

How Executives Manage Interpersonal Conflicts in Chinese Companies in Germany: Intercultural Difference in Conflict Management Styles

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Abstract

This study aimed to examine the influence of culture on the conflict management styles of Chinese executives when interacting with their German staff in Chinese companies located in Germany. A mixed method was employed. First off questionnaire survey was completed and the data was analyzed with t-test and Pearson Correlation Coefficient methods, then semi-structured interview was conducted and the qualitative content analysis method was used for analysis. This study found that IDV, UAI, IVR dimensions had significant powerful influence on conflict styles of Chinese and German managers; the cultural orientations of Chinese and Germans had also been altered, but their favorite styles remained the same due to the factors, namely: cultural regression, stability of national culture, and various dialectics.

Keywords: culture, conflict management, multinational company, Chinese company of Germany

1. Introduction

As economic powers with a shared international responsibility in many industries, China and Germany have being established diplomatic relations since the 1970s. Their bilateral economic relationship in particular the trend of Chinese direct investment in Germany characterizes significant change and development of the Sino-German relations. In reference to the Chinese Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in Germany, Chinese FDI had a sharp increase in 2016, reaching to EUR 11 billion (Mitchell, Chazan & Weinland, January 11, 2017). Although in 2017 the value of FDI showed a slow decline for the first time in more than a decade due to the screening policies of Germany, the new amendment of such policies being made in last year, such as the amendment to the Foreign Trade and Payments Ordinance provided a lowered threshold in particularly sensitive areas, has given a fresh impetus to Chinese investment. Such subtle variance in Chinese outbound investment cannot change Chinese investors' preference for German market; of EU economies, Germany is still one of the most favorite destination countries for Chinese investors (Hanemann & Huotari, 2017).

Within an environment beneficial for promotion of investment, the majority of Chinese companies would like to enter German market in acquisitions and mergers (Hanemann & Huotari, 2015). As they understand that intercultural management must be a testing task for multinational company, they tend to make use of existing resources of German domestic companies, including the know-how, brands and staff, to prevent potential conflicts resulting from cultural difference. For multinational company, the utilization of existing resources is a widely-used way in practice. Intercultural conflict, however, is uneasy to be avoided or handled by this single way. The *Survey for Development Conditions of Chinese Companies in Germany* being published between 2014 and 2016 by the Chinesische Handelskammer in Deutschland e.V. indicated that intercultural conflict existed everywhere in Chinese companies located in Germany and that intercultural management was one of the biggest obstacles of Chinese companies in business operation in Germany.

For Chinese companies in Germany, as a result of acquisition and merger, their management staff mainly consists of Chinese and German managers coming from a distinguished Eastern and Western culture. "Cultures, especially national cultures, are extremely stable over time" (Hofstede, 2001, p. 34). "[Culture] gives people a

sense of who they are, of belonging, of how they should behave, and of what they should be doing" (Katsioloudes & Hadjidakis, 2007, p. 38). "Cultural differences are a prevalent source of contention in intercultural conflict...intercultural conflict often results because of misunderstanding related to different worldviews and communication styles that result from cultural differences" (Ting-Toomey & Oetzel, 2001, p. 106). There exist thus differences in cultural values between Chinese and Germans. Nowadays, in multinational company, conflict is everywhere and managers face it so often. How to effectively manage conflict has become an important part of intercultural management. A good understanding of different cultures and how culture influences conflict style becomes a requisite for the success of multinational companies, therefore this paper attempts to explore the relationship between cultural value orientation and conflict management style within an intercultural context.

Previous research has argued the importance of cultural difference in conflict resolution and repeatedly found that the differences in the Eastern and Western cultures result in different adoption of conflict strategies. Their focus is on the comparison of China and the USA (e.g. Tsai & Levenson, 1997; Morris et al. 1998; Xie, Song & Stringfellow, 1998; Song, Xie & Dyer, 2000; Peng, He & Zhu, 2000; Knutson & Hwang, 2000; Tinsley & Brett, 2001; Friedman, Chi & Liu, 2006; Weldon & Jehn, 2018), although such empirical studies have shed light on the influence of Eastern and Western cultures on conflict resolution. Of these studies, there are a few contributors who have researched different styles of handling conflict between Chinese and Germans. Oetzel et al. (2001) examined different face concerns in conflict situation between different cultural members from China, Germany, Japan and the USA. Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2003) provided further empirical evidence to suggest that face concerns of different cultural members result in different conflict styles. Brew and Cairns (2004) examined how position, face concerns and conflict management styles connected and mutually affected. These empirical studies, however, are conducted with the main focus on comparing conflict styles of China and some Western developed countries particularly the USA and UK, the sample size and relevant analysis involving Germans are relatively limited.

Scholarly studies in the intercultural and conflict management areas do not widen the focus of their research so far, their main focus of interest in study is still in Chinese and American contexts. Meanwhile, one subtle change is that they began to call for further empirical inquiry into the cultural influence on specific consequence in handling conflict. Merolla et al. (2013) explored the difference in interpersonal forgiveness between Chinese and American cultures and figured out that direct forgiveness could help repair a damaged relationship in both cultures. Zhang et al. (2019) explored how face concern, self-construal and apology affect consequent behaviors in conflict process, including forgiveness, reconciliation and revenge. They found that forgiveness had a negative relationship with independent self-construal and self-face concern, but a positive relationship with interdependent self-construal and other-face concern; in Chinese and American cultures forgiveness was positively related with reconciliation but negatively related with revenge. The overall studies provide sufficient empirical evidence to suggest the relationship between culture and conflict management. Whereas, people have different past experiences and knowledges, their cross-cultural schemata vary with different degrees. It means that the findings being found in Chinese and American contexts cannot be used to indicate cross-cultural schemata in all contexts. Therefore, this paper examines the influence of culture on the conflict management styles of Chinese executives when interacting with their German staff in Chinese companies located in Germany, explores an aspect of conflict management that has received little attention from researchers so far and, thus, makes a valuable contribution to the field.

