427$; Women: $M = 1.73, SD = .440$; $t(89) = -.203, p < .840$). Similar results appeared for the U.S. sample (Men: $M = 1.25, SD = .393$; Women: $M = 1.25, SD = .363$; $t(471) = .109, p < .913$).

Additional Analyses

Based on some patterns evidenced in the aforementioned results, additional analyses were conducted. First, acculturation levels appeared to increase if the respondent had family living within the United States (Family in U.S.: $M = 1.279$; Family not in U.S.: $M = 1.741$; $t(563) = -8.825, p < .0001$). No significant results appeared for U.S. and international student samples when tested separately, however.

Next, significant differences were also observed between different races' media use, INDCOL scores, acculturation, and conflict styles. For the combined U.S. and
A one-way ANOVA indicates that races significantly differed on how much media they used (U.S. media and race: $F[7, 562] = 2.258, \eta^2 = .027, p < .028$; non-U.S. media and race: $F[7, 562] = 13.575, \eta^2 = .145, p < .0001$). Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ($M = 6.05$) and Native Americans ($M = 5.66$) spent the most hours using U.S. media, while Hispanics/Latin Americans ($M = 4.79$) and Asians ($M = 4.88$) spent the least time. Asians ($M = 2.66$) and Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ($M = 1.96$) used the most hours of non-U.S. media, while Native Americans ($M = .00001$) and biracial respondents ($M = .2941$) spent the least time.

Post-hoc Tukey tests indicated that Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders used significantly more hours of U.S. media than Whites/Caucasians ($M = 5.12$), Hispanics/Latin Americans, and Asians. Whites/Caucasians ($M = .585$) used significantly fewer hours of non-U.S. media than Hispanics/Latin Americans ($M = 1.49$), Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders ($M = 1.96$), and Asians ($M = 2.66$). Blacks/African Americans ($M = .350$) used significantly less non-U.S. media than Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ($M = .1.96$) and Asians ($M = 2.66$). Hispanics/Latin Americans ($M = 1.49$) used significantly less non-U.S. media than Asians ($M = 2.66$), and Asians used significantly more non-U.S. media than did biracial respondents ($M = .294$).

In terms of race versus INDCOL scores, results were somewhat unexpected and did not correspond neatly with Hofstede’s (1980, 1984, 1991) findings on ethnicity and individualism-collectivism. Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ($M = 40.55$) and Asians ($M = 38.62$) were more individualistic, while Middle Easterners ($M = 32.66$) and Hispanics/Latin Americans ($M = 33.61$) were more collectivistic. A one-way ANOVA indicates group differences among participant race and individualistic-collectivistic
tendencies for the combined sample of U.S. and international students (INDCOL and race; $F[7, 524] = 4.005, \eta^2 = .051, p < .0001$). The data signify that Whites/Caucasians ($M = 34.92$) had significantly lower INDCOL scores than Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ($M = 40.55$) and Asians ($M = 38.62$). This corresponds to the idea that Whites/Caucasians were generally more collectivistic (lower INDCOL scores) than Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders and Asians.

The data from the combined U.S and international student sample also show that Hispanics/Latin Americans ($M = 33.61$) also had significantly lower INDCOL scores than Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ($M = 40.55$) and Asians ($M = 38.62$). This indicates that Hispanics/Latin Americans were generally more collectivistic (had lower INDCOL scores) than Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders and Asians.

For acculturation, a one-way ANOVA indicates significant differences between racial groups in the combined U.S. and international student sample (PAS and race: $F[7, 555] = 13.489, \eta^2 = .145, p < .0001$). Whites/Caucasians ($M = 1.228$) had significantly lower acculturation scores than Hispanics/Latin Americans ($M = 1.446$), Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ($M = 1.413$), and Asians ($M = 1.612$). This means Whites/Caucasians tended to be more acculturated than Hispanic/Latin Americans, Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders, and Asians. Similarly, Blacks/African Americans ($M = 1.111$) had significantly lower acculturation scores than Hispanics/Latin Americans ($M = 1.446$), Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders ($M = 1.413$), and Asians ($M = 1.612$). These findings align with the contention that Blacks/African Americans feel more acculturated to U.S. culture than Hispanics/Latin Americans, Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders, and Asians. In total, the data indicate that Blacks/African Americans and biracial respondents ($M =$
1.137) feel most acculturated to U.S. culture, while Asians and Hispanic/Latin Americans feel the least acculturated.

