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Abstract

The global marketplace increasingly demands that cultural diverse people work together but studies have documented important barriers to inter-cultural collaboration. Researchers have argued the need to study inter-cultural interaction directly in order to develop knowledge that diverse people can use to overcome obstacles and work productively. This study proposes that collectivist values are a basis upon which Korean and Chinese colleagues working in joint ventures in China develop quality collegial relationships and thereby work productively together. Chinese employees completed measures of collectivist and individualist values in their relationships with a Korean colleague. The Korean partners completed measures of collegial relationships, productivity, and confidence of future collaboration. In addition to supporting that collectivist values can promote quality collegial relationships, findings support the theorizing that quality relationships facilitate productive collaborative work. Results suggest that collectivist values can be an important basis for Korean and Chinese employees to develop a common platform where they work together productively across cultural boundaries.

Organizations are developing subsidiaries and joint ventures in foreign countries to capture opportunities to improve quality and customer service as well as to lower costs (Buvik & Gronhaug, 2000; Charman, 2000; Davies & Ko, 2006; Hitt, Harrison & Ireland, 2001; Lane, Salk & Lyles, 2001). But foreign employees must be able to work with local employees to realize these advantages. Indeed, researchers have argued that productive relationships and interactions are critical for effective organizational work (Elicker, Levy, and Hall, 2006; Gersick, Bartunek, and Dutton, 2000; Li & Scullion, 2006; Toh & DeNisi, 2004; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, and Chen, 2005). However,

colleagues, especially when they come from diverse cultures, often find it difficult to collaborate (Earley, & Gibson, 2002; Earley & Mosakowski, 2000). Cross-cultural researchers have recently called for developing frameworks that can help diverse people overcome obstacles and work together productively (Bond, 2003; Leung, 2006; Smith, 2003).

This paper examines how Chinese employees can work with their Korean colleagues productively in joint ventures in China. China is Korea's largest trading partner and the source of much of its international trade surplus. It proposes that when they develop a collectivist team culture compare to an individualistic one Chinese and Korean teammates strengthen their collegial relationships; these quality collegial relationships in turn help them work productively and develop confidence in future collaboration.

Relationships for Cross-Cultural Teamwork

Working across diverse cultures has long been thought to present a number of barriers and difficulties (Adair, Okumura & Brett, 2001; Rao and Hashimoto, 1996; Ratiu, 1983). Research is needed to understand and develop cross-cultural communication, especially as organizations are increasingly relying upon multicultural teams to innovate and to solve a wide range of problems (Wheelan, Buzalo & Tsumura, 1998). People from diverse cultures are advised to become more aware of their own perspectives in how they communicate. Then they can learn to alter their behavior and develop trusting relationships with each other (Matveev; Nelson, 2004; Triandis and Singelis, 1998; Lam, 2000).

Although many researchers have investigated the barriers for cross-cultural communication (e.g. Kealey and Protheroe, 1996; Redmond and Bunyi, 1991; Samovar and Porter, 1991), an understanding of how to facilitate cross-cultural interaction is insufficiently developed. There is a need to develop knowledge that helps diverse individuals communicate and interact productively (Hofner Saphiere, 1996; Wiseman and Shuter, 1994).

Kimmel (2000) proposed that diverse people should together develop a common foundation, called a "micro-culture", to serve as the basis for productive inter-cultural communication and interaction. Similarly, Leung (2006) has suggested that a common, mutually acceptable frame of reference, labeled "cultural tuning", can facilitate effective inter-cultural interaction. Individuals consider their own norms, motives, and cognitive processes while also developing shared, mutually acceptable understanding of how they can

work together. They should also reflect and learn from each other to refine their common platform.

Cross-cultural researchers have argued that studying intercultural interactions directly would develop relevant knowledge for diverse people to form a common platform for collaboration (Bond, 2003; Smith, 2003). Smith (Leung, Smith, Wang & Sun, 1996; Smith, Kruzela & Groblewska, 2000) for example has investigated how diverse managers and employees manage "events" in order to identify mutually acceptable ways to deal with barriers.