There is a consensus that culture as the set of values, beliefs, and behavioral patterns being held by a particular nation or group of people can interpret and explain various behaviors. The theory of cultural dimensions is central to discuss and analyze the effect of culture on conflict behavior. Most studies examined how cultures differ in diverse preferred forms of handling conflict within Hofstede's cultural model. Although some scholars criticized the validity of Hofstede's model (e.g. McSweeney, 2002; Blodgett, Bakir & Rose, 2008), many scholars still hold that Hofstede's model is enough valid and reliable (e.g. Cullen, 1999; Herrera & Erdener, 2009; Finch, 2009). Of these scholarly studies, individualism-collectivism as the key theoretical dimension is often used to examine the influence of culture on conflict styles. Cai and Fink (2002) examined cultural differences in conflict styles between individualistic and collectivistic cultural members and figured out their fundamental difference in conflict styles. Ogretir (2008) constructed the correlation between this dimension and conflict styles. Other scholars also mapped some investigations that utilize different cultural dimensions. Oudenhoven, Mechelse and Dreu (1998) used three dimensions (power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity) of Hofstede's model to measure how culture influences conflict behaviors of people. Purohit & Simmers (2006) explored intercultural differences in styles of handling conflict based on two dimensions: power distance and

uncertainty avoidance. Chen, Chao, Xie and Tjosvold (2018) tested how individualism and power distance dimensions as organizational variable influence people's strategy of conflict management. Overall, these scholarly contributions present a partial mapping of cultural influence on conflict management and unique methods for conducting analysis, but they do not address how each cultural dimension individually affects conflict styles within the scope of intercultural conflict management.

In fact, in measurement of cultural difference in conflict styles each cultural dimension can be taken into account for a clearer relationship between culture and conflict styles (Swierczek & Onishi, 2003). A few researchers took a further tentative step to examine how each dimension of Hofstede's model affect people's conflict behaviors. Peng, He and Zhu (2000) examined how each cultural dimension of Hofstede's model influences employees' styles of handling conflict in company. Mohammed (2008) employed Hofstede's cultural framework to investigate the connection between culture and conflict styles. They offered a relatively clear map of connection between culture and conflict styles, but their findings and explanations are relatively outdated. Specifically, Hofstede's current cultural model consists of six dimensions, but the model they used in study consisted of four or five cultural dimensions, thus their studies cannot provide update findings for the current research of conflict management. More importantly, these scholarly contributions presented relevant issues of foreign invested companies in China including German invested companies in China, few findings or discussions within the scope of Chinese companies in Germany. This paper aims to fill this research gap by examining the role of all cultural dimensions play in deciding a specific conflict style between Chinese and German managers working in Chinese companies located in Germany, providing practical implications for Chinese managers in Germany as well as theoretical implications for the field of intercultural conflict management.

In the following section, this paper first provides some background information on culture and conflict management. Building on these theoretical frameworks, research questions and hypotheses are developed. Next, the hypotheses are tested by using quantitative data, then with combination of qualitative data, the findings of this paper are developed and discussed. In last section, the paper makes a conclusion to assess this study's limitation and to suggest recommendations for future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

In early literature conflict is often defined as competition (e.g. Coser, 1967, cited in Dierkes, Antal, Child & Nonaka, 2003; Mortensen, 1974, cited in Putnam, 2013). The terms *competition* and *conflict* are often used synonymously, but essentially the two terms are distinguished, one of the most significant differences is that competition is bound to result in conflict, but conflict may arise either in a competitive or cooperative relationship (Deutsch, 1977). However, "pure cooperation or pure competition; the motive to compete is often mixed with the motive to cooperate" (Walker, 2015, p. 294). In contemporary studies conflict is thus viewed as interactive behaviors among humans rather than a simple competition action (e.g. Folger, Poole & Stutman, 2001, cited in West & Turner, 2009; Rahim, 2015). Conflict as a consequence of human interaction is inevitable in organization (Hammer, 2001). For effectively managing conflict, Rahim (1983) and (1985) differentiated the concern for self and for other dimensions and then proposed five-factor styles of conflict-handling: integrating, obliging, dominating, avoiding, and compromising. The integrating style means that an individual has a high concern for both self and others. The obliging style refers to that an individual has a low concern for self and high concern for others. The dominating style refers to a high concern for self and low concern for others. The avoiding style displays a low concern for both self and others. The compromising style refers to a moderate concern for both self and others, not neither high nor low.

Conflict management style is influenced by three factors: cultural context, language differences, and thinking patterns (Chen & Starosta, 1997). Of them, culture can be seen as the crucial factor in conflict-handling. Culture is intertwined with conflict management. In intercultural encounters, individuals from different cultural societies shape their specific cultural style of interaction with others and the interpretive frame of conflict behavior. How conflict is managed by different cultural members is a constant focus of most researchers. But as described at the beginning of this paper, their main focus is on the comparison of conflict-handling behaviors between Chinese and American cultural members in the scope of multinational companies in China, a relatively small number of them concentrate on examining conflict between Chinese and German cultural members. In existing literature, however, a general review of how Chinese or German culture affects conflict management style is offered. Tang and Kirkbride (1986) figured out that Chinese would like to use ambiguous styles to handle conflict such as avoiding and compromising styles. Ting-Toomey et al. (1991) examined the relationship among culture, face maintenance, and styles of handling conflict and found that Chinese have more tendency to adopt avoiding and compromising styles compared with the people from the West. Tse, Francis and Walls (1994) argued that Chinese managers would like to give or accept negative suggestions like discontinuing or withdrawing while dealing with

conflict in negotiation. Similar to these scholars, some other scholarly studies also hold that Chinese would like to avoid conflict or make an agreement with different parties involved in conflict because of their conformity tradition (e.g. Morris et al. 1998; Knutson & Hwang, 2000; Peng, He & Zhu, 2000; Ma, 2007). Different with Chinese, scholarly studies found that Germans have high tendency to use an explicit attitude while handling conflict, for them an unambiguous statement is a requisite for conflict solution. Specifically, Tinsley (1998) found that German would like to deal with conflict according to specific regulations (cited in London, 1999). Wang et al. (2005) conducted an empirical study and found that Germans had higher willingness to use a solution-oriented way to handle conflict than Asian people.

3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

Scholarly studies argued that different cultural groups have different tendencies to adopt conflict management styles. Taking possible differences in conflict management behaviors between Chinese and Germans into consideration, the research question and hypotheses were posed based on each of the theoretical connections between Hofstede's six cultural dimensions and Rahim's five conflict styles as follows. Cultural dimension was as independent variable and conflict management style as dependent variable.

RQ1: How the cultural orientation of Power Distance has influenced the conflict style of Chinese/German managers?