Finally, because race as a variable appeared to hold a stronger relationship with conflict styles than being an international or domestic student, a one-way ANOVA was conducted between race and each of the five conflict styles for the entire sample. Race had a significant impact on obliging \(F[7, 528] = 3.88, \text{eta}^2 = 0.049, p < 0.0001\). Post-hoc Tukey tests indicate that Whites/Caucasians \(M = 3.26\) were significantly more obliging than Hispanics/Latin Americans \(M = 3.85\) and Hispanics/Latin Americans were also less obliging than Asians \(M = 3.15\). Among international students only, race significantly impacted compromising, \(F[4, 78] = 4.33, \text{eta}^2 = 0.182, p < 0.003\). Post-hoc Tukey tests also indicate that Blacks/African Americans \(M = 1.35\) were significantly more compromising than Asians \(M = 2.93\) or Pacific Islanders \(M = 3.28\). Middle Eastern students were not included in the analyses because there were fewer than two students. Among domestic students only, race significantly impacted the obliging conflict style \(F[7,444] = 3.63, \text{eta}^2 = 0.054, p < 0.001\). Post-hoc Tukey tests indicate that Whites/Caucasians \(M = 3.25\) were significantly more obliging than Hispanics/Latin Americans \(M = 3.93\).
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion of Results

This thesis set out to find what factors influence people’s individualist-collectivist culture tendencies and conflict styles, as well as whether or not acculturation is a moderating factor between cultural individualism-collectivism and conflict style among foreign nationals living within the United States. Although many statistically-significant relationships existed between culture, acculturation, and conflict styles, the data only revealed acculturation to be a significant moderating factor between individualism-collectivism and one conflict style: dominating. Further, the similarities between this study and that of Cai and Fink (2002), followed by testing multiple factors hypothesized to affect conflict styles like acculturation, serve as an extension to the Cai and Fink study.

First, regarding the relationship between individualism-collectivism and conflict style, the results are similar to those in Cai and Fink’s (2002) study. Integrating was most preferred among all respondents, while dominating was least preferred. One reason students might have preferred integrating over other conflict styles is because integrating is predominantly taught in the Western culture to be the “optimal response” to settling conflicts. Therefore, students might have been more inclined to agree with survey questions that promoted the integrating conflict style. This reasoning might also help
explain a prominent difference in conflict-style preference between respondents from this study and that of Cai and Fink. Whereas compromising was least preferred next to dominating in Cai and Fink’s study, more of this study’s respondents preferred compromising second after integrating. Because compromising is also considered positive in Western society, students in this study might have also agreed with ROCI-II survey questions that described the compromising conflict style.

A second finding similar to that of Cai and Fink (2002) was that obliging was still slightly more preferred than avoiding. While both conflict styles indicate a low concern for the individual’s outcomes in the dual-concern model, the greater preference for the obliging conflict style indicates that slightly more students consider others’ outcomes when in conflict. Another relationship shared between the two studies is that individualists preferred the avoiding conflict style. This finding was only significant among the U.S.-student sample in this study and respondents tended to prefer both the avoiding and dominating conflict styles. This result is somewhat contradictive, however. According to the definition of individualists, individualists generally have a higher concern for their outcomes over others, which would most closely correspond with the dominating conflict style in the dual-concern model. However, the definition of an individualist does not correspond neatly with the avoiding conflict style in the dual-concern model, where concern for others’ outcomes is not only low, but so is the concern for one’s own outcomes.

For international students especially, the more individualistic the person is, the less he or she preferred the compromising and integrating conflict styles. For the U.S.-student sample, the more individualistic the student, the less likely he or she preferred
obliging, compromising, and integrating. Both of these findings suggest that individualists, regardless of country of origin, do not prefer using the compromising and integrating conflict styles. This result is additionally supported by Cai and Fink's (2002) finding that individualists did not prefer compromising as much as collectivists did.

**Acculturation and Conflict Style**

The results of the inquiry into acculturation levels and conflict styles point to several significant relationships between the two. For instance, in the combined U.S. and international student sample, students who preferred the dominating conflict style appeared to be more acculturated to the United States. In addition, U.S. students in particular who preferred the obliging conflict style also tended to be more acculturated.

At first glance, these results might seem somewhat unrelated and confounding. However, upon closer look, one might theorize that an international student living within the United States could feel different cultural pressures than would a U.S. student also attending the same U.S. university. For example, an international student who prefers the dominating conflict style might have few qualms about making his or her voice heard by others, especially in order to succeed both academically and socially within a school of an individualistic culture such as the United States. Therefore, an international student who prefers the dominating conflict style might feel more integrated into the U.S.-school culture, leading to higher—or perhaps, inflated—self-perceived levels of acculturation to U.S. culture. Conversely, a U.S. student attending a university in the United States is likely to feel more pressure to conform to the “home culture.” Thus, a U.S. student who prefers a more obliging conflict style might feel more acculturated to the U.S. culture.

