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Conflict Management in an Age of Globalization:

A Comparison of Intracultural and Intercultural Conflict Management Strategies between Koreans and Americans

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to compare conflict management strategies (CMS) between Koreans and Americans involving intracultural and intercultural interaction. Based on cultural difference between Korea and the U.S., Wilmot and Hocker's "Duel Concern" model and previous intercultural conflict management studies, five research questions involving the characteristics of and similarities and differences between Koreans' and Americans' CMS in intracultural and intercultural interaction were established. The findings of this study showed that: first, both Koreans and Americans tended to use similar patterns of CMS in managing intracultural conflict and those patterns are directly related to their CMS in managing intercultural interaction; second, while Koreans prefer an avoidance strategy and a cooperative orientation to Americans, Americans prefer a competition strategy and an assertive orientation to Koreans in handling both intracultural and intercultural conflict; third, while Koreans' use of compromise and collaboration strategies and their cooperative tendency for managing conflict in

intracultural interaction is likely to decrease in intercultural interaction, Americans' use of a competition strategy and their assertive tendency for managing conflict in intracultural interaction is likely to decrease in intercultural interaction. Discussions involving ethnocentrism in a multicultural society and implications and limitations of this study were described.

Conflict Management in an Age of Globalization: A Comparison of Intracultural and Intercultural Conflict Management Strategies between Koreans and Americans

Owing to the development of communication and transportation technologies, today's world has more and more become a huge global community. Human interactions between different cultures across social, political, economic, and cultural boundaries have come to more rapidly increase than ever before, resulting in immediate and transparent global connections (Olson, 1999). Advances in Internet technology have facilitated intercultural communication interactions in cyber spaces and the growth in international travel for business, study, vacation, the migration of people seeking work in other countries, and the expansion of international trade have all naturally led to increased contacts across national and ethnic boundaries, together with severe communication problems and conflict situations (Ross, 1993).

Over the past several decades, conflict management strategies have been major concerns of communication scholars because they have direct influences on almost all types of human relationships across socio-cultural boundaries. In other words, across cultures, conflict is a pervasive human activity involving every aspect of human life and thus inevitable in human interactions (Bartos & Wehr, 2002; Jeong, 1999; Rahim, 1892, 1986; Roloff, 1987; Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). Although previous conflict studies have merely focused on conflict management strategies in intracultural interaction, issues involving intercultural conflict have come to be especially prominent today. In particular, within a multicultural society where diverse cultural groups of people are interconnected, intercultural mixings increase stresses and anxieties in intercultural interaction, which in turn may increase intercultural

conflicts. The continuous prosperity of a multicultural society depends on how well we manage socio-cultural and ethnic diversity (Smelser & Alexander, 1999). As the U.S. is coming apart ethnically and culturally under the impact of the enormous influx of the new immigrants and international students, intercultural relations as a consequence of intercultural conflict and discontent are of great importance (Wuthnow, 1999). In an increasingly globalized world in which diversified workforces across multicultural communities, schools, companies, and organizations are present, therefore, understanding conflict management strategies in both intracultural and intercultural interaction are very important for building and maintaining more harmonious multicultural societies.

Nevertheless, it is surprising that there has been no research dealing with conflict management strategies in intracultural and intercultural interaction simultaneously. Although a number of previous cross-cultural conflict studies have shown cultural differences in conflict management strategies, it is not clear yet what roles two different cultures play for their members' conflict management strategies in intracultural and intercultural interactions. Most importantly, previous cross-cultural communication studies involving conflict management strategies have used college students in the U.S. as a sample, but they did not give specific directions as to whether situations involved intracultural interaction or intercultural interaction. Some students, particularly international students, are likely to consider the situations as intercultural interactions, while other students, particularly domestic (U.S.) students, are likely to consider the situations as intracultural interactions. In the same context, we do not know yet how individuals' conflict management strategies in intracultural interaction relates to those in intercultural interaction. The purpose of this study is to compare conflict management strategies in intracultural interaction and intercultural interaction, particularly between Koreans and Americans. By doing so, this study is expected to obtain in-depth understanding about cross-cultural similarities and differences involving how individuals from different cultures manage intracultural and intercultural conflicts.

Conflict Management Strategies

Because conflict is a feature of everyday life and an aspect of all human and social relationships (Ramesh, 1998; Wilmot & Hocker, 2001), there are no completely conflict-free societies. Conflict is an important element of socio-cultural interactions and conflict management skills are very important for maintaining almost all human relationships (Rahim, 1986). Individuals' ability to manage conflict successfully depends on their skills to estimate the effectiveness of different conflict management strategies. In a conflict situation, however, conflict management does not necessarily mean the resolution of conflict. Even when both parties agree on an issue, different interpretations of the issue or its anticipated solutions may generate conflict. When the original problem is not enough to resolve, conflicts over how to manage it can create secondary problems. The consequences of mismanaging conflicts are often complex and may lead to further communication breakdown and disagreement (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). Therefore, conflict management should be considered "an ongoing process of handling conflict interactions" (Kim & Leung, 2000, p. 232).