H1: Managers of high power distance are	H1a: more likely to adopt the integrating style H1b: less likely to adopt the obliging style H1c: more likely to adopt the dominating style H1d: more likely to adopt the avoiding style H1e: less likely to adopt the compromising style
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RQ2. How the cultural orientation of Individualism-Collectivism has influenced the conflict style of Chinese/German managers?

H2: Managers with collectivistic culture are	H2a: less likely to adopt the integrating style H2b: more likely to adopt the obliging style H2c: less likely to adopt the dominating style H2d: more likely to adopt the avoiding style H2e: more likely to adopt the compromising style
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RQ3. How the cultural orientation of Masculinity has influenced the conflict style of Chinese/German managers?

H3: Managers with masculine culture are	H3a: more likely to adopt the integrating style H3b: less likely to adopt the obliging style H3c: more likely to adopt the dominating style H3d: less likely to adopt the avoiding style H3e: less likely to adopt the compromising style
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RQ4. How the cultural orientation of Uncertainty Avoidance has influenced the conflict style of Chinese/German managers?

H4: Managers with Low uncertainty avoidance culture are	H4a: more likely to adopt the integrating style H4b: less likely to adopt the obliging style H4c: more likely to adopt the dominating style H4d: less likely to adopt the avoiding style H4e: less likely to adopt the compromising style
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RQ5. How the cultural orientation of Long Term Orientation has influenced the conflict style of Chinese/German managers?

H5: Managers with long term culture are	H5a: more likely to adopt the integrating style H5b: more likely to adopt the obliging style H5c: less likely to adopt the dominating style H5d: less likely to adopt the avoiding style H5e: more likely to adopt the compromising style
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RQ6. How the cultural orientation of Indulgence has influenced the conflict style of Chinese/German managers?

H6: Managers with restrained culture are	H6a: less likely to adopt the integrating style H6b: more likely to adopt the obliging style H6c: less likely to adopt the dominating style H6d: more likely to adopt the avoiding style H6e: more likely to adopt the compromising style
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4. Methodology

This study was conducted in the scope of Chinese companies in Germany, which are defined as ‘subsidiaries or represent offices being directly invested and established in Germany by the parent companies located in the mainland of China, or as holding companies located in Germany that have achieved controlling interest during mergers and acquisitions by the parent companies located in the mainland of China’. The mixed method approach of combining qualitative and quantitative techniques is employed to study empirically, as it provides a wide variety of data to assist answering research questions and enables better inference in particular in the case of receiving relatively small sample for quantitative survey (Hall, 2008). Following a triangulation approach to proceed, the whole empirical study consisted of quantitative and qualitative phases: in the first phase questionnaire survey was conducted and after then semi-structured interview was developed in next phase:

4.1 Quantitative Phase

4.1.1 Participant and Sample Size

Two instrumentations were used in the design of questionnaire: Hofstede's Value Survey Module and Rahim's ROCI-II Form B. In survey, the sample population was based on the list of Chinese companies in Germany that was compiled in reference to four databases: (a)document gathered by Wirtschafts-und Handelsabteilung der Botschaft der Volksrepublik China in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland; (b)a list of membership companies provided by Die Chinesische Handelskammer in Deutschland e.V.; (c)a list of Chinese companies in Hamburg provided by Handelskammer Hamburg; (d)a list of Chinese companies in Sachsen provided by Wirtschaftsförderung Sachsen GmbH.

In all, questionnaires are distributed to 243 managers via post being derived from the aforementioned list of Chinese companies. 36 managers participated in this survey, who were from various industries such as automobile, logistics and finance and involve different levels of managerial positions. Their age ranged from 20 to 60 years, most of them worked at middle-and top-level managerial position and had more than three years of working experience in Chinese company located in Germany, a few had ten years or even more.

4.1.2 Variates and Measurement

The independent variate of quantitative research was Hofstede's six cultural dimensions, dependent variate was Rahim's five conflict management styles Cultural orientation. The quantitative data were gathered in two groups: Chinese and German managers. The questionnaire survey served to examine the cultural orientation of Chinese and German managers in order to find out if there exist intercultural differences, and also to examine their tendency to adopt different styles of handling conflict in order to explore possible difference in their use of conflict strategies. Based on the measurement results concerning cultural orientation and conflict management style, the Pearson Correlation Coefficient was employed to build their linear correlation in order to provide quantitative evidence for testing of hypotheses.

Six dimensions were used for measurement: Power Distance (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), Long-term Orientation (LTO), and Indulgence (IVR). The measured results were partly different from Hofstede et al. (2010)'s findings (Table 1). This study found that managers' cultural orientation has been shown alteration with various degrees, main differences were on PDI, MAS, and UAI.

Individual scores of managers on each style were also gathered, five measured styles were Integrating (IN), Obliging (OB), Dominating (DO), Avoiding (AV), Compromising (CO). The independent sample t-test was computed and results showed that except for the DO style, there existed difference between Chinese and German managers on other styles: significant difference on the IN and OB styles ($p=0.027<0.05$; $p=0.026<0.05$), highly significant difference on the AV and CO styles ($p=0.000<0.01$; $p=0.007<0.01$) (Table 2).

Table 1. Comparison of cultural dimension scores

Cultural Dimensions	China		Germany	
	by survey	by Hofstede	by survey	by Hofstede
PDI	46	80	60	35
IDV	20	20	64	67
MAS	74	66	38	66
UAI	58	30	48	65
LTO	83	87	71	83
IVR	12	24	49	40

Table 2. Difference in conflict management styles measured by independent sample T-Test

Group Statistics		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean			
IN	Gernan	12	4.119	.594	.171			
	Chinese	22	3.649	.548	.117			
OB	Gernan	12	3.139	.291	.084			
	Chinese	22	2.833	.398	.085			
DO	Gernan	12	3.367	.702	.203			
	Chinese	22	3.255	.479	.102			
AV	Gernan	12	2.236	.698	.202			
	Chinese	22	3.265	.459	.098			
CO	Gernan	12	2.854	.527	.152			
	Chinese	22	3.375	.493	.105			
t-test for Equality of Means								
Conflict Management Styles		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
							Lower	Upper
IN		2.319	32	.027	.470	.203	.057	.882
OB		2.336	32	.026	.306	.131	.039	.573
DO		.552	32	.585	.112	.203	-.301	.526
AV		-5.186	32	.000	-1.029	.198	-1.433	-.625
CO		-2.876	32	.007	-.521	.181	-.890	-.152

$p < 0.05$ (significant); $p < 0.01$ (highly significant).