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Initial data from both U.S. and international students indicated that acculturation increases as time in the United States increased. However, among international students, no statistically significant relationship existed. This outcome is not entirely surprising given the conflicting findings of previous studies described earlier in greater detail. This finding might also be helpful in reinforcing the idea that factors other than time in the host country are more important to the process of acculturation.

The data support the idea that acculturation is a moderating factor between individualism-collectivism and conflict style, although this relationship was only significant among those who preferred the dominating conflict style. Thus, the extent to which a person adheres to or supports the dominant conflict style is moderated by his or her level of acculturation. Specifically, the results suggest that as individuals become more acculturated to the United States' culture, they are also more accepting of dominating as a conflict style. One could make several interpretations of this finding. First, international students might be attempting to mirror their conflict styles to the stereotype of the “loud and demanding American.” Another interpretation of this finding could be that it indicates the tendency for many international students to be dominating, especially if the dominating conflict style aids this specific group of people to decide to physically break away from their home culture, move to the United States to study at the college level, and be successful academically. This second explanation might be strengthened still since, as will be discussed at the end of this section, Asian respondents (who also made up the majority of the international student sample) tended also to be more individualistic. And, although the relationship was only demonstrated to be
significant among the U.S. student sample, individualists preferred to use the dominating conflict style.

Last, the data revealed no significant relationship between INDCOL scores and acculturation levels for international students. One reason for this finding could be that other factors besides INDCOL scores have greater influence of people's acculturation levels. For instance, Alkhazraji, Gardner, Martin, and Paolillo's (1997) finding that collectivist Muslim immigrants acculturated more quickly to the United States than those who were individualists might have been, and most likely were, more heavily influenced by other factors such as education level, religious values, and race.

Media, Acculturation, and Conflict Style

The data indicate that greater use of U.S. media in both the U.S. and international groups of respondents corresponds with greater use of non-U.S. media as well. Particularly in the age of relatively easy accessibility to a wide variety of media via the Internet and satellite services among others, it is likely that people who enjoy spending much of their time using media from one country are probably also both exposed to and more accepting of using more media from other countries. Because they use media as a way to stay connected with their home countries, international students were more likely to use more non-U.S. media than were U.S. students.

The use of both U.S. and non-U.S. media significantly corresponded to the preference to use the dominating conflict style. For instance, in the combined sample of U.S. and international students, hours spent watching non-U.S. media appeared to be positively correlated with the preferences to be obliging, avoiding, and dominating when facing conflict. Hours spent using U.S. media also positively correlated with the
preference for dominating. For the international-student sample, hours spent using both U.S. and non-U.S. media appeared to be positively related to the preference for using the dominating conflict style. For the U.S.-student sample, the more hours in a day spent using both U.S. and non-U.S. media, the greater the tendency to prefer dominating and avoiding. These correlations lend support to a positive relationship between the preference to use the dominating conflict style and media use, regardless of the culture/nation of origin of the media. This finding also indirectly supports numerous studies’ results linking the use of media such as television and video games to aggressive behavior (see Farrar & Krcmar, 2006), as one may deduce that people who use more media might also prefer a more aggressive conflict style, which is related to dominating.

In regard to media use and acculturation levels, greater U.S.-media use also correlated with higher acculturation levels for both U.S. and international students. However, among the U.S. sample, as non-U.S. media use increased, acculturation scores decreased. This is not necessarily surprising, as it suggests that those who feel less acculturated, comfortable, or tied to the U.S. culture are more likely to seek out information and media outside of the United States. Given that these analyses were correlational versus causal, it is difficult to ascertain if the use of media made in other countries causes people to be less acculturated, or if the fact that they feel less acculturated to begin with leads them to seek media from other countries/cultures.

Last, a significant positive relationship existed between U.S.-media use among international students and their likelihood to be individualistic. However, it is interesting that even as non-U.S. media use increased in the international student sample, the tendency to be more individualistic also increased. This suggests that all media,
regardless of the country/culture or origin, might influence users to be more individualistic.

Religiosity, Acculturation, and Conflict Style

Religiosity evidenced an impact on both acculturation and preference for certain conflict styles. For instance, a significant relationship existed between at least one conflict style preference and religiosity. As religiosity increased among the combination of U.S. and international students, so did the preference for avoiding. A possible explanation for this could be that the more religious a person, the greater the likelihood he or she will follow the religion’s social and behavioral rules. If others do not obey the same rules, the highly religious person might instead choose to avoid the conflict altogether. In addition, as mentioned previously, people of the same religion (and often similar ethnic and racial backgrounds as well) tend to congregate and form close communities. A highly religious person within such a community might not want to disrupt those relationships, and hence might also choose to avoid conflict.