Although the definitions of conflict are different from one researcher to another conflict can be defined for my purposes as "an expressed struggle between at least two interdependent parties who perceive incompatible goals, scarce resources and interference from others in achieving their goals" (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001, p. 41), and conflict management strategies (CMS) refer to "patterned responses, or clusters of behavior, that people use in conflict," (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001, p. 130) through diverse communication tactics. At the individual level, conflict begins "when one party perceives that the other has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect, something that he or she cares about" (Thomas, 1992, p. 653). At the cultural level, conflicts occur between members of different cultures, and members of the same culture who feel that cultural rules or norms are being violated (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001, p. 66). Although conflicts can be managed in a variety of ways, individuals' CMS are typically based on a two-dimensional typology, the so called "dual concern model": concern for self and concern for other's interests and outcomes (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Wilmot & Hocker, 2001).

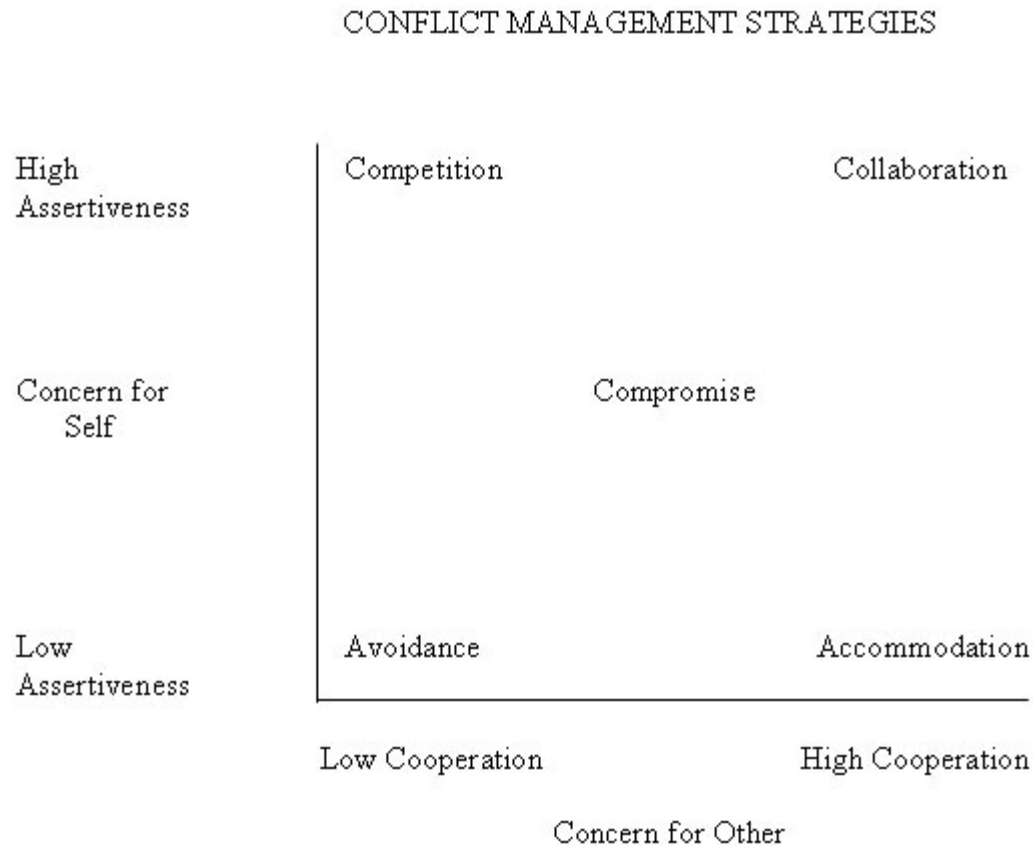
The “dual concern model” comes from Blake and Mouton’s (1964) work which proposes that conflict in organizations is managed in different ways depending on whether a manager has high or low concern for production and high or low concern for people. By crossing the two dimensions, then, they generated five styles: problem solving resulting from high concern for productivity and people, forcing showing high concern for productivity and low concern for people, compromising based on moderate concern for productivity and people, smoothing depending on low concern for productivity and high concern for people, and withdrawing representing low concern for productivity and low concern for people. Since then, Thomas (1976, 1992) and his colleagues (Kilman & Thomas, 1975, 1977) extended this model by suggesting that individuals’ styles will depend on the desire to satisfy one’s own concern (the tendency of assertiveness) and the desire to satisfy other’s concern (the tendency of cooperation). Based on these works, recent research involving CMS (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986; Putnam & Wilson, 1982; Rahim, 1983, 1995; Wilmot & Hocker, 2001) has presumed that individuals’ strategies depend on the degrees of high or low concern for their own interests and outcomes and high or low concern for other’s interests and outcomes.

Based on the “dual concern model,” researchers have classified CMS in different ways. For example, Tjosvold (1990) classified two strategies including cooperation and competition, and Putnam and Wilson (1982) distinguished them into three styles such as nonconfrontation, solution orientation and control. Gilmore and Fraleigh (1992) classified four strategies including accommodating/harmonizing, analyzing/preserving, achieving/directing, and affiliating/perfecting, and Thomas (1976) and Kilman and Thomas (1975) classified five strategies: collaboration, accommodation, competition, avoidance, and compromise. Similarly, Rahim (1983) and Rahim and Magner (1995) classified five strategies including integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. Most researchers today tend to prefer a five-style approach (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). Although there are somewhat different labels--for example, integrating instead of collaborating, yielding or obliging instead of accommodation, dominating instead of competition--Wilmot and Hocker (2001) classify CMS into five strategies including

collaboration, accommodation, competition, avoidance, and compromise, based on two-dimensional frameworks: concern for self and concern for the other. According to Wilmot and Hocker (2001), the tendency of concern for self requires assertiveness, whereas the tendency of concern for other demands cooperation. The more concern for self an individual pursues the more assertive tendency the individual has, whereas the more concern for other an individual pursues the more cooperative tendency the individual has. While an individual engaged in competition or collaboration strategies has a high level of assertiveness, an individual involved in accommodation or avoidance strategies has a low level of assertiveness. An individual involved in collaboration and accommodation strategies has a high level of cooperativeness, whereas an individual engaged in competition and avoidance strategies has a low level of cooperativeness. The compromise style is in the middle of assertiveness and cooperativeness (see [Figure 1](#)).