4.2 Qualitative Phase

As interviewing emphasizes practical experience of interviewees and interpretation of interviewing questions, it can be seen as a useful qualitative research method to systematically verify the validity of quantitative survey (Hines, 1993). Thus, this study employed semi-structured interview method to complete the qualitative study.

4.2.1 Interviewee

This study sought interviewees through three ways: (a) asking wish of having a n interview in questionnaire; (b) re-contacting with managers who participated not in questionnaire survey; (c) having a door-to-door visit. A total of 20 managers coming from different companies accepted a face-to-face interview. Interview began with the interview guide that consisted of three topics, including experience of handling conflict situations;

reactions to intercultural encounters, judgment on the relationship between culture and conflict management.

4.2.2 Interviewing and Recording

Interviews with Chinese managers were conducted in Chinese; interviews with German managers were conducted in English. Each interview was designed to conduct approximately twenty minutes, but the actual length ranged from twenty to forty minutes. All the records were transcribed. After the completion of interviewing, the qualitative content analysis method was used to analyze the interview contents.

First off, these transcribed contents were reviewed, then the contents were condensed into concise and specific paragraphs or sentences, at next these contents were organized within a coding frame that was built according to the interview guide. After analysis, the contents were used to corroborate the quantitative findings of questionnaire survey by quoting original sentences.

5. Testing Results of Hypotheses

In reference to the results concerning cultural dimensions and conflict management styles, the correlation between cultural dimension and conflict style was constructed (Table 3). Then, hypotheses were tested and testing results were classified into three types: (1) basically proved, i.e. a hypothesis can be proved by both the t-test and Correlation results; (2) partially proved, i.e. a hypothesis can be proved by the Correlation and t-test results but the linear correlation is not significant; (3) untenable hypothesis.

Table 3. Relationship between cultural dimensions and conflict management styles

		IN	OB	DO	AV	CO
PDI	Pearson Correlation	.244	.045	.246	.144	.279
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.165	.802	.161	.415	.110
	N	34	34	34	34	34
IDV	Pearson Correlation	.453**	-.147	.441**	-.165	-.181
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.007	.407	.009	.351	.305
	N	34	34	34	34	34
MAS	Pearson Correlation	.444**	-.070	.346*	-.031	-.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.008	.696	.045	.860	.955
	N	34	34	34	34	34
UAI	Pearson Correlation	-.095	.216	.133	.355*	.311
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.593	.219	.452	.039	.074
	N	34	34	34	34	34
LTO	Pearson Correlation	.157	.050	-.107	-.182	-.157
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.376	.780	.549	.304	.374
	N	34	34	34	34	34
IVR	Pearson Correlation	.156	-.051	.007	-.252	-.228
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.378	.773	.968	.150	.194
	N	34	34	34	34	34

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

RQ1 The t-test result showed that Chinese managers with low power distance have a lower mean ($M=3.649$) on the IN style than German managers ($M=4.119$) with high power distance, but the Correlation was not significant ($r=0.244$, $p=0.165>0.05$), so H1a was partially supported. For H1b, the t-test result indicated that the mean of Chinese managers ($M=2.833$) was lower than that of German managers ($M=3.139$) on the OB style, which implied a positive relationship, but the Correlation showed no significant relationship ($r=0.045$, $p=0.802>0.05$), thus it was partially rejected. H1c, H1d, and H1e were untenable hypotheses.

RQ2 H2b and H2c were untenable. For H2a, as the t-test result on IN style showed that Chinese managers had a smaller mean ($M=3.649$) than German managers ($M=4.119$), and the Correlation was highly significant positive ($r=0.453$, $p=0.007<0.01$), it was basically supported. As for H2d, the t-test result on AV style indicated that Chinese managers had a higher mean ($M=3.265$) than German managers ($M=2.236$), and the Correlation showed

no significant relationship ($r=-0.165$, $p=0.351 > 0.05$), thus it was partially supported. For H2e, based on the t-test result on CO style, Chinese managers had a higher mean than German managers ($M=3.375 > M=2.854$), and the Correlation result indicated no significant relationship ($r=-0.181$, $p=0.305 > 0.05$), so it was partially supported.

RQ3 As for H3b, on the OB style the mean of Chinese managers ($M=2.833$) was lower than German managers ($M=3.139$), which indicated a negative relationship between MAS and the OB style, and the Correlation also indicated a negative relationship but not significant ($r=-0.070$, $p=0.696 > 0.05$), thus it was partially supported. Other hypotheses were untenable.

RQ4 H4b and H4c were untenable. H4a was partially supported, as the t-test result on the IN style showed that the mean of Chinese managers was smaller ($M=3.649$) than German managers ($M=4.119$), but the Correlation showed no significant relationship ($r=-0.095$, $p=0.593 > 0.05$). For H4d, the t-test results showed that Chinese managers ($M=3.265$) was higher than German managers ($M=2.236$), and the Correlation also showed a significant positive relationship ($r=0.355$, $p=0.039 < 0.05$), so it was basically supported. As for H4e, the t-test result indicated that Chinese managers had a higher mean ($M=3.375$) than German managers ($M=2.854$) on CO style, but the Correlation showed no significant relationship ($r=0.311$, $p=0.074 > 0.05$), thus it was partially supported.

RQ5 Its five hypotheses were untenable in this study, so it can be said that this dimension has no influence on the styles of conflict management.

RQ6 H6b and H6c were untenable. As for H6a, the t-test result showed that Chinese managers had a lower mean ($M=3.649$) than German managers ($M=4.119$) on the IN style, and the Correlation indicated no significant positive relation ($r=0.156$, $p=0.378 > 0.05$), so it was partially supported. As for H6d, the t-test result on the AV style showed that Chinese managers had a higher mean ($M=3.265$) than German managers ($M=2.236$), and the Correlation was not significant negative ($r=-0.252$, $p=0.150 > 0.05$), thus it was partially supported. Similarly, H6e was also partially supported.

6. Findings and Discussions

The findings and relevant discussions centered on the hypotheses that were proved partially or basically, because these tested hypotheses could be corroborated or interpreted by the qualitative data through direct quotation. In this study, quantitative and qualitative evidence clearly indicate that not all of cultural dimensions can greatly affect people's adoption of conflict styles, only three of them have significant influence on behaviors of handling-conflict. The empirical evidence of this study also suggest that in cross-cultural context people's cultural value orientation is possible to be altered, but it is noteworthy that their favorite styles of handling conflict are resistant to be changed, i.e. their favorite styles remain the same even though their value orientation have been altered with various degrees. In addition to these, this study used the dialectic thinking theory to explain why Chinese and Germans remain their preference for particular styles in conflict situations.