Although no significant correlations occurred between international students’ acculturation and religiosity levels, an unexpected finding appeared regarding acculturation and religiosity levels among U.S. students. Acculturation levels for U.S. students increased as religiosity increased. A possible explanation could be that the majority of U.S. respondents (59.8%) were Christians, and being in an environment where most people share the same religious convictions and values increases one’s feeling of “fitting in” and being a part of the “in-group,” thus corresponding with an increase in one’s acculturation levels.
Biological Sex, Acculturation, and Individualism-Collectivism

The fact that the data did not indicate any differences in individualism-collectivism between male and female students is not particularly surprising, especially given that numerous of studies already exist offering conflicting results concerning the individualistic-collectivistic tendencies of men and women. This might indicate that biological sex is less of an influence in one’s individualistic-collectivistic tendencies than are other factors such as culture, religious values, and education level. In fact, the results in this study suggest that both men and women who attend U.S. universities are individualistic.

Additionally, biological sex did not appear to significantly affect acculturation levels of the respondents. The nearly identical mean acculturation and INDCOL scores for both male and female students might point to the idea that being university students could be the more significant factor in both acculturation and individualism-collectivism. This possibility is reiterated in Alkhazraji et al.’s (1997) study that education-level was positively related to Muslim immigrants’ willingness to accept the U.S. national culture.

Other Significant Findings

Although not expressed as research questions or hypotheses, several relationships between variables tested in the study became apparent and should be discussed. First, regularly interacting with family who live within the United States positively related to respondents’ acculturation to the U.S. culture. A potential reason that a student with family in the United States might acculturate more quickly is because he or she has a “support group” within relatively close proximity to help ease the transition (to the
university culture and/or U.S. culture) and make it more enjoyable, hence leading to higher acculturation levels.

The relationships between race and acculturation, conflict style and culture are also important to consider, as many significant correlations appeared in the data set. For instance, Asian respondents who used the most non-U.S. media also had the lowest acculturation levels of all the races in the combined sample of U.S. and non-U.S. students. In addition, self-perceived acculturation levels were significantly higher in biracial respondents and Blacks/African Americans than in Asians. Analyzed separately, the international student sample also reflected this trend, with Blacks/African Americans reporting better self-acculturation that Asians. These correlations point to the idea that acculturation is a process everyone goes through to some extent, even in one’s home country. Also, they reveal that minority groups such as Blacks/African Americans generally feel more acculturated to the United States than do Asians.

Comparing respondents’ race to individualistic-collectivistic tendencies yielded several surprising results. Unlike Hofstede’s (1980, 1984, 1991) findings that people from Asian countries like China, Korea, and Japan were more collectivistic, those in this study who most closely associated themselves with the Asian race tended to be more individualistic. Moreover, Whites/Caucasians in the combined U.S. and international student sample were generally more collectivistic than Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders and Asians. One possible explanation for these results is that Asian culture itself is becoming more individualistic. China, for example, has the largest Asian population and is changing through the privatization of companies and emerging ideology of cut-throat competitive capitalism that emphasizes individualism. Another feasible explanation for
the results is that Asians and Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders living in the United States might consider U.S. society as the “out-group,” and therefore have less concern for collective harmony outside their Asian or Hawaiian/Pacific-Islander group of friends. As a result, Asians and Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders might tend to be more individualistic when living in a Western society. Similarly, Asians and other respondents from typically collectivistic cultures might have been “primed” to answer more individualistically after being asked to take the survey for this study within the context of a U.S.-university setting, which is not only individualistic because it is situated within the Western culture, but also because the university environment is such where students compete individually for merit, academic status, and success.

Finally, race had a significant impact on conflict-style preferences. In the combined U.S. and international student sample, for example, Whites/Caucasians were significantly more obliging than Hispanics/Latin Americans and Hispanics/Latin Americans were also less obliging than Asians. Among international students only, race significantly related to compromising, with Blacks/African Americans preferring the compromising style more than Asians or Hawaiians/Pacific Islanders. Among U.S students only, Whites/Caucasians were significantly more obliging than Hispanics/Latin Americans. These results indicate that race might provide additional cues to predicting people’s preferred conflict styles.

Limitations

Several limitations accompany this study. They include the sampling method, survey design, as well as known shortcomings of the way conflict style is measured.
Convenience sampling inherently limits the generalizability of the findings because this sample consisted of a relatively small group of people, all of whom were college students, living in one area of the United States. The generalizability of this study’s findings should be expanded by administering a version of this survey to a larger, more diverse group of people. Also, the fact that the survey requires the respondent to self report is a limitation of the study, requiring the respondent to imagine what he or she would say or do in a certain situation rather than actually recording the respondent’s actions. Similarly, respondents might have answered certain questions according to what they thought were the most socially-accepted answers. As mentioned previously, one example of socially-acceptable answers includes highly agreeing to all survey questions on the INDCOL scale that suggested an integrating conflict style because students knew from their school instruction that integrating is the way one “should” respond to conflicts.

