

Culture and Conflict Management: A Chinese Perspective

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Five Parts

I. Introduction

II. Communication is Contextually Dependent

III. Paradigmatic Assumptions of Chinese Behaviors

IV. Key Concepts in Understanding Chinese Behaviors

V. Conclusion

I. Introduction

- **Cultural awareness in globalizing society** - The lack of cultural awareness and proper ways to address cultural differences will result in unrealistic expectations, frustrations, conflicts, and failure in establishing a positive intercultural relationship among people from different cultures.
- **Rising of China** - To understand the way Chinese think and act, especially how they manage and resolve conflicts, becomes an important step in maintaining a stable and peaceful world.
- **Purpose of this presentation** - to examine the issue of conflict management and resolution from Chinese cultural perspective. Three parts: (1) I'll argue that communication is contextually dependent and therefore an emic approach should be taken for better understanding a cultural group, (2) paradigmatic assumptions are used to demonstrate the differences between East and West, and (3) key concepts based on Chinese cultural values are illustrated for better understanding Chinese in the process of conflict management.

II. Communication is Contextually Dependent

- Communication is contextually dependent and therefore an emic approach should be taken for better understanding a cultural group.
- Example: Chen, Chen, & Ryan (2000).
- Reflected in paradigmatic assumptions of each culture.

Table 1. National Differences on the Six Factors

	American (N = 50)	Chinese (48)
Factors	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Severity	*6.22 (.99)	5.56 (.83)
Credibility	5.28 (1.34)	5.02 (1.65)
Relation	5.12 (1.46)	5.19 (1.57)
Power	4.14 (1.82)	4.40 (1.69)
Seniority	*3.76 (1.59)	4.52 (1.84)
Face	*3.44 (1.73)	4.23 (1.80)

Note. * $p < .05$.

Table 2. Elements That Affect Conflict Management

Americans	Chinese
1. Time Constraint	1. My Authority
2. Don't Care the Project	2. I'm Right
3. Grade on the Line	3. Affect Group Interest
4. Poor Performance	4. Grade on the Line
5. Lack of Cooperation	5. Lack of Cooperation
6. Negative Attitude	6. Poor Performance
7. Laziness	7. Don't Care the Project
8. Refuse to Re-do	8. Time Constraint
9. Frustrated/Angry	9. Lose My Face
10. Members Don't Help	10. Negative Attitude
11. Affect Group Interest	11. Members Don't Help
12. My Authority	12. Not Trustworthy