6.1 Three Cultural Dimensions of Strong Influence on Conflict Management Styles

6.1.1 IDV and Conflict Styles

This study found that IDV dimension, as the key dimension that can explain many differences and similarities of various intercultural communication behaviors, strongly affects conflict strategies of managers. It has great influence on three styles of conflict management: IN, AV, CO.

Chinese managers were examined as collectivistic orientation and German managers as individualistic orientation in this study. It is requisite for the adoption of IN style to express opinions or needs in direct way. Chinese managers with collectivistic orientation would like to emphasize the division between in-group and out-group members, and the interdependent self-construal. While dealing with conflict, first off Chinese managers tend to identify who are in-group members or out-group members, since they would not like to speak up their real standpoints while facing with their in-group members, in order to prevent from destroying the interests or face of in-group members. Furthermore, for Chinese managers, the trait of interdependent self-construal also drives them to have a strong willingness of building a high mental relationship with in-group members, thus they would be worried that their contradiction or different ideas weaken or negatively affect the relationship with other in-group members. As one manager said that "*while facing disputes, it's better to ignore them or resolve them privately rather than in public...sometimes it's not good to discuss problems in front of other colleagues...may have some negative influence, weakening relationship*" (personal communication, October 06, 2016). It is obvious that this cultural orientation of emphasizing division of in-and out-group and the interdependence on in-group members makes Chinese managers have more tendency to give up the use of IN

style. With a similar logic, the cultural trait of emphasizing individual interest implied by individualism should become one of the main reasons why German managers are more willing to use the IN style.

Chinese managers have more tendency to use the AV and CO styles than German managers. Theoretically, due to the collectivistic orientation of Chinese managers, they concentrate on the harmonious relationship among individuals, which makes them have a high tendency to spontaneously ignore conflict and to reach an agreement with conflict parties or even change their standpoints in order to protect their relationship with others. This inference can also be corroborated by interview contents. One Chinese manager said, *"If conflict doesn't affect the proceeding of our tasks, I'd like to ignore them...when I have to handle it, the relationship between me and colleagues may be affected"* (personal communication, October 17, 2016). Another similar argument is that *"harmony is a tradition of China...here[Chinese companies in Germany] to have a good relationship among our staff is also important, it gives us a good climate for work and a higher efficiency"* (personal communication, September 29, 2016). The focus on harmonious relationship is also demonstrated by the contents of a few German managers, who mentioned that Chinese colleagues often invite them to have a *"formal Chinese dinner"* after working (personal communication, September 08 & September 12, 2016).

6.1.2 UAI and Conflict Styles

This study also concludes that UAI dimension has a strong influence on the adoption of conflict styles. Similar to IDV dimension, three styles affected by UAI dimension are IN, AV, and CO styles.

There exists a negative relationship between UAI and IN style: the lower UAI managers are, the more likely they are to adopt the IN style. Chinese managers were examined with a higher score on UAI than German managers, thus Chinese managers should have less willingness to use the IN style in conflict management. The *Survey for Development Conditions of Chinese Companies in Germany* showed that some difficulties such as visa application of Chinese employees and limitation of entrance in particular industries often make Chinese managers feel threatened (Chinesische Handelskammer in Deutschland e.V., 2016). After Chinese companies enter into German market, such difficulties and possible unknown factors increase Chinese manager's cultural orientation of worrying or avoiding uncertain situations. The adoption of IN style aims to achieve a win-win result, which is not easy to meet and often requires a flexible way of handling conflict, in this case some change or breaking of existing rules may arise. In return, Chinese managers, who are with a comparatively higher UAI and have a high anxiety of uncertain situations, are less willing to use the IN style. As one manager said that *"...when I worked in parent company[located in China], it's easy to change ways to deal with conflict based on the situation, as a Chinese saying 'no matter what rule exists there, we can change it to adapt us'...now I work here[Chinese companies in Germany], I found we have to obey many rules, if we break them easily, many troubles come to us, so we should follow every rule. A good result is important, but at present, avoiding some troubles even is more important"* (personal communication, October 24, 2016).

A positive relationship exists between UAI and the AV and CO styles, the correlation between UAI and AV style is significant. In reference to this, Chinese managers, who are with a higher score on UAI than German managers, have more tendency to use AV style in handling conflict. Due to higher anxiety over unknown situations, Chinese managers as direct operators in German market often feel stressed. One manager described that *"here everything is better, good salary and environment, [but I must learn many things], understand different cultures and different people...I've been here for many years, such feeling doesn't weaken, so stressed"* (personal communication, October 13, 2016). The result of questionnaire survey also showed that most Chinese managers have a similar high degree of anxiety. Their degree of nervousness can be seen as a reflection of their high anxiety over uncertain situations. In the case of being unable to avoid conflict, they have to share some resources to seek a temporary resolution of conflict, reducing their feeling of anxiety as much as possible. From this perspective, perhaps it is not difficult to understand that why Chinese, compared with Germans, would be more likely to ignore conflict and avoid direct handling of conflict, or to make compromise in exchange of solution.

6.1.3 IVR and Conflict Styles

It is also defined that IVR dimension can affect managers' use of handling-conflict styles. As this dimension is comparatively new, its relationship with conflict management styles are seldom examined by scholars. In this study, it figured out that there exists relationship between IVR and three styles: being positively related with IN style, being negatively related with AV and CO styles. Although these relationships are not significant, this study argues that the cultural orientation of IVR can affect the adoption of three conflict styles and its role should be paid more attention in the research field of intercultural management.

The relationship between IVR and IN style is partially defined: Chinese managers with restraint orientation are not inclined to use the IN style, however, the interview contents corroborated this inference. One Chinese

manager said, "...while meet a conflict, I like to listen [rather than] tell my views...just let things go, for a good relationship...less trouble, less stress, it's important for me" (personal communication, September 28, 2016). Another manager also held a similar view that "maybe it's not good to discuss problems [in all cases]...we need to learn how to hide them, sometimes [this way] can give us more chances, [reaching for] a happy ending of problems" (personal communication, October 27, 2016). Expression of opinions in public is the prerequisite of using the IN style, but Chinese managers' descriptions show that they would like to control their personal needs or desires, thus they are less likely to speak up their different views or impose such views on others in a verbal way. Different from Chinese, one German manager said that "...I know the way we do things may be not the way other cultures do things...but I like direct communication, it's good for solving conflicts" (personal communication, October 31, 2016). It can be observed that Germans with indulgent orientation should be more likely to use the IN style.