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

- High Competition Collaboration
- Assertiveness
- Concern for Compromise
- Self
- Low Avoidance Accommodation
- Assertiveness
- Low Cooperation High Cooperation
- Concern for Other

FIGURE 1

DUAL CONCERN MODEL, ADAPTED FROM WILMOT AND HOCKER (2001, p. 131)

The five strategies by Wilmot and Hocker (2001) will be explained in the following paragraphs. First, collaboration is the most cooperative and simultaneously very an assertive style, showing the highest concern for self and the other. In collaboration, conflict is viewed as a win-win orientation in which individuals integrate the needs of both parties into acceptable solutions that may maximize the interests of both parties. That is, collaboration is a cooperative and effective mutual problem solving style, and it focuses on mutual effort, partnership, or shared personal goals, through open and qualifying communication and information exchange, solicitation of disclosure and criticism, supportive remarks, concessions, acceptance of responsibility, constructive statements of different points of view, and mutual

effort to reach a solution that will be mutually acceptable. Therefore, conflict literature suggests that collaboration is preferred over other styles, as the ideal style of conflict management.

Second, accommodation involves the combination of low concern for self and high concern for other, along with low assertiveness and high cooperation. In this style, individuals involved in conflict sacrifice their own needs or goals to satisfy the desires of the other party. That is, accommodation does not assert individual needs but prefers a cooperative and harmonious approach in which individuals set aside their concerns in favor of pleasing the other people to preserve the relationship with the other people.

Accommodation emphasizes the similarities and downplays the differences between the two parties, by frequently using such tactics as giving up/giving in, disengagement, denial of needs, and expression of desire for harmony. Individuals engaged in conflict are more likely to use accommodation if both parties feel an equal power relation between them.

Third, competition results from high concern for self and low concern for others, along with high assertiveness and low cooperation. This style is considered a win-lose orientation because individuals in this style tend to maximize their own needs or goals at the expense of the other party. That is, competition is characterized by aggressive and uncooperative behaviors, pursuing one's own concerns at the cost of the other party, and it is considered the most confrontational style. Individuals engaged in this style tend to use forceful tactics such as personal criticism, threats, put-downs, rejection, hostile imperatives, irrelevant jokes and questions, presumptive remarks, and denial of responsibility. Individuals are more likely to use competition when the other party seems willing to yield and less likely to use it if they detect a risk of isolating the other party (Pruitt & Rubin, 1986).

Fourth, avoidance is associated with low concern for self and low concern for others, along with low assertiveness and cooperation. Individuals involved in avoidance tend to deny the conflict and withdraw from dealing with the conflict. As a result, the conflict is avoided in unresolved or the other party may take responsibility for solving the conflict. That is, avoidance is to avoid or withdraw communication,

through the denial of the conflict, equivocation, changing and avoiding topics, being noncommittal, and joking rather than dealing with the conflict at hand. This style, therefore, is regarded as a lose-lose orientation. Avoidance tends to occur when either the benefit in pursuing the conflict is small or when the other party seems not to make concessions. An individual engaged in avoidance tends to wish that, if left alone, the conflict will somehow disappear.

Fifth, compromise is in the middle of the dimension across concern for self, concern for the other, assertiveness, and cooperation. In this intermediate style, both parties may have some gains and some losses by allowing give-and-take and sharing whereby both parties give up some important needs or goals to make a mutually acceptable solution. That is, compromise shows modest effort to pursue a mutually acceptable outcome but without making a concerted effort to reach a desirable outcome by solving the problem. Individuals often use this style when willingness to solve the problem is not sufficiently high or when pressures involving time limitations or high costs present themselves. Individuals involved in compromise tend to use such tactics as appealing to fairness, suggestion of a trade-off, maximizing wins and minimizing losses, and offering a quick, short-term solution.

According to Volkema and Bergmann (1995), an individual who uses more competition or collaboration strategies and less avoidance and accommodation strategies has a higher assertive tendency, whereas an individual who is more collaborative and accommodative and less competitive and avoiding has a higher cooperative tendency. This study will collapse four of those five strategies, except for the compromise strategy, into two categories--assertiveness and cooperativeness --to further specify cultural differences in CMS. The compromise strategy was not included in the formula because it is always in the middle of assertiveness and cooperativeness. The tendencies of an individual's assertiveness and cooperativeness can be estimated by following formula (Volkema & Bergmann, 1995).

Assertiveness = (competition + collaboration) – (avoidance + accommodation)

Cooperativeness = (collaboration + accommodation) – (competition + avoidance)

Culture and Conflict Management Strategies

Cultural dynamics shape one of the bedrock concerns that lead to conflict management (Wilmot & Hocker, 2001). When we consider shared cultural values, beliefs, norms, expectations, and behavioral dispositions within a culture and simultaneously different cultural assumptions between different cultures, intercultural conflict seems to be more difficult to manage than intracultural conflict. That is, people involved in intercultural conflict may have more difficulty in attuning their standpoints or behaviors toward other cultural parties. As Wilmot and Hocker (2001) note, understanding cultural differences in individuals' CMS can help us avoid the secondary problems derived from mishandling conflicts.

