**Cultural Dimension: Individualism and Collectivism**

**Individualism-Collectivism** describes the degree to which a culture relies on and has allegiance to the self or the group.

**Individualism**

In individualistic countries such as the USA, UK, France and Australia, people tend to see themselves as unique individuals who must take care of themselves. Behaviour is seen as arising from personality traits and internal dispositions. Ties between individuals are loose and voluntary. Personal goals are pursued and people compete with each other rather than cooperate. Typical values are freedom, personal challenge and personal time.

**Collectivism**

In collectivist countries such as China, Peru, Venezuela and Pakistan, the individual is tied to social groups such as families throughout their lifetime. This extended group social group provides safety in return for loyalty. The self is defined by long-standing relationships and obligations. Individual behavior is strongly guided by social roles and group membership. There is more emphasis on achieving group harmony than individual achievement. Individual autonomy and self expression are not encouraged.

Evidence

**Cousins** (1989)

Compared 159 Japanese students from Tokyo with 111 North American students from Michigan.Each student completed the ‘Twenty statement test’ by providing 20 answers to the question who am I?

Japanese students were more likely to refer to social roles (e.g. ‘I am a brother’) and membership to social groups (e.g. ‘I am in the gymnastics club’). This demonstrates the importance of interconnections and relationships in collectivist cultures.

American students used personal or psychological attributes (e.g. ‘I am intelligent’ or ‘I am musical’). This demonstrates how the individualistic self is largely seen as independent.

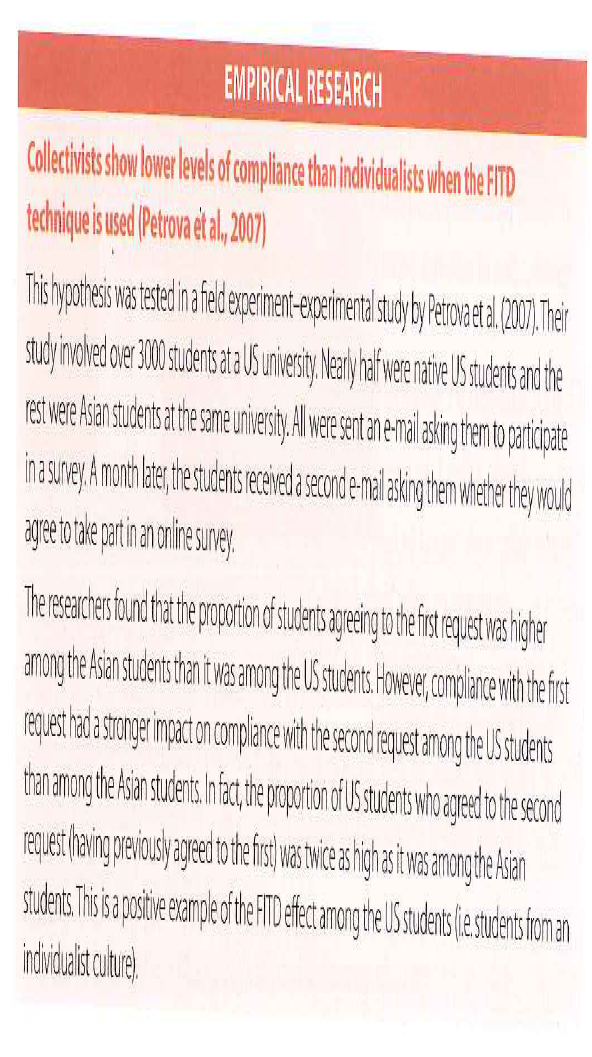
**Blurred lines**

The individualistic/collectivist distinction is not clear-cut. There is diversity within the same culture. There are many individuals with collectivist values in places like the USA and substantial numbers of individualists in Japan.

**Individualism/collectivism and compliance**

Research has shown that in collectivist cultures, people are less likely than those in individualistic cultures to behave consistently with their personal choices and earlier commitments (**Heine and Lehman** 1997)

***Explain the reasoning that leads from Cialdini’s consistency based explanation of the FITD technique to the prediction that collectivists will be less likely to show the FITD effect.***