Another limiting factor to this study is the fact that the survey was administered to international students using the English language. Harzing (2005) found that the answers students gave to questions written in the English language differed significantly from answers students gave to the same questions written in their native languages. This suggests that multi-lingual people will often associate particular cultural values with each language, thus leading them to think differently about how they will answer even the same questions in different languages. Because the international students took this study’s survey in English, it is likely that they might have offered more westernized answers, including possibly also resulting in a more frequent reporting of higher perceived levels of acculturation to the United States.
Next, it could be that students answered questions about conflict styles with the limits of their college years in mind. That is, time in college is short-lived—often 4 years for an undergraduate student, two years for a M.A. student, and four years for a Ph.D. student. It could be that respondents were more inclined to be obliging, integrating, and compromising among their college peers because becoming embroiled or embattled in a conflict was not perceived as “worth it” given the fleetingness of college years. To replicate this study among non-students who are working out in the “real world” might yield different results as much more might be perceived to be at stake. Sillars (1980), in his study of college roommates and conflict patterns, found that fleeting nature of the college roommate relationship affected one’s tendency to be integrative (positive) versus distributive (negative) during conflicts.

Lastly, one of the greatest-limiting factors of this study is the measuring instruments. For example, although it produced an acceptable reliability, the ROCI-II statements did not pay any special attention to the important role situation and context play in determining how individuals react in when in conflict with others. In addition, as noted by many different communication researchers, current measures of conflict styles are incomplete and possibly even culturally biased (Cai & Fink, 2002; Kim et al., 2004; King & Miles, 1990; Nicotera, 1993; Oetzel, 1995; Putnam, 1988). King and Miles (1990) comment that “perhaps we know less about measuring conflict and about conflict managements styles, strategies, and behavior than the wealth of measurement devices would suggest” (p. 222). For instance, the more recent conflict-style scales like the ROCI-II (Rahim, 1983), rely heavily on Blake and Mouton’s (1964) two-dimension conceptualization of conflict management (concern for self versus concern for others),
which "grossly understates the complexity of conflict management, the meaning of the styles is not clearly universal, and the five styles themselves are not exclusive" (Cai & Fink, 2002, p. 83). Also, the ROCI-II scale is noted by some researchers as having an "individualistic bias" because it is assumed that avoidance is less desirable than confrontation and gives little regard to "the potentially positive attributes of conflict avoidance and suppression" (Kim et al., 2004, p. 202). Oetzel (1995) observed that, among Asian and Latin ethnic groups in particular, avoiding and obliging conflict styles are not perceived negatively, and can instead be used to maintain harmony in the relationship as well as maintain mutual face interests. Despite some obvious drawbacks to using the ROCI-II conflict-style assessment, the measure is nevertheless often utilized within the research community.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Further Study

Because conflicts are always possible when humans interact, it is important to attempt to understand the factors that contribute to how individuals perceive and manage conflict. This greater understanding of the elements contributing to a person's culture and conflict style can positively affect all types and levels of human communication by ultimately increasing effective conflict management. That is, as people become more aware of why they themselves and others react the way they do in conflict using the findings from this and other studies, as well as by using tools such as the dual-concern model and Hofstede's (1980, 1984, 1991) characterizations of individualistic-collectivists cultures, they can also begin to develop techniques to more effectively cope with and
manage such conflict-style preferences within an ever-increasing population of culturally-diverse individuals.

One direct application of the cultural and conflict-style trends revealed in this study could be in the field of negotiation and mediation. When people must "size-up" one another quickly in order to make important business deals, for example, it is imperative that negotiators "do their homework" beforehand to see what angle to best approach the other party to reach a desired outcome. If cues such as race, religiosity, and acculturation can accurately point to a preference for a negotiator's particular conflict-style preference, it might be advantageous to brainstorm beforehand negotiation styles that compliment that conflict style. Also, it could behoove a manager or other mediator involved in settling disputes of others to anticipate conflict-resolution techniques based on observations of cultural and behavioral cues prior to being fully immersed in a conflict.