Intercultural miscommunication and misunderstanding often provide intercultural conflict. People from different cultures have different cultural values, norms, expectations, verbal and nonverbal predispositions, and cultural codes for interactions that influence the process of conflict management (Ting-Toomey, 1999). According to Triandis (1990, 1994a, 1994b, 1995), while people from individualistic low context cultures tend to consider that interactions within relationships and groups occur between independent individuals, and thus disagreements and conflicts are undeniable and inevitable aspects of social life, in collectivistic high context cultures people tend to dislike social disorganization or disagreements. As Tinsley (1998) argues, further, cultural biases exacerbate the potential for mishandling conflicts and disagreements. Therefore, people from different cultures may hold different preferences regarding how conflict should be managed.

Cross-cultural CMS studies have shown that individuals' strategies differ depending on culture. According to Ting-Toomey (1999), in individualistic low-context cultures individuals tend to be "outcome-oriented," whereas in collectivistic high-context cultures individuals are likely to be "process-

oriented.” While the “outcome-oriented” model emphasizes the goals and outcomes of individual conflict parties, open and honest communication in the conflict process, assertive confrontation, tangible outcomes, solutions, objective criteria, timing, and the situational context, the “process-oriented” model puts weight on mutual face, in-group/out-group relationships, substantive issue discussion after proper framework management, and win-win results. In the “outcome-oriented” model, therefore, conflict is viewed as fundamentally functional, personally liberating, and an open sphere for “struggling against” or “struggling with” one another in managing conflict issues, whereas in the “process-oriented” model conflict is seen as mainly dysfunctional, interpersonally embarrassing and distressing, and a sphere for group-related face loss and face humiliation.

Further, the cultural differences of individualism and collectivism influence our assumptions about conflict that guide our attitudes, expectations, and behaviors in a conflict situation. As Avruch (1998) and Ohbuchi, Fukushima, and Tedeschi (1999) note, of several cultural elements influencing individuals’ CMS, the strongest element that influences the way people manage conflicts are cultural values by which people attempt to achieve cultural expectations involving various CMS in achieving the values. Put another way, appropriate and inappropriate conflict behaviors or styles are derived from the basic value assumptions in the cultural conflict socialization process.

Intercultural Conflict Management Strategies

Because the ways that individuals manage conflict are directly involved in the development of their human relationships across cultures, a substantial body of research has been concerned with individuals’ conflict management styles within the multicultural U.S. and the processes of conflict management in different cultures. Recently, intercultural conflict studies have focused on the influence of national culture categorized by individualistic and collectivistic and/or low-context and high-context cultures on individuals’ strategies. A number of studies have shown how different CMS are affected by culture (Elsayed-Ekhouly & Buda, 1996; Gabrieldis, Stephan, Ybarra, Pearson, & Villareal, 1997; Schneider,

Fonzi, Tomada, & Tani, 2000; Ting-Toomey, 1997, 1999; Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001; Ting-Toomey, et al., 2000). In general, intercultural conflict research has shown that people in individualistic low-context cultures prefer direct, overt, active, assertive, controlling, and confrontational styles such as dominating and competitive styles, whereas people in collectivistic high-context cultures prefer indirect, covert, passive, non-confrontational collaborating/integrating, compromising, obliging (accommodation)/avoiding styles in managing conflicts (Chua & Gudykunst, 1987; Haar & Krahe, 1999; Ohbuchi & Takahashi, 1994; Ohbuchi, Fukushima, & Tedeschi, 1999; Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, & Lin, 1991). According to Ting-Toomey (1988, 1999), members of individualistic low-context cultures tend to use integrating and dominating styles frequently, whereas members of collectivistic high-context cultures are more likely to use obliging, compromising and avoiding styles. Based on the review of previous CMS studies, however, Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) argue somewhat differently that individualists tend to use a dominating style and collectivists are more likely to use avoiding and obliging styles in general.

Several empirical studies examined intercultural conflict management strategies (ICMS) across cultures. For example, based on the responses of international students studying in the U.S., Leung (1988) and Leung and Iwawaki (1988) found that while people from individualistic cultures are more likely to use direct conflict communication and solution-oriented (integration) styles, people from collectivistic cultures tended to use indirect conflict communication and avoidance styles. As another example, Trubisky, Ting-Toomey, and Lin (1991) examined the influence of individualism-collectivism and the personality variable of self-monitoring on individuals' CMS. With samples of American and Taiwan college students, they compared cultural differences in CMS between American (an individualistic culture) and Taiwan (a collectivistic culture) college students. They found that Taiwan students not only used obliging and avoiding styles more often than did American students, but used integrating and compromising styles more frequently than did American counterparts. Further, Cai and Fink (2002) examined the differences in CMS between individualists and collectivists, with a sample of college students from 31 different countries within the U.S. They found: first, across individual cultural

tendencies the most preferred CMS is integrating, and then obliging, avoiding, compromising, and dominating in turn; second, individualists rather than collectivists preferred the avoidance style and collectivists did not differ from individualists in their preference for the dominating style; third, collectivists preferred integrating and compromising more than did individualists.