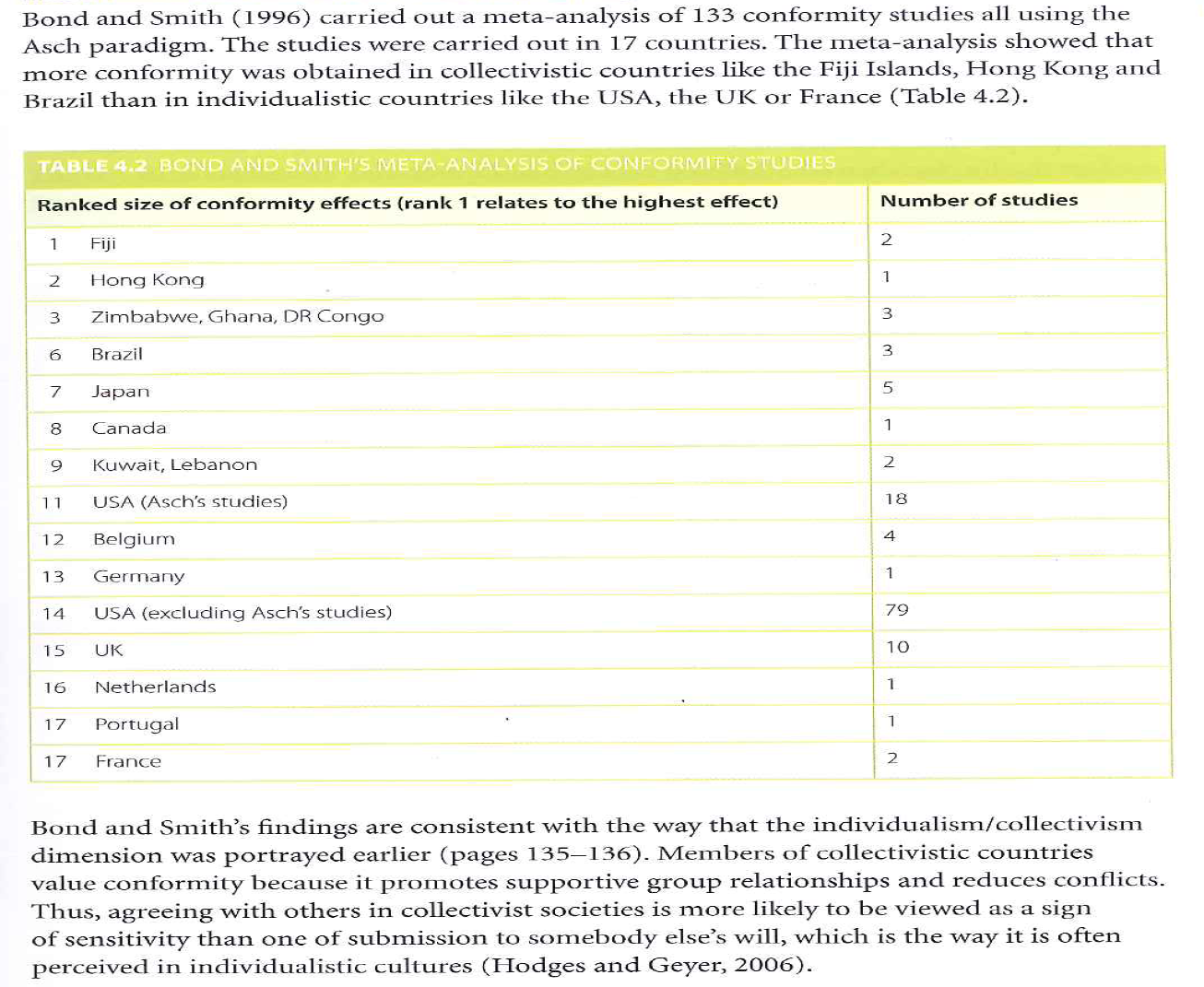


***What are the possible methodological issues?***

**Explanation of findings:**

**Cialdini et al (1999)** suggest that individuals from collectivist countries may be more sensitive to compliance histories of other members of their groups rather than their own compliance history. In collectivist cultures, one would perhaps be more successful in gaining compliance from participants if they know that others have complied that belong to the same group as them.

**Individualism/collectivism and conformity**



***What methodological and other problems may reduce the validity of cross-cultural studies of the type meta-analysed by Smith and Bond (1996). What additional critical points are possible from an inspection of the above table?***

It should not be concluded that members of collectivist societies do not always conform to group views. The level of conformity they show depends on the exact nature of the group. This, collectivist may be more likely to conform to members of a group they are tied to (e.g. family, coworkers).

**William and Sogon** (1984) found significantly higher levels of conformity among Japanese groups who already knew one another than among groups lacking pre-acquaintance.

**Questions:**

***What do you think determines whether a culture is individualistic or collectivistic? Try to come up with three main points (See what determines individual vs collectivist.pdf)***

***What tips do you have for people working or doing business in a country with a higher individualism score than themselves?***

***What tips do you have for people working or doing business in a country with a lower individualism score than themselves? (See Business tips.doc)***

***How might the role of marriage be different in an individualistic culture and in a collectivist culture?***

***‘Saving face’ means to maintain one’s status and not being embarrassed by failure. How could the need to not lose face affect an individual’s behavior?***

***Does saving face ever appear in western culture?***