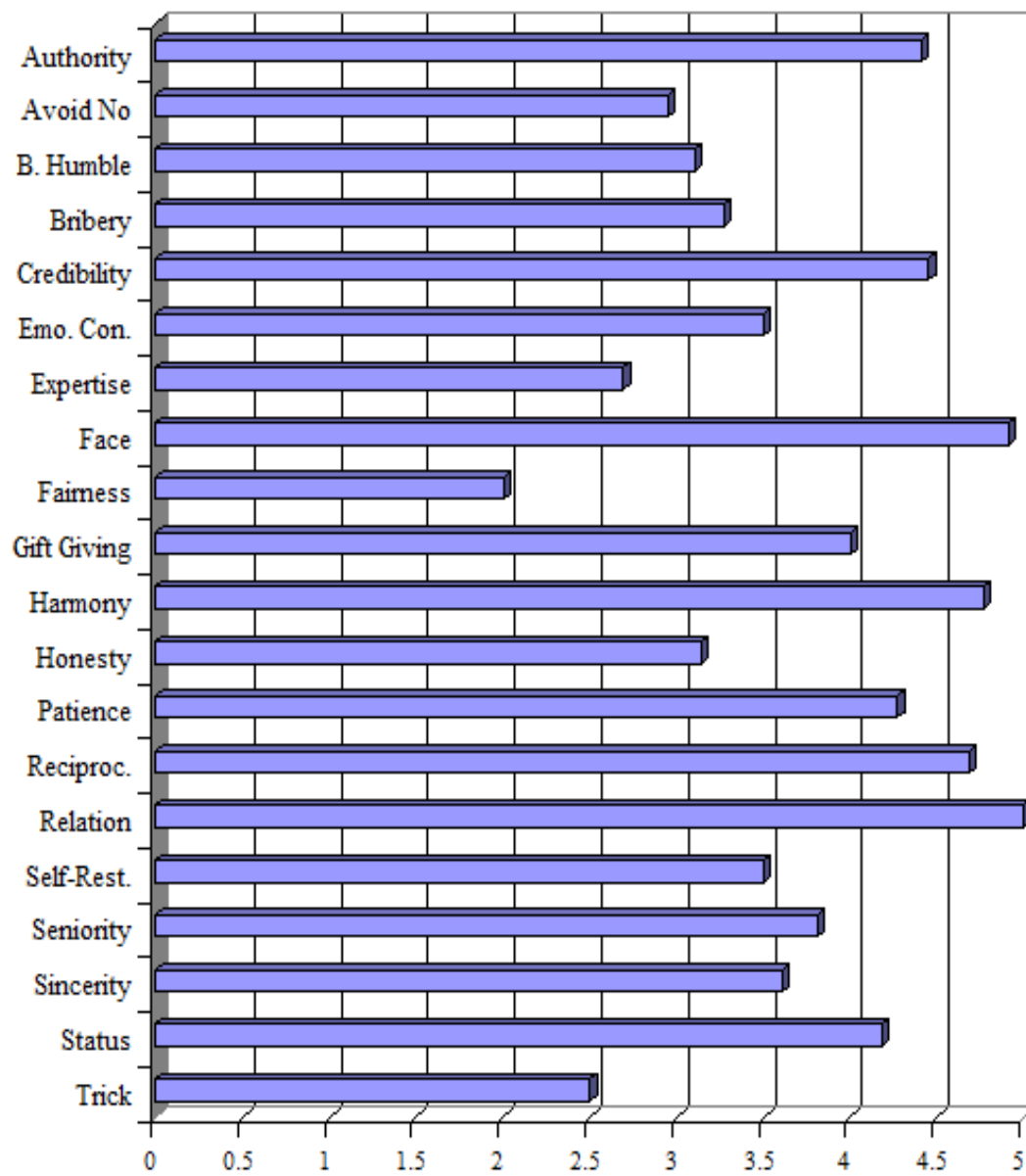


Figure 1. The distribution of mean scores of the 20 factors

- The top five mean scores of the 20 factors are:

(1) Relation (5.0)

(2) Face (4.91)

(3) Harmony (4.77)

(4) Reciprocity (4.68)

(5) Credibility (4.45)

- Chen, G. M., & Chen, V. (2002). An examination of PRC business negotiations. *Communication Research Reports*, 19, 399-408.

III. Paradigmatic Assumptions of East and West

Ontology					
East			West		
Holistic			Atomistic		
submerged collectivistic			discrete individualistic		
Axiology		Epistemology		Methodology	
East	West	East	West	East	West
Harmonious	Confrontational	Interconnected	Reductionistic	Intuitive	Logical
indirect subtle adaptative consensual agreeable	direct expressive dialectical divisive sermonic	reciprocity we hierarchical associative ascribed	independent I equal free will achieved	subjective nonlinear ambiguous ritual accommodative	objective linear analytical justificatory manipulative

* Contextual Dependence of Communication

Axiology (The ultimate goal of human communication)	
East	West
Harmonious	Confrontational
indirect subtle adaptative consensual agreeable	direct expressive dialectical divisive sermonic

- The most eminent influence of Chinese belief on establishing a harmonious relationship in human communication is the effort to avoid being involved in a conflict. In order to pursue a conflict free interaction, Chinese have developed five communication rules:

- (1) Self-restraint/self-discipline – avoid aggressive behaviors.
- (2) Indirect expression of disapproval – implicit, evasive, intermediary.
- (3) Saving or making face for counterparts – Spy plane incident in Hainan Island in 2001 (face vs. fact).
- (4) Reciprocity – *li shang wang lai – xiann li hou bing*
- (5) Emphasis on particularistic relationships – *guanxi*

*Chen, G. M. (2002). The impact of harmony on Chinese conflict management. In G. M. Chen & R. Ma (Eds.), *Chinese conflict management and resolution* (pp. 3-19). Westport, CT: Ablex.

* Emic View of Asian Behaviors

Chinese	Japanese	Korean	Pilipino	Thai
<i>bao</i> (reciprocity)	<i>amae</i> (message expanding and message accepting needs)	<i>uye-ri</i> (complementary and obligatory reciprocity)	<i>kapwa</i> (reciprocal being)	<i>kreng jai</i> (being extremely considerate)
<i>guanxi</i> (interrelation)	<i>en</i> (predestined relation)		<i>pahiwatig</i> (strategic ambiguity)	
<i>ke qi</i> (politeness)	<i>enryo-sasshi</i> (restraint-guessing)		<i>pakiramdam</i> (the capacity to feel for another)	
<i>miantz</i> (face)	<i>omoiyari</i> (altruistic sensitivity)			
<i>yuan</i> (predestined relation)				

IV. Key Concept in Understanding Chinese Communication

- **Harmony** as the Foundation of Chinese Communication
- **Face**: Dynamism in Confucian Society
- Social Relations (**Guanxi**): A Chinese Approach to Interpersonal Communication
- Favor (**Renqing**): Characteristics and Practice from a Resourced-Based Perspective
- Reciprocity (**Bao**): The Balancing Mechanism of Chinese Communication
- Politeness (**Keqi**): The Fragrance of Chinese Communication
- Rites (**Li**): The Symbolic Making of Chinese Humanity
- Predestined Relation (**Yuan**): The Passionate and the Helpless of Chinese Communication
- Hierarchy (**Dengji**): A Pyramid of Interconnected Relationships
- *Chi* (**Qi**) Process: The Interplay of Opposites in Selected Communication Contexts
- Divination/Fortune Telling (**Zhan Bu/Xianming**): Chinese Cultural Praxis and Worldview

V. Conclusion

- The two faces of Chinese communication
- Dynamics of cultural values (Chen & Chung)
- Strategy (*Ji*) (Chinese compliance-gaining strategies) (Chen & Zhong)

*** Factors of Chinese Compliance-Gaining Strategies**

- (1) Delusion
- (2) Burrowing/Misleading
- (3) Distraction
- (4) Indirect Exploration
- (5) Espionage
- (6) Adapting
- (7) Deceiving

* Chen, G. M., & Zhong, M. (2000). Dimensions of Chinese compliance-gaining strategies. *Human Communication*, 3, 97-109.

Thank You!