Similarly, in a study that tested face-negotiation theory Ting-Toomey and her colleagues (1991) found that Korean, Japanese and American college students tend to engage less in avoidance than Chinese and Taiwanese students, and Korean and American students are less likely to engage in an obliging style than Chinese, Japanese, and Taiwanese students. They concluded that other-concern face needs as the major characteristic of collectivistic cultures were deeply involved in integrating, avoiding, and compromising styles, whereas self-concern face needs as the main feature of individualistic cultures were strongly related to dominating styles. Contrary to previous findings, Lee and Rogan's (1991) study shows that Americans are less likely to be confrontational than Koreans. Although Lee and Rogan's study found that while Koreans tend to use an avoidance style less as the power of the other party increases, Americans are less likely to change the use of avoidance style depending on the power of the other party, which still supports cultural difference in the preference of avoidance style. In particular, Lee (1990, 1996, 2002) examined the CMS of Korean managers (1990), central government employees (1996) and local government employees (2002) with superiors, peers, and subordinates by using a mail survey and personal interviews. He found that the CMS used by Korean managers and government employees varied depending on the relative status. Although Lee's studies seem not to directly relate to the purpose of this study, both studies provide important information about Koreans' CMS, particularly involving CMS with peers. That is, in conflict with peers, Koreans tend to use the compromising style (46.9%) most frequently, and then integrating (17.1%), obliging (15.2%), dominating (10.4%), and avoiding (10.4%) styles, in turn (Lee, 2002).

The findings of previous CMS research imply that while members of collectivistic cultures emphasize maintenance of relational harmony, those of individualistic cultures focus on achievement of individual needs and goals in conflict situations. As Kim (2000) notes, however, there seems to be confusion involving the different preferences in CMS between cultures. That is, while the use of competition, controlling and dominating styles by people from individualistic cultures has been consistently supported, the use of compromise and avoidance styles by the people from collectivistic cultures has been shown contradictory or mixed in the previous empirical CMS studies. Further, there also is confusion in the use of a collaboration (integration) style between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. Most importantly, we should note that previous intercultural conflict research merely investigated cultural differences in managing intracultural conflict, rather than intercultural conflict.

Research Questions

RQ1: What are the major characteristics of Koreans' and Americans' intracultural conflict management strategies?

RQ2: What are the similarities and differences between Koreans and Americans in their intracultural conflict management strategies?

RQ3: What are the major characteristics of Koreans' and Americans' intercultural conflict management strategies?

RQ4: What are the similarities and differences between Koreans and Americans in their intercultural conflict management strategies?

RQ5: For each national culture, will the scores of individuals' conflict management strategies in intracultural interaction increase or decrease in intercultural interaction?

Method

1. Sample

A total of 600 questionnaires (300 for Koreans and 300 for Americans) were distributed at three large public university communities in the Midwestern U.S in which a considerable number of international students including Korean international students, their families and Korean Americans reside. Then, 453 valid questionnaires were collected and used for the final analysis. Because there are every day intercultural contacts between people from different cultures in a university community, the researcher judged that a university community is the best place to study intercultural communication apprehension and conflict management styles. Of the 453 subjects, 228 were Koreans (117 males and 111 females) and the other 225 (109 males and 116 females) were Americans. Participation was voluntary and confidential.

2. Procedures

Upon agreeing to participate in the study, each subject completed the modified ROCI-II to measure individuals' preferred intracultural and intercultural CMS (twenty-five items, respectively). To specify the situations of intercultural and intercultural interactions, the direction of the modified ROCI-II for intracultural interaction said "Think of a situation where you have a conflict, disagreement, argument, or disappointment with a fellow student or acquaintance from your own country," and that for intercultural interaction said "Think of a situation where you have a conflict, disagreement, argument, or disappointment with a fellow student or acquaintance from other countries."

All subjects completed the questionnaire in their native language. For Korean subjects, the questionnaires were translated by three bilingual Korean doctoral students and backtranslated by a bilingual Korean doctoral student majoring in English. Back-translation can improve the reliability and validity of research in different languages by requiring that the quality of a translation is verified by an independent translator translating back into the original language (Hambleton, 1993, 1994, 1995). This process can be repeated

several times. Once the process is complete, original and back translated scales can then be compared (Hambleton, 1993, 1994, 1995).

The questionnaire was self-administered in a variety of places around three campuses, such as classrooms, libraries, campus benches, student centers, recreation centers, college buildings, dormitories, and university apartments. Ten trained graduate students who volunteered to participate in this study distributed the questionnaires around the campuses. In particular, the presidents of the Korean Student Association in three public universities volunteered to collect data for Korean subjects. Under the supervision of the researcher, they distributed the questionnaires to Korean subjects who reside in their own university community. Sufficient time (30 minutes) was allowed for each subject to complete the questionnaire. Each subject was complete the questionnaire on their own time through personal contacts and during the classes and returned it to the questionnaire distributors.