This study proposes that high quality relationships can very much contribute to productive interaction between Korean and Chinese colleagues as they are asked to work together in joint ventures in China. Asian people are thought to be especially concerned about interpersonal relationships (Xin, and Pearce, 1994; Child and Markoczy, 1993; Pan and Zhang, 2004). Relationships are widely recognized as very much affecting business in Asia and developing quality relationships is expected to facilitate organizational work (Hui, Law, and Chen, 1999).

Researchers in the West have also begun to recognize the value of relationships for organizational work (Chen & Chen, 2004; Elicker, et al, 2006; Gersick, et al, 2000). Studies have shown that high quality relationships can foster trust and reduce prejudice (Cook, 1984, 1978; Stephen, 1986). Recent research has emphasized that quality relationships between managers and employees are key to effective leadership (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and result in commitment, where employees perform useful tasks (Boyd and Taylor, 1998; Deluga, 1998; Howell and Hall-Merenda, 1999).

With high quality relationships, members combine and channel their members' tacit as well as explicit knowledge to promote innovation (Leonard & Sensiper, 1998; Nonaka, 1990; Simonin, 1999). These relationships are an alternative to hierarchy with its heavy investments in contracting and monitoring (Ouchi, 1981). Many employees, especially professionals who traditionally distrust hierarchy, may welcome teamwork as a more acceptable means of social control. High quality team relationships are a complex, embedded competence that can be difficult to replicate (Barney, 1991, 2001; Wernerfelt, 1994).

Based on the above reasoning, it is hypothesized that:

H1: To the extent that Chinese and Korean colleagues develop high quality relationships, they work productively and become confident that they will work effectively in the future.

The next section explores how these quality relationships can be established. It argues that Koreans and Chinese can draw upon their own

cultures, both of which emphasize collectivist values. When they are able to develop collectivist in contrast to individualistic values in their relationship, they develop quality collegial relationships that in turn help them collaborate and become confident in future teamwork.

Collectivist and Individualist Values

Collectivist and individualist values consist of a set of related dimensions. Collectivist compared to individualistic values emphasize a collective rather than personal self, that in-group goals are important rather than personal goals, and that social norms rather than individual attitudes should determine behavior (Kashima, Siegel, Tanaka, & Kashima, 1992; Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994; Markus and Kitayama, 1991; Mills & Clark, 1982; Triandis, 1995; Yamagushi, 1994).

In addition to playing a role in cross-cultural psychology, international management, politics, and religion, these values have been fundamental in theorizing and research on differences between organizing in the West and the East (Adelman & Morris, l967; Bakan, l966; Hofstede, 1993; Inkeles & Smith, l974; Kim, Triandis, Kagitcibasi, Choi, & Yoon, 1994; Triandis, 1995; Taylor, 1989). Theorists argue that these values affect leadership, conflict management, and relationship development. But more empirical evidence is needed to document the processes by which these values have far reaching effects on people and their interaction (Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002).

However, Chinese and other collectivist people do not necessarily have or even value close relationships. Many observers of Chinese social relations (e.g., Butterfield 1983) have noted that in comparison with Westerners, Chinese have a much stronger tendency to divide people into categories and treat them accordingly. Indeed, they may see Koreans and other non-Chinese as members of an out-group who are then walled into a different social network (Hui and Graen, 1997). However, Chinese and Koreans can both develop collectivist relationships and, if they do, they may then strengthen their relationships.

Collectivist Values as a Common Framework

Although cultural values have been used to predict behavior, it is understood that cultural values are continually in flux and manifested in various ways (Morris, Williams, Leung, Larrick, Mendoza, Bhatnagar, Li,

Kondo, Luo, & Hu, 1998; Yamagishi, Kikuchi, & Kosugi, 1999; Yamagishi & Yamagishi, 1994). Research is needed to understand how the situation and the expression of values alter their effects.

Research on collectivist and individualistic values has traditionally been conducted at the individual and cultural levels. Studies have assessed how individual differences in values predict behavior and personality and the role of cultural differences on behavior and outcomes (Wheeler, Reis, & Bond, 1989). Values, although not often collectivist and individualistic ones, have been studied at the group and organizational level. Corporate culture is thought to have major effects on the dynamics and success of organizations (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Pfeffer, 1994). This study uses collectivist and individualist values at the interpersonal level to develop a specific understanding of their effect on collaborative dynamics and outcomes (Tjosvold, Law & Sun, 2003). Values measured at the interpersonal level may well have a stronger, more demonstrable relationship to collaborative productivity than values measured at the individual or cultural level.