Chinese have more tendency to use the AV and CO styles in handling conflict than Germans, which is corroborated by the interview contents. One Chinese said, "...if I have choice, I'd like to avoid public discussion of problems...[even in condition of] sharing some interests" (personal communication, October 07, 2016). Similarly, another manager also stated that "I just listen, sometimes people just need to talk their needs...if I can solve them soon, I like to give up some interests" (personal communication, October 27, 2016). In addition, the reason for why Chinese prefer to adopt the two styles may be similar to the reason for why they do not like to use the IN style. Because of the restraint orientation, Chinese are used to control their real thinking while handling conflict. In return, they are more conscious to ignore conflict and reach a compromise in exchange for a fast but temporary resolution of conflict.

6.2 Whether Alteration of Value Orientation Influences Preferred Styles or Not?

In this study, cultural orientations of Chinese and German managers were examined to be altered in varying degrees. Logically, such alteration of cultural orientations might affect conflict behaviors. But in fact, Chinese still prefer the AV and CO styles, they have an implicit or ambiguous attitude to conflict management rather than problem-solving oriented attitude; Germans, who are likely to express their real thinking in a direct way and use an explicit or problem-solving oriented way to handle conflict, are examined as more willing to use the IN style. In this case, a thought-provoking question arises: why does the preference of Chinese and Germans on conflict management styles remain the same under the condition that their cultural orientations have shown alterations? This could be interpreted from two factors:

6.2.1 Limited Influence of Cultural Regression Phenomenon

The alteration of cultural orientations can be seen as a result of the phenomenon of cultural regression. Chinese companies in Germany is an intercultural context, in which Chinese and German managers should know each other and be adapted with this environment for keeping their positions stable and safe. The majority of managers have a strong wish to understand different cultures, the cultural regression naturally appears. From this perspective, a few alterations of cultural orientation might not be difficult to understand.

It is noteworthy that this phenomenon is not permanent but temporary and purposive because of some certain elements like job security, thus it has few possibilities to alter basically cultural value orientation of individuals. In intercultural context, managers from various cultural societies attempt to adapt with each other even imitate similar behavioral patterns of others in order to build a harmonious relationship or protect their positions and benefits. Hypothetically, if one manager switches his or her job in a new company which is just a domestic firm with single cultural context, his or her interests in understanding or imitating behavioral patterns of different cultures would reduce even disappear, since it seems comparatively easier to establish a good relationship in a single-cultural environment. It can be said that alteration of cultural orientation influenced by cultural regression is a temporary consequence, in return such alterations play a limited role in the use of conflict management strategies.

6.2.2 Deep Influence and Stability of National Culture

The stability character of national culture may reduce ambiguity and facilitate a better control over expected behaviors (Weick & Quinn, 1999). In learning national culture, the values are resistant to be changed, i.e. when people face with other values opposite to their original values, they have tendency to re-arrange the order of these values rather than change their original values (Ravlin, Thomas, & Ilsev, 2000). More importantly, the learning of national culture is a process of socialization, in which cultural identity is created and "...influences both verbal and nonverbal communication, the propensity to engage in conflict, conflict behaviors, and attitudes about conflict resolution" (Wenning, 2003, p. 87). Through stereotyping, cultural identity affects individual behaviors profoundly (Remland, Jones, Foeman & Arevalo, 2015). For example, Chinese managers have a

cultural identity that makes them form a stereotype of focusing on collectivistic interests, on the contrary the cultural identity of German managers makes them form a stereotyping of focusing on personal interests. Under the influence of such stereotypes, while facing with group interests, Chinese managers show more tendency to give up individual interest than German managers. As such stereotypes are stable, conflict behaviors affected through stereotyping also resist to be changed. National culture and relevant value orientations have thus lasting and profound impact on conflict behaviors in organization (e.g. Smith, Dugan & Trompenaars, 1996; Tsui, Nifadkar & Ou, 2007).

6.3 Whether Dialectical Thinking influences Preferred Styles or Not?

Chinese philosopher Feng Youlan (1926) argued, "the difference between oriental and western cultures is because their basic thought is different. Their basic thought is their philosophy (view of values)" (cited in Chen, 2009, p.169). Philosophical ideas can be expressed through dialectic that is the crucial form in classical philosophy. The dialectical thinking is generated and improved in the development of a society, which affects people's behavioral patterns. Scholarly studies also gave empirical evidence on the influence of dialectical thinking on people's patterns of behaving and perceiving contradiction (e.g. Peng & Nisbett, 1999; Spencer-Rodgers, Williams & Peng, 2010; Fang, 2014). It can be said that different dialectics in Chinese and German cultures can be viewed as wisdom of handling conflict, clearly distinguishing conflict behaviors of Chinese and German managers. Thus, different dialectics in Chinese and German cultures are used to offer a further interpretation of preferred conflict styles,

There are two classic schools of thought that are reflective of Chinese dialecticism: Taoism and Confucianism. The thinking of the two dialecticism makes Chinese managers remain the preference on the adoption of AV and CO styles. Taoism provides a system of thinking about how understand the world works, one of its basic concepts is Non-Duality that is explained in details in *Tao Te Ching* written by Laozi. Laozi states: "有无相生，难易相成，长短相形，高下相盈，音声相和，前后相随 (And so, being and nonbeing produce each other; difficulty and ease complete each other; long and short contrast each other; high and low distinguish each another; sounds and tones harmonize each other; front and back accompany each other)". In reference to this statement, any conflict has two different sides that exist in active harmony, being mutually opposed and connected at the same time. This implies that people should learn to use Wu Wei(no action) strategy to handle them i.e. letting opposites go in natural way without intervention. This dialectical thinking has significant influence on how Chinese deal with conflict. When they are in conflict situation, they always like to say that "祸兮福所倚，福兮祸所伏(Good fortune follows upon disaster, disaster lurks within good fortune)", consequently they are unlikely to directly face with contradiction and handle them with ambiguous attitude other than direct attitude.