Measurement

The preferred CMS of individuals in intracultural and intercultural interactions were estimated by the modified ROCI-II suggested by Wilmot and Hocker (2001) (see Appendices D and E). The modified ROCI-II consists of twenty-five items that are measured by 5-point Likert scales (1=never, 5=always). Each of five items reflects one of five CMS: avoidance, competition, compromise, accommodation, and collaboration. The original ROCI-II developed by Rahim (1983) to study conflict management in organizations contains three separate forms--form A, B, and C--differing only in reference to conflict with a superior, subordinate, or peer, respectively. It consists of twenty-five items that are cast on 5-point Likert scales (higher scores represent greater use of a conflict style) to assess five CMS: seven items for the integrating style, six items for the avoiding style, five items for the dominating style, six items for the accommodating style, and four items for the compromising style. However, because the ROCI-II scale includes an unequal number of items involving the five styles, Wilmot and Hocker (2001) modified the twenty-eight items of the ROCI-II scale into twenty-five items. Along with the analysis of five CMS, to

further specify cultural differences in CMS this study collapsed four of those five CMS, except for compromise strategy, into two categories--assertiveness and cooperativeness. The compromise strategy dropped out in their formula in that it is always in the middle of assertiveness and cooperativeness and thus has zero (0) value. According to Volkema and Bergmann's formula (1995) which represents that:

$$\text{assertiveness} = (\text{competition} + \text{collaboration}) - (\text{avoidance} + \text{accommodation})$$

$$\text{cooperativeness} = (\text{collaboration} + \text{accommodation}) - (\text{competition} + \text{avoidance})$$

Further, Wilmot and Hocker (2001) suggest that the modified ROCI-II should be measured for two different situations, situation A and situation B. While situation A describes a more close personal relation with a friend, romantic partner or family member, situation B involves a less personal relation such as someone one does not know well. Based on this suggestion, this study will independently estimate the situation of intracultural interaction (Situation A) and that of intercultural interaction (Situation B). Further, if a subject who has had no experience involving an intercultural conflict does not fill out the modified ROCI-II scale for intercultural interaction, the questionnaire will be eliminated from the analysis. Scores from the ROCI-II have been reported to have high reliability and validity (Rahim, 1983; Rahim & Magner, 1995). Reliability of scores from the modified ROCI-II scales used in this study was estimated by Cronbach's alpha. For Korean samples, Cronbach's alphas were .87 for the modified ROCI-II (CMS), and .83 for the modified ROCI-II (ICMS). For U.S. samples, those were .83 for the modified ROCI-II (CMS) and .83 for the modified ROCI-II (ICMS). Although lower thresholds are sometimes used in the literature, Nunnally (1978) has indicated 0.7 to be an acceptable reliability coefficient. In general, a reliability coefficient of .80 or higher is considered as "acceptable" in most social science applications. Therefore, the above Cronbach's alphas show that all scales used in this study are acceptable.

Results

The first RQ involves the major characteristics of Koreans' and Americans' CMS and the second RQ concerns the similarities and differences between Koreans and Americans in their CMS. Involving the first RQ, [table 1](#) shows the characteristics of Koreans' and Americans' intracultural conflict management strategies: Koreans are likely to use collaboration, compromise, accommodation, avoidance, and competition strategies in turn and they are likely to be cooperative in managing intracultural conflict and Americans are likely to use collaboration, compromise, accommodation, competition, and avoidance strategies in turn and they are also likely to be cooperative in handling intracultural conflict.

Involving the second RQ, to compare CMS between Korea and the U.S. a series of independent samples t-tests were conducted. The results of t-tests show that there were significant differences between Korea and the U.S. in the use of avoidance ($t(451)=2.18, p<.030$), competition ($t(451)=-12.60, p<.000$) and accommodation ($t(451)=2.16, p<.031$) and assertive ($t(451)=-7.88, p<.000$) and cooperative ($t(451)=6.75, p<.000$) tendencies. That is, while Koreans are more likely to use avoidance and accommodation strategies and to be cooperative than Americans in managing intracultural conflict, Americans are more likely to use a competition strategy and to be assertive than Koreans.

Table 1

Comparison of Intracultural Conflict Management Strategy between Korea and U.S.

| | Korea | | U.S. | |
|---------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| | M | SD | M | SD |
| Avoidance* | 2.88 | .88 | 2.70 | .88 |
| Competition*** | 2.11 | .82 | 3.07 | .80 |
| Compromise | 3.47 | .76 | 3.50 | .63 |
| Accommodation* | 3.33 | .69 | 3.18 | .72 |
| Collaboration | 3.72 | .72 | 3.61 | .71 |
| Assertiveness*** | -.38 | 1.75 | .90 | 1.70 |
| Cooperativeness*** | 2.06 | 1.43 | 1.12 | 1.52 |

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

The third RQ concerns the major characteristics of Koreans' and Americans' ICMS. Involving the first RQ, [table 2](#) shows the characteristics of Koreans' and Americans' intercultural conflict management strategies. Koreans are likely to use collaboration, compromise, accommodation, avoidance, and competition strategies in turn and they are likely to be cooperative in managing intercultural conflict. Americans are likely to use collaboration, compromise, accommodation, competition, and avoidance strategies, in turn and they are also likely to be cooperative in handling intercultural conflict.

The fourth RQ involves the similarities and differences between Koreans and Americans in their ICMS. To compare ICMS between Korea and the U.S. independent samples t-tests were conducted. The results of t-tests show that there were significant differences between Korea and the U.S. in the use of avoidance ($t(451)=2.59$, $p < .010$) and competition ($t(451)=-7.31$, $p < .000$) styles and assertive ($t(451)=-6.68$, $p < .000$) and cooperative ($t(451)=3.27$, $p < .001$) tendencies. That is, while Koreans are more likely to use an avoidance strategy and to be cooperative than Americans in handling intercultural conflict, Americans are more likely to use a competition strategy and to be assertive than Koreans.