Rather than the traditional cross-cultural research of comparing individuals or samples from different cultures regarding the strength and effects of values (Leung, 1997), we explore the role of collectivist and individualist values in Korean ventures in China. The present research aims to develop our understanding of the effects of collectivist and individualistic values on collegial dynamics and outcomes.

Hypotheses

Based on the above reasoning, it is hypothesized that:

H2: To the extent that Koreans and Chinese colleagues have collectivist values, they develop high quality relationships.

H3: To the extent that Koreans and Chinese colleagues have individualistic values, they develop low quality relationships.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The Study's Model

Although research has focused on differences between the West and the East, it is useful to test theories developed in one culture to another (Morris, Leung, Ames, & Lickel, 1999). Indeed, the collectivist-individualist framework is thought to be useful to apply to diverse cultures. There is a need

to develop a more specific understanding of the processes by which collectivist and individualist values affect interaction and productivity (Oyserman, et al, 2002). This study proposes that collectivist and individualistic values have significant effects to the extent that they alter the quality of the relationship between diverse people. Resulting strong relationships from collectivist values help diverse people exchange resources and ideas that result in productive work and confidence in future collaboration. This study tests this model in Korean joint ventures in China.

Method

Participants

Respondents from Sino-Korean ventures, located in different provinces in Chinese Mainland, were invited to participate in the study. Each respondent had worked with their co-worker for at least six months so that they could report on an on-going relationship. Confidential survey was considered a viable approach to collecting data on sensitive issues (Chen & Tjosvold, 2006). To reduce potential concern for being involved in evaluating others and being evaluated, the researchers explained to the participants that their responses would be held totally confidential and be used for research only. To assure respondents that their responses would not be revealed to others, researchers collected completed questionnaires directly from the participants.

We distributed 200 pairs of the questionnaire and received 143 copies completed by Chinese and 110 copies completed by Koreans, among which were 74 valid dyadic data. We first distributed the questionnaires to Korean employees, asking them to identify a Chinese colleague that they often work with. They identified the Chinese partner and then responded to the questions based on their experience with this partner. We then asked the Chinese partner to response to the questionnaire according to their experience with that Korean partner.

Measures

Collectivism and Individualism

Scales for collectivist and individualist values were taken from Triandis and Gelfand (1998). The six collectivism items measured the emphasis on in-group solidarity and equality. A sample item for the collectivism scale is "The

well-being of each of us is important to this team". (Appendix A has the items for all scales.) Participants were asked to rate on a 7-point scale (1=strongly agree, 7=strongly disagree) their degree of agreement to the seven statements. The coefficient alpha for collectivism is .73.

The seven individualism items measured the emphasis on the self and equality. A sample item for this scale is "This team would rather depend on ourselves than on each other." Participants were asked to rate on a 7-point scale (1=strongly agree, 7=strongly disagree) their degree of agreement to the seven statements. Both scales demonstrated acceptable reliability. The coefficient alpha is .92 for individualism.

Co-worker Relationships

The study used a 5-item co-worker relationship developed from previous studies (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Law, et al, 2000). The items measure how employees build co-worker relationship. A sample item is "This colleague and I are inclined to pool our available resources to solve the each other's problems". Participants were required to rate on 7-point scales (from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) their level of agreement to the items. The coefficient alpha of the scale was .84.

Productive Team Measures

Productivity was measured by a 5-item scale developed from Van der Vegt, Emans, and Van de Vliert, (2000). A sample item is "I achieve a high standard of task accomplishment." Participants were required to rate on 7-point scales (from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) their level of agreement to the items. Coefficient alpha for this 5-item team productivity scale is .87.

The confidence of future collaboration asked the extent to which the partners were willing to work together in the future (Tjosvold and Andrews, 1991; Chen and Tjosvold, 2005). A sample item is "I hope I can work with this colleague in the future". Respondents were required to rate on a 7-point scale (from 1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree) their level of agreement to the statements. Coefficient alpha for this 4-item scale is .78.

Questionnaire Translation and Pilot Test

Questionnaires originally written in English were translated into Chinese for Chinese employees, and were translated into Korean for Korean employees then checked by being translated back into English to ensure conceptual consistency. The translation and back-translation were undertaken by translators working in a Sino-Korean company, thus sufficiently educated in three languages as recommended by Bracken and Barona (1991).