As indicated previously, being aware of general culture and conflict-style differences between races, sexes, and ethnicities also opens the door to further study of and development of techniques to more effectively cope with and manage conflict arising from differences in culture and conflict-style preferences. Rather than leading people to categorize others based on cues such as race and sex, it is hoped that the general relationships found in this and other studies between such cues and outcome variables like individualism-collectivism and conflict style instead serve to open people's acceptance to and/or willingness to work with those who are different. For instance, after learning from this study that there is a correlation between Asian students and low acculturation levels, a professor might want to incorporate activities within class that assist in team-building between Asians and other races/ethnicities, with the goal of
creating a more positive learning environment for all. In essence, studies like this one can be utilized in diversity training in organizations like schools and universities, among others.

Finally, this study points to several different areas of further research. First, it would be beneficial to the academic community among others to study what factors most relate to people's acculturation and conflict styles. For instance, this study points to the possibility that education level (e.g., studying at the university level) is positively associated with acculturation to the United States and individualism. However, this cannot be fully supported in this study because university student composed the entire sample. However, after conducting more studies that further highlight the factors most influential on acculturation, people could more effectively smooth the transition from one culture to another. Also, doing this might assist people in more quickly and accurately predicting others' conflict styles with fewer cues, possibly settling disputes more rapidly.

Second, this study also points to the great influence media appears to have in encouraging people to be more dominating and individualistic. If these results are indeed significant and reproducible in future studies, more attention might also then be paid to how to curb or harness these media effects in vastly different fields ranging from optimizing classroom instruction for a generation of high media users to utilizing the media to advertise to media users. Last, more attention should be directed toward the study of race as compared to factors such as media use, acculturation, individualism-collectivism, and conflict style. For instance, significant results appeared in this study showing that Asians in particular used more non-U.S. media, were less acculturated to the U.S. culture, and were more individualistic than the other races. Blacks/African
Americans, despite also being a minority group within the United States, appeared to be the most acculturated of all the races. These findings raise more questions of the nature of acculturation, media use, individualism-collectivism, and conflict style among races and should be studied in greater detail.
APPENDIX I

SURVEY AND INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Acculturation Effects Questionnaire

If at any point you decide you do not want to complete this questionnaire, simply close the window and your responses will not be sent. Otherwise, as you complete this survey, you will have the option to skip questions that you do not feel comfortable answering. When finished, please submit your questionnaire by clicking the “SUBMIT” button. You will then receive a receipt to print that you may submit to your instructor for extra credit, if awarded. You may take this survey only once.

Please answer the following general questions about yourself:

1. Sex: Man____ Woman____
2. Student status: Undergraduate Student____ Graduate Student____
3. Your age: _____ years
4. Total time spent in the United States (does not need to be all at one time): _____ years _____ months
5. Do you have family living within the United States that you regularly interact with? Yes____ No_____
6. Are you an international student? Yes____ No____

7. If you are an international student, what is your home country? _______________(type in)

8. Primary religious or nonreligious affiliation (Check one):
   ____Christian     ____Muslim     ____Buddhist     ____None
   ____Jewish        ____Hindu       ____Other (Specify) __________(type in)

9. Primary racial group (Check one):
   ____White/Caucasian  ____Black/African American  ____Asian
   ____Hispanic/Latin American  ____Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
   ____Other (Specify) __________(type in)

In this section, please indicate the levels to which you agree or disagree (1 = agree, 2 = neutral, 3 = disagree):

10. American people understand me.
    Agree  Neutral  Disagree
    1       2        3

11. I understand Americans.
    Agree  Neutral  Disagree
    1       2        3

12. I feel comfortable with Americans.
    Agree  Neutral  Disagree
    1       2        3

13. I have a lot in common with Americans.
    Agree  Neutral  Disagree
    1       2        3

14. I feel proud to be a part of American culture.
    Agree  Neutral  Disagree
    1       2        3

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15. I share most of my beliefs and values with Americans.

Agree  Neutral  Disagree
1  2  3

Please answer the following questions about your media usage by indicating the appropriate number in the text box beside the questions.

16. How much time in a day do you estimate you spend consuming the following (to the best of your knowledge) American media in English?

Television____ hours ____ minutes
Movies____ hours ____ minutes
Video Games____ hours ____ minutes
Music____ hours ____ minutes
Talk Radio____ hours ____ minutes
Internet____ hours ____ minutes
Magazines____ hours ____ minutes
Books____ hours ____ minutes
Cell phone (text messages of news updates)____ hours ____ minutes
Other____ (type in media form)____ hours ____ minutes

17. How much time in a day do you estimate you spend consuming the following media in a language other than English, or consuming non-American media?