Confucianism provides a system of thinking about harmony. One of the most significant idealist philosophical ideas is the idea of Zhongyong, that is described in Confucius's books, *Doctrine of the Mean*: Zhongyong (unwobbling pivot). This idea drives people to take a neutral standpoint and always be in harmony without extreme viewpoints or emotions, which act as the only necessary condition for resolution of problem. The theoretical basis of Zhongyong is 天人合一 (harmony between nature and humanity) which attaches great importance to harmonious relationship. As Lun (2012) said, "the high value placed on harmony is probably the most representative characteristic of Chinese culture" (p. 467). The dialectical thinking of focusing harmony leads Chinese to be more willing to adopt AV and CO styles, since in Chinese culture the two styles are positively related with harmony. In conflict-handling, they seek for a solution with the main focus on harmonious relationship and often keep from going to extremes in conflict management. Under the influence of these dialectics deriving from Taoism and Confucianism, Chinese hold that any events or objects are necessary parts as the whole, which should be given tolerance or respect without aggressive intervention. This can be seen as one kind of oneness thinking pattern.

Germans hold another different thinking pattern. German dialectical thinking is affected fundamentally by Hegelianism. According to the pattern of Hegel's thinking, a series of phases during each process of development are composed of three parts: affirmation, negation, and the negation of negation (Hegel, 2008), thus Germans' treatment and attitude with conflict are linked with synthesis. Unlike Chinese, Germans have no absolute tolerant attitude towards contradiction, but an alienate spirit while handling conflict. First off, they affirm conflict, at next negate it and then negate their previous negations, which forms a circle of development by repeating in this way. As a result, they are able to achieve a new idea, i.e. a final resolution to preliminary conflict will be found. This dialectical thinking leads to their direct problem-solving attitude and preference of the IN style while handling conflict, in other words they would like to think about conflict with dividedness idea and to directly face apposite ideas and openly express differences of opinions.

In sum, harmony characterizes Chinese dialectical thinking, the key feature of German dialectical thinking is characterized as integrating. Thus, it is inevitable that Chinese and Germans show different preference for conflict-handling strategies and remain their favorite styles in intercultural context. For instance, in Chinese companies located in Germany, while facing with conflict occurring in superior-subordinate relationship, Chinese managers seldom criticize the performance of their subordinates directly in public, but often have a one-to-one talk or give indirect information or suggestions to motivate subordinates to enhance their performance. For Chinese, conflict is a natural part in organization and should be totally accepted by members, thus they have few tendencies to handle conflict in a polarized way. Unlike Chinese, Germans would like to seek a direct strategy for conflict resolution, thus usually criticize or judge the performance of their subordinates in workplaces. It can be observed that while managing conflict there exists a polar opposition between Chinese' pursuit of morality and Germans' pursuit of truth. In their different patterns of thinking, Chinese and Germans are bound to adopt different styles to handle conflict. Chinese, who lay high emphasis on harmonious relationship, are more likely to treat with conflict by catering to others or staying away from disagreement or contradiction; Germans, who would like to put conflict into separate parts and consider the parts in their dialectic in line with Hegelianism, are more likely to explain or discuss positive and negative aspects of conflict with the aim of seeking a solution in interaction process.

7. Conclusions

The main limitation of this study is that a clearer mapping of the relationship between Hofstede's cultural dimension and Rahim's conflict style should be desirable. Perhaps other theories such as Hall and Trompenaars' models would have allowed for another interpretation for such correlation in order to achieve a clearer correlation. This study employed, however, the dialectical thinking theory to help explain why Chinese and Germans have different tendency to use different strategies in conflict resolution, providing further clues to the correlation between cultural value orientation and conflict management styles from another perspective.

Overall, this study provides some new light on the correlation between cultural value orientation and conflict management styles in intercultural context. In existing literature, most studies used cultural dimensions within Hofstede's model, but they mostly examined how individualism dimension affects conflict styles. Compared with them, this study measured all six dimensions and based on sufficient empirical evidence figured out their relationship with conflict styles, providing a deep knowledge of how different cultures affect behaviors of handling-conflict in intercultural encounters. The findings of this study may contribute to the improvement of intercultural research, offering practical guidance for Chinese and German managers. Moreover, this study breaks new research ground because of its focus on Chinese companies in Germany, as in previous Sino-German studies most studies focus on German companies in China.

Although these findings of this study have shed some light on the influence of culture on conflict management, more research is needed in order to fully understand how people's cultural value orientation affect their strategies while handling conflict. As such, this study revealed that three dimensions make stronger influence on conflict strategies and that Chinese and German managers have been showing a similar orientation on some cultural dimensions. Future research may seek to test such findings, thus more new or wider insights could be obtained and more valuable practical and theoretical guidelines for managers and professionals in global business would also be acquired.

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Appendix A

Survey on Cross Cultural Management of Chinese Companies in Germany

I. Introductory Questions

—Do you work in Chinese company in Germany?

☐ yes ☐ no

—What industry does your company belong to?

☐ machine ☐ automobile ☐ electronic technology and equipment ☐ metal and mining
☐ food ☐ logistics ☐ service ☐ finance ☐ construction ☐ other

—What position do you have in your company?

☐ chairman/chief executive ☐ divisional manager ☐ department manager
☐ project director ☐ manager assistant ☐ operating clerk ☐ other

—How big is the German subsidiary company you work for?

☐ 1-9 employees ☐ 10-49 employees ☐ 50-249 employees ☐ more than 250 employees

—How long have you worked in the company? (Only count the working years in Germany)

☐ less than 3 years ☐ 3-6 years ☐ 7-10 years ☐ 11-15 years ☐ more than 15 years

—How do you like the Chinese company you work for?

☐ very like ☐ fairly like ☐ not very like ☐ not like at all

—How much do you know about German culture?

☐ strong knowledge ☐ moderate knowledge ☐ little knowledge ☐ no knowledge

—Do you wish to know Chinese/German culture?