Table 2

Comparison of Intercultural Conflict Management Strategy between Korea and U.S.

| | Korea | | U.S. | |
|---------------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| | M | SD | M | SD |
| Avoidance** | 2.99 | .96 | 2.76 | .94 |
| Competition*** | 2.18 | .88 | 2.80 | .94 |
| Compromise | 3.35 | .83 | 3.44 | .80 |
| Accommodation | 3.31 | .80 | 3.16 | .82 |
| Collaboration | 3.62 | .80 | 3.67 | .79 |
| Assertiveness*** | - .50 | 1.85 | .56 | 1.45 |
| Cooperativeness*** | 1.75 | 1.51 | 1.27 | 1.65 |

p<.01, *p<.001

The fifth RQ involves the relationship between CMS and ICMS for each national culture. Data for the fifth RQ was tested by a series of paired samples t-tests and Correlation analyses (Pearson's C). The paired variables are CMS and assertive/cooperative tendencies in intracultural interaction and ICMS and assertive/cooperative tendencies in intercultural interaction.

[Table 3](#) shows the means and standards deviations of and correlation coefficients between CMS and ICMS including assertive/cooperative tendencies for each national culture. The results of paired samples t-tests showed that: First, for Koreans (n=228) there were significant differences between the use of CMS and ICMS in the use of compromise ($t(227)=2.61, p<.010$) and collaboration ($t(227)=1.99, p<.047$) styles and the cooperative tendency ($t(227)=2.94, p<.004$). That is, Koreans' use of compromise and collaboration styles and their cooperative tendency for managing conflict in intracultural interaction ($m=3.47, m=3.72, m=2.06$, in turn) is likely to decrease in intercultural interaction ($m=3.35, m=3.62, m=1.75$, in turn); second, for Americans (n=225) there were significant differences between the use of CMS and ICMS in the use of a competition style ($t(224) = 5.89, p<.000$) and an assertive tendency ($t(224) = 3.39, p<.001$). That is, Americans' use of a competition style and an assertive tendency for managing

conflict in intracultural interaction ($m=3.00$, $m=.90$, in turn) is likely to decrease in intercultural interaction ($m=2.80$, $m=.56$, in turn). The results of Correlation analyses showed that there were significant relationships between CA and ICA across Koreans and Americans. Across Koreans and Americans, the use of all five CMS and assertive/cooperative tendencies in managing intracultural conflict were positively related to the use of five ICMS and assertive/cooperative tendencies in managing intercultural conflict.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of and Correlation Coefficients between CMS and ICMS for Each National Culture

| | CMS | | ICMS | | Correlation Coefficients |
|--------------------------|------|------|------|------|--------------------------|
| | M | SD | M | SD | |
| Korea | | | | | |
| Avoidance | 2.88 | .88 | 2.99 | .96 | .551*** |
| Competition | 2.11 | .82 | 2.18 | .88 | .505*** |
| Compromise** | 3.47 | .76 | 3.35 | .83 | .585*** |
| Accommodation | 3.33 | .69 | 3.31 | .80 | .634*** |
| Collaboration* | 3.72 | .72 | 3.62 | .80 | .487*** |
| Assertiveness | -.38 | 1.75 | -.50 | 1.85 | .604*** |
| Cooperativeness** | 2.06 | 1.43 | 1.75 | 1.51 | .420*** |
| US | | | | | |
| Avoidance | 2.70 | .88 | 2.76 | .94 | .522*** |
| Competition*** | 3.07 | .80 | 2.80 | .94 | .708*** |
| Compromise | 3.50 | .63 | 3.44 | .80 | .350*** |
| Accommodation | 3.18 | .72 | 3.16 | .82 | .435*** |
| Collaboration | 3.71 | .67 | 3.67 | .79 | .584*** |
| Assertiveness*** | .90 | 1.70 | .56 | 1.48 | .553*** |
| Cooperativeness | 1.12 | 1.52 | 1.27 | 1.65 | .641*** |

p<.01, *p<.001

Conclusion and Discussion

The purpose of this study is to compare conflict management strategies between Koreans and Americans involving intracultural and intercultural conflict. Based on cultural difference between Korea and the

U.S., Wilmot and Hocker's "duel concern model" and previous intercultural conflict management studies, five research questions were established.

The first RQ and the second RQ involve the characteristics of and the similarities and differences between Koreans' and Americans' intracultural conflict management strategies. The findings of this study involving the first and second RQs are as follows. First, Koreans are likely to use collaboration, compromise, accommodation, avoidance, and competition strategies in turn, Americans are likely to use collaboration, compromise, accommodation, competition, and avoidance strategies in turn, and both Koreans and Americans are also likely to be cooperative in handling intracultural conflict. The findings of cross-cultural preference for a collaboration strategy and cooperative orientation in managing intracultural conflict are opposite to the findings of previous cross-cultural conflict research. The findings of Koreans' avoidance of a competition strategy and Americans' least frequent use of an avoidance strategy are broadly consistent with the findings of previous cross-cultural conflict studies. For Koreans, in particular, those findings are somewhat different from those of Lee's studies (1990, 1996, 2002) where a compromise strategy is the most preferred strategy and an avoidance strategy is the least often used strategy for Koreans. Second, while Koreans are more likely to use avoidance and accommodation strategies and to be cooperative than Americans, Americans are more likely to use a competition strategy and to be assertive than Koreans in managing intracultural conflict. These aspects are consistent with the general findings of previous cross-cultural conflict studies where cultural differences in managing intracultural conflict.