Television____ hours ____ minutes
Movies____ hours ____ minutes
Video Games _____ hours _____ minutes
Music _____ hours _____ minutes
Talk Radio _____ hours _____ minutes
Internet _____ hours _____ minutes
Magazines _____ hours _____ minutes
Books _____ hours _____ minutes
Cell phone (text messages of news updates) _____ hours _____ minutes
Other (type in media form) _____ hours _____ minutes

For the following nine statements, please indicate the levels to which you agree or disagree (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree):

18. I try hard to carry my religion over into all my other dealings in life.
   Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

19. Quite often I have been keenly aware of the presence of God or the Divine Being.
   Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

20. My religious beliefs are what really lie behind my whole approach to life.
   Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

21. Religion is especially important to me because it answers my questions about the meaning of life.
   Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

22. I read literature about my faith.
   Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

23. It is important to me to spend periods of time in private religious thought and meditation.
   Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7
24. It doesn't matter so much what I believe so long as I lead a moral life.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Neutral
Strongly Disagree

25. I refuse to let religious considerations influence my everyday affairs.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Neutral
Strongly Disagree

26. I feel there are many more important things in life than religion.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Neutral
Strongly Disagree

For the following 11 statements, please indicate the levels to which you agree or disagree (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree):

27. I would not let my cousin(s) use my car (if I have one).
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Neutral
Strongly Disagree

28. It is enjoyable to meet and talk with my neighbors regularly.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Neutral
Strongly Disagree

29. I would not discuss newly acquired knowledge with my parents.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Neutral
Strongly Disagree

30. It is not appropriate for a colleague to ask me for money.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Neutral
Strongly Disagree

31. I would not let my neighbors borrow things from me or my family.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Neutral
Strongly Disagree

32. When deciding what kind of education to have, I would pay no attention to my uncles' advice.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Neutral
Strongly Disagree

33. I would not share my ideas with my parents.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Neutral
Strongly Disagree

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34. I would help, within my means, if a relative told me that he/she is in financial difficulty.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

35. I am not interested in knowing what my neighbors are really like.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

36. Neighbors should greet each other when we come across each other.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

37. A person ought to help a colleague at work who has financial problems.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

For these following 29 statements, please indicate the levels to which you agree or disagree (1 = strongly agree, 7 = strongly disagree).

38. I generally try to satisfy the needs of my peers.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

39. I try to work out a compromise that gives both of us some of what we want.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

40. I try to work with my peers to find solutions that satisfy our expectations.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

41. I usually avoid open discussions of differences with my peers.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7

42. I exert pressure on my peer to make decisions in my favor.
Strongly Agree 1 2 3 Neutral 4 5 Strongly Disagree 6 7
43. I try to find a middle course or compromise to resolve an impasse.
   | Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

44. I use my influence to get my ideas accepted.
   | Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

45. I use my authority to get decisions made in my favor.
   | Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

46. I usually accommodate the wishes of my peers.
   | Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

47. I give in to the wishes of my peers.
   | Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

48. I bargain with my peer so that a middle ground can be reached.
   | Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

49. I exchange information with my peers to solve a problem together.
   | Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

50. I sometimes bend over backwards to accommodate the desires of my peers.
   | Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

51. I sometimes take a moderate position so that a compromise can be reached.
   | Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

52. I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.
   | Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |

53. I negotiate with my peers so that a compromise can be reached.
   | Strongly Agree | Neutral | Strongly Disagree |
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
54. I try to stay away from disagreement with my peers.
   Strongly Agree   Neutral   Strongly Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

55. I avoid conflict situations with my peers.
   Strongly Agree   Neutral   Strongly Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

56. I use my expertise to make others decide in my favor.
   Strongly Agree   Neutral   Strongly Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

57. I often go along with the suggestions of my peers.
   Strongly Agree   Neutral   Strongly Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

58. I try to give and take so that a compromise can be made.
   Strongly Agree   Neutral   Strongly Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

59. I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the
    best possible way.
   Strongly Agree   Neutral   Strongly Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

60. I collaborate with my peers to come up with decisions acceptable to us.
   Strongly Agree   Neutral   Strongly Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

61. I try to satisfy the expectations of my peers.
   Strongly Agree   Neutral   Strongly Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

62. I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation.
   Strongly Agree   Neutral   Strongly Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

63. I try to keep my disagreement with my peers to myself in order to avoid hard feelings.
   Strongly Agree   Neutral   Strongly Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7

64. I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my peers.
   Strongly Agree   Neutral   Strongly Disagree
   1   2   3   4   5   6   7
65. I keep disagreements with my peers to myself to prevent disrupting our relationship.
   Strongly Agree  1  2  3  Neutral  4  5  Strongly Disagree  6  7

66. I try to work with my peers for a proper understanding of a problem.
   Strongly Agree  1  2  3  Neutral  4  5  Strongly Disagree  6  7

Thank you for your participation in this project. Please click “Submit” below to send your answers.

Please print and submit the receipt on the next page to receive extra credit from your instructor (if awarded).