☐ strong wish ☐ moderate wish ☐ few wish ☐ no wish ☐ not sure

II. Questions for Cultural Differences

—Please think of an ideal job, disregarding your present job, if you have one. In choosing an ideal job, how important would it be to you to ... (please circle one answer in each line across):

1= of utmost importance, 2= very important, 3= of moderate importance, 4= of little importance,

5= no importance

01.have sufficient time for your personal or home life	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
02.have a direct superior you can respect	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
03.get recognition for good performance	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
04.have security of employment	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
05.have pleasant people to work with	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
06.do work that is interesting	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
07.be consulted by your boss in decisions involving your work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
08.live in a desirable area	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
09.have a job respected by your family and friends	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
10.have chances for promotion	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

—In your private life, how important is each of the following to you (please circle one answer in each line across):

1= of utmost importance, 2= very important, 3= of moderate importance, 4= of little importance,

5= no importance

11.keeping time free for fun	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
12.moderation: having few desires	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
13.doing a service to a friend	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
14.thrift (not spending more than needed)	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
15.How often do you feel nervous or tense? <input type="checkbox"/> 1= always <input type="checkbox"/> 2= usually <input type="checkbox"/> 3= sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> 4= seldom <input type="checkbox"/> 5= never					
16.Are you a happy person ? <input type="checkbox"/> 1= always <input type="checkbox"/> 2= usually <input type="checkbox"/> 3= sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> 4= seldom <input type="checkbox"/> 5= never					
17.Do other people or circumstances ever prevent you from doing what you really want to? <input type="checkbox"/> 1= yes, always <input type="checkbox"/> 2= yes, usually <input type="checkbox"/> 3= sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> 4= no, seldom <input type="checkbox"/> 5= no, never					
18.All in all, how would you describe your state of health these days? <input type="checkbox"/> 1= very good <input type="checkbox"/> 2= good <input type="checkbox"/> 3= fair <input type="checkbox"/> 4= poor <input type="checkbox"/> 5= very poor					
19.How proud are you to be a citizen of your country? <input type="checkbox"/> 1= very proud <input type="checkbox"/> 2= fairly proud <input type="checkbox"/> 3= some what <input type="checkbox"/> 4= not very proud <input type="checkbox"/> 5= not proud at all					
20.How often, in your experience, are your subordinates afraid to contradict you? <input type="checkbox"/> 1= never <input type="checkbox"/> 2= seldom <input type="checkbox"/> 3= sometimes <input type="checkbox"/> 4= usually <input type="checkbox"/> 5= always					

—To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements? (please circle one answer in each line across):

1= strongly agree, 2= agree, 3= undecided, 4= disagree, 5= strongly disagree

21.One can be a good manager without having a precise answer to every question that a subordinate may raise about his or her work	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
22.Persistent efforts are the surest way to results	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
23.An organization structure in which certain subordinates have two bosses should be avoided at all cost	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
24.A company's or organization's rules should not be broken - not even when the employee thinks breaking the rule would be in the organization's best interest	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

III. Questions for Organizational Conflict—A

—Please check the appropriate box after each statement, to indicate how you handle your disagreement or conflict with your subordinates. Try to recall as many recent conflict situations as possible in ranking these statements. (please circle one answer in each line across)

1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= not sure, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree

01.I try to investigate an issue with my subordinates to find a solution acceptable to us	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
02.I generally try to satisfy the needs of my subordinates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
03.I attempt to avoid being "put on the spot" and try to keep my conflict with my subordinates to myself	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
04.I try to integrate my ideas with those of my subordinates to come up with a decision jointly	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
05.I try to work with my subordinates to find solutions to a problem which satisfy our expectations	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
06.I usually avoid open discussion of my differences with my subordinates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
07.I try to find a middle course to resolve an impasse	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
08.I use my influence to get my ideas accepted	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
09.I use my authority to make a decision in my favor	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
10.I usually accommodate the wishes of my subordinates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
11.I give in to the wishes of my subordinates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
12.I exchange accurate information with my subordinates to solve a problem together	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
13.I usually allow concessions to my subordinates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
14.I usually propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
15.I negotiate with my subordinates so that a compromise can be reached	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
16.I try to stay away from disagreement with my subordinates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
17.I avoid an encounter with my subordinates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
18.I use my expertise to make a decision in my favor	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
19.I often go along with the suggestions of my subordinates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
20.I use "give and take" so that a compromise can be made	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
21.I am generally firm in pursuing my side of the issue	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
22.I try to bring all our concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
23.I collaborate with my subordinates to come up with decisions acceptable to us	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
24.I try to satisfy the expectations of my subordinates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
25.I sometimes use my power to win a competitive situation	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
26.I try to keep my disagreement with my subordinates to myself in order to avoid hard feelings	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
27.I try to avoid unpleasant exchanges with my subordinates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5
28.I try to work with my subordinates for a proper understanding of a problem	<input type="checkbox"/> 1	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 5

IV. Demographic Questions

—What is your nationality?

☐ German ☐ Chinese ☐ other

—What is your gender?

☐ male ☐ female

—How old are you?

☐ younger than 20 ☐ 20-29 ☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49 ☐ 50-59 ☐ older than 60

—What is your last university or college degree?

☐ bachelor ☐ master ☐ doctorate ☐ other

If you are interested in my research and want to receive the results, I would like to send the results to you after completing the study of my dissertation.

(It is optional. If you want it, please leave your Email)

Email Address _____

After this survey, I will invite some respondents to make an interview.

(It is optional. If you would like to do this, please fill out the following blanks for our contact)

Name _____ Email Address _____ Telephone _____

Name of the Company You Work for _____

Address of the Company _____

Other Contact Ways or Some Requirements about Interview _____

Appendix B

Interview Guideline

Interviewee's experience

- have you worked in local companies of Germany previously? compared with the current company where you work, describe some possible differences on methods or attitudes of treating conflict.
 - could you please give me an example of a typical conflict case?
 - does difference exist in handling conflict with Chinese and with German subordinates? If yes, describe a case to demonstrate the difference.
 - how often do conflicts take place between you and your subordinates?
 - facing with various conflicts every day, how you handle them in limited time?
-

Interviewee's reactions to relevant experience

- how do you think of the role of working relationship in handling conflict?
 - if managers place much attention to personal authority or leadership in workplace, what consequences will take place?
 - while handling a conflict between you and your subordinate, what do you think of the priority of the involving parties' interests or needs?
 - what do you think of the role of regulations in conflict management?
 - what element is the key to manage a conflict in workplace?
 - what do you think of giving up personal immediate gratifications for conflict management?
-

Interviewee's thinking on relationship between culture and conflict management

- what do you think of the role of national culture in business management, especially its role in management of Chinese companies in Germany?
- under the influence of localization, many companies argue that there exists no problem concerning intercultural communication and management in companies. What do you think of it?
- what do you think of the role of conflict in business management and development of companies?
- apart from the influence of organizational culture, how do your national cultural traits influence the way of handling conflict?
- what cultural trait is typical element of influencing conflict?

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