The third RQ and the fourth RQ concern the characteristics of and the similarities and differences between Koreans' and Americans' intercultural conflict management strategies. The findings of this study involving the third and fourth RQs are as follows: First, Koreans are likely to use collaboration, compromise, accommodation, avoidance, and competition strategies in turn, Americans are likely to use collaboration, compromise, accommodation, competition, and avoidance strategies in turn, and both

Koreans and Americans are also likely to be cooperative in handling intercultural conflict. That is, both Koreans and Americans are precisely the same patterns of CMS in managing intercultural conflict with those in handling intracultural conflict. Second, while Koreans are more likely to use an avoidance strategy and to be cooperative than Americans, Americans are more likely to use a competition strategy and to be assertive than Koreans in handling intercultural conflict. That is, both Koreans and Americans are precisely the same patterns of assertive/cooperative tendencies in intercultural interaction with those in intracultural interaction. Further, this aspect shows that regardless of the situations of interaction (intracultural vs. intercultural) individuals' CMS are likely to be consistent.

The fifth RQ asks the relationship between intracultural and intercultural CMS for each national culture. The findings of this study involving the fifth RQ are as follows. First, across Koreans and Americans, the use of all five CMS and assertive/cooperative tendencies in managing intracultural conflict were positively related to the use of those in managing intercultural conflict. That is, across cultures individuals' use of all five CMS and assertive/cooperative tendencies has a direct influence on their use of those in ICMS. Second, while Koreans' use of compromise and collaboration strategies and their cooperative tendency in managing intracultural conflict is likely to decrease in intercultural interaction, Americans' use of a competition strategy and their assertive tendency in managing intracultural conflict is likely to decrease in intercultural interaction. That is, Koreans' use of constructive strategies and their positive tendency in handling intracultural interaction tends to decrease in managing intercultural conflict, whereas Americans' use of distributive strategy and their negative orientation in managing intracultural conflict tends to increase in handling intercultural conflict. This aspect shows that across cultures individuals' CMS are ethnocentric. That is, regardless of whether a culture is individualistic or collectivistic and low context or high context, culture is fundamentally ethnocentric, being centered on one's own cultural frames of reference (Porter & Samovar, 1997). This aspect is consistent with Sitaram's argument (Sitaram, 1995; Sitaram & Cogdell, 1976) that individuals tend to be ethnocentric by evaluating other cultures through their own cultural values. Because ethnocentrism is "a universal tendency for any

people to put its own culture and society in a central position of priority and worth” (Keesing 1965, p. 46), in many aspects, ethnocentrism has been institutionalized and has been practiced unconsciously (Porter & Larry, 1997). If we interpret and evaluate conflict management behaviors of people from other cultures through ethnocentrism, we may have biased evaluations on the routine practices of their conflict handling behaviors. For example, as communication avoidance can be differently estimated within different cultural contexts, avoidance or withdrawal strategy can be viewed as either positive or negative by people from different cultures (Kim, 2002). That is, while in individualistic cultures such as U.S. avoidance of conflict may be considered negative politeness, in collectivistic cultures such as Korea it can be seen as positive politeness (Kim, 1999; Kim & Leung, 2000).

Globalization now is a reality that imbedded our lives in ways most us never stop to think about. With the increasing universal tendency of globalization across every aspect of society, we are all becoming more interdependent with one another than ever before (Palmer, 2002; Wark, 1994). Issues involving intercultural conflict seem to be especially prominent in a multicultural society. In a multicultural society where diverse cultural groups of people are interconnected, intercultural mixings increase stress and anxieties in intercultural interactions, which in turn may increase intercultural conflicts. As Lustig and Koester (1996) note, the systemic efficiency of a multicultural society such as the U.S. across political, economic, cultural, and social boundaries is determined by individual and collective abilities to perform constructive conflict management with effective intercultural communication. Constructive conflict management by diverse cultural groups of people would be a shortcut to build a far more harmonious and egalitarian multicultural society in an age of globalization.

Although this study, as the first study that examined cross-cultural CMS in intracultural and intercultural interaction, showed several meaningful findings and implications, it also includes some limitations. First, this study presumed that culture works as implicit communicative and behavioral norms for its members, and found that culture has a heavy influence on the use of individuals’ CMS and assertive/cooperative

orientation. However, an expanding body of cross-cultural communication studies has recently shown that culture-level differences alone seem to be no longer a priori justification for studying communication behavior or predisposition across cultures. Therefore, individual-level elements such as self-construal--the way individuals conceive of themselves--are necessary to understand cross-cultural communication behaviors and styles (Gaines et al., 1997; Gudykunst et al., 1996; Kim, 1999, 2002; Kim et al., 1996; Singelis & Brown, 1995; Triandis, 1990). Second, although this study examined cultural differences and similarities in individuals' CMS, it did not investigate the influence of other communication elements on the CMS and it compared merely two national cultures. The influences of other communication predispositions such as communication apprehension, communication competence and shyness on individuals' CMS and individuals' CMS from various national cultures are recommended to consider. Similarly, beside the differences in the conflict situations of intracultural and intercultural interaction, future studies are also recommended to consider other situational factors such as task performance, educational setting, and relational distance involving intracultural and intercultural conflict. Third, although this study used a survey as a main data collection method depending on recalled situations, individuals' CMS could be more precisely examined by employing qualitative research methods such as observation, interview, and participation-observation methods which may allow researchers for investigating participants' lived experience involving their CMS.

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