Submit

Informed Consent Form
INFORMED CONSENT

Project Title: Acculturation Effects on Culture and Conflict Style

You are invited to voluntarily participate in the above-titled research study. The purpose of this study is to examine factors influencing people's individualist-collectivist culture tendencies and conflict styles, as well as whether or not acculturation is a moderating factor between cultural individualism-collectivism and conflict style among foreign nationals living within the United States. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate.

Completing this confidential online questionnaire should take about 15-20 minutes of your time. By clicking “submit” at the end of the questionnaire, you are giving permission for the researcher to use the data. You may withdraw from this study at any time during the course of completing the questionnaire with no penalty to you. Your name will NOT be associated with your questionnaire and you will not be asked to provide your name on the questionnaire. Therefore, your name will not appear in any reports that result from this project. A possible benefit of participating in this study is becoming more educated on the subject matter, as well as avoiding a fellow student in completing her master's degree. There are no foreseeable risks in participating in this project. Only the researchers involved in this project will have access to the data and the data will be stored in a password-protected electronic file.

You must complete the survey within seven days of being asked to take the survey to receive extra credit or to be entered for a chance to win the cash prizes if you finish the survey during the allotted time.

If the researcher visited your class to solicit participants or you received an e-mail with the survey link from your instructor:
After completing this survey by clicking the “submit” button, please print the last page of the survey, write your name and e-mail address on the certificate, and turn it in to your instructor within seven days of being asked to participate in the survey. THERE IS NO WAY TO CONNECT YOUR NAME WITH THE DATA. Undergraduate students will receive one extra-credit point, and graduate students will be entered in a drawing with a chance to win a $25 Starbucks gift card. Winners will be contacted by e-mail or on or before October XX, 2007.

If you received an e-mail from the Office of International Students and Scholars asking you to participate in the study and an Internet link to the survey:
After completing this survey by clicking the “submit” button, please print the last page of the survey, write your name and e-mail address on the certificate, and turn it in to the Office of International Students and Scholars (Student Services Complex #313) within seven days of receiving the initial e-mail asking you to participate. All students who take the survey will be entered for a chance to win a $25 Starbucks gift card. Winners will be contacted by e-mail or on or before October XX, 2007.

You can obtain further information from the principal investigator (Dr. Tara Emmer-Sommer) at (702) 895-2633 or the student investigator (Mae-Ji Allison) at (702) 949-6072. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may call the University of Nevada, Las Vegas Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at (702) 895-2704. You can find the survey at https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/9wpsrgt5pr174331647. You may use the password: 1TYR1IC to gain access to the survey.

By clicking the link to proceed to the survey, you are indicating that you AGREE with your rights as a participant AND that you are at least 18 years old.
APPENDIX II

E-MAIL TO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
(Sent by the Office of International Students and Scholars)

Subject: Invitation to Participate in a Survey

Good morning/afternoon,

You are invited to take a 15-20 minute survey about culture and conflict style as part of a UNLV graduate-student thesis. If you participate in the survey you will have the chance to win a $25 Starbucks gift card. Simply fill out the survey, print the confirmation page at the end, and print your name and e-mail address on the printed page. Then, take it back to the Office of International Students and Scholars (Student Services Complex (SSC), Room 311). Your name will then be submitted into a drawing for the gift card. The researcher will contact the gift card winner by e-mail within two weeks of this e-mail.

Participation is completely voluntary and you must be at least 18 years of age to participate. All volunteers have one week from the date of this e-mail to take the survey and turn in the confirmation page. Please click the following link to begin the survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=FL8YFshKuelyioYbKnKrVg_3d_3d
Use the password: CONFLICT to gain access to the survey.

Thank you for your participation!
REFERENCES


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Sahlstein, E., Allen, M., Emmers-Sommer, T., Nebel, S., Canella, M.,
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relationship with gender, sex-stereotypical beliefs, and perceptions of
communication inappropriateness.” Paper to be presented at the Western
States Communication Association Conference, Denver, CO. *Authors 3-9 are listed alphabetically.

Papers in Revision for Publication:
Emmers-Sommer, T. M., Nebel, S., Allison, M. L., Cannella, M.,
Cartmill, D., Ewing, S., Horvath, D., Osborne, J. K., & Wojtasek, B.*
“Patient-provider communication about sexual health: The relationship
with gender, sex-stereotypical beliefs, and perceptions of communication
inappropriateness.” *Authors 3-9 are listed alphabetically. Manuscript to
be revised and resubmitted to Sex Roles.

Thesis Title: Acculturation Effects on Culture and Conflict Style
Thesis Examination Committee:
Chairperson, Dr. Tara Emmers-Sommer, Ph.D.
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