The first version of the questionnaire was pre-tested to make sure that every question was stated appropriately so that respondents could clearly understand every concept and question. The pilot-test was conducted among 10 employees (5 Chinese and 5 Korean) in a multinational company in Qingdao. Based on their feedback, a few questions were rephrased for clarity, then, the final version was ready for data collection. All the items for the seven scales are shown in the appendix.

Results

Correlational analyses were used as an initial test of the hypotheses. Structural equation analyses more directly tested the model postulating quality relationships mediate between collectivist and individualist values and outcomes.

Correlational Findings

Zero-order correlations provide an initial examination and support of the hypotheses linking collectivist and individualistic values, quality collegial relationships, and outcomes (Table 1). Consistent with H1, Korean employees who reported a high collegial relationship also rated their productivity as high ($r= .33$, $p<.01$), and looked forward to future collaboration with their Chinese collegial ($r= .25$, $p<.05$). Results support H2 and H3 in that Korean employees indicated that they and their Chinese colleagues had a quality collegial relationship to the extent that their Chinese colleagues reported collectivist interpersonal values ($r= .28$, $p< .01$). In contrast, Korean employees indicated that they and their Chinese colleagues had a low quality collegial relationship to the extent their Chinese colleagues reported individualist values, but this correlation just tended to be statistically significantly ($r=-.21$, $p<.10$).

Insert Table 1 about here.

Structural Equation Results

Structural equation analyses through AMOS 5.0 were used to explore the relationship between values, collegial relationships, and outcomes. Table 2 shows the path estimates for the model tested in this study. Results support Hypothesis 1 that with high quality collegial relationships they work productively and become confident that they will work productively in the future. Collegial relationship had a significant effect on productivity (ß=.26, p<.01) and confidence in future collaboration (ß=.20 p<.05).

Results indicate that collectivist values (ß=.42, p<.01) have significant positive effects on collegial relationships (ß=.42, p<.01) between Korean and Chinese teammates whereas individualist values have significant negative effects on collegial relationships (ß=.19, p<.05) between Korean and Chinese teammates. These results support Hypothesis 2 and 3.

Insert Table 2 about here.

The hypothesized Mediating Effects model was compared with the Direct Effects model. The ?2, NFI and CFI of the Mediating Effects model was ?2 =20.01(d.f.=6), .98 and .99. These fits are not significantly superior to those of the Direct Effects model, ?2 =34.33 (d.f.=6), .97 and .97. But none of path coefficient was significant. These results were interpreted as indicating that collegial relationships mediate the relation between values and outcomes.

Discussion

Results suggest that collectivist values can be a basis for Korean and Chinese partners to develop a common platform for collaboration, called a "micro-culture" by Kimmel (2000) and "cultural tuning" by Leung (2006). To the extent that collectivist values become part of the relationship's culture, then Korean and Chinese colleagues were able to overcome barriers to intercultural work, develop quality relationships, and collaborate productively. However, when they emphasize individualistic values, then Koreans and Chinese colleagues may experience significant difficulties that frustrate relationships and productivity.

Findings extend our understanding of the role of collectivist and individualist values on group dynamics and suggest the processes by which

they have their effects. The more relationships had collectivist values the more colleagues believed that they had quality relationships. Individualist values can have quite contrasting effects by reducing quality relationships and thereby affecting productivity.

To the extent Korean and Chinese colleagues believed that they had quality relationships, they were more productive and more confident in future collaborative work. These findings support recent theorizing on the value of strong interpersonal relationships for organizational work. Theorists and researchers in the West have joined those from Asia to argue that quality relationships are a foundation for effective organizations (Elicker, et al, 2006; Gersick, et al, 2000; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995. Indeed, Barney (1991, 2001) and others have argued that quality relationships are a vital competitive advantage; they are not only very valuable but they are rare and difficult to develop.

Results also address the general discussion on the effects of collectivist and individualistic values on productivity and modernization. Some theorists have argued that collectivist values, while maybe valuable for interpersonal relationships, are more suited for an agrarian economy whereas individualistic values foster more openness, conflict, and innovation necessary for organizations to compete in the emerging global marketplace (Adelman & Morris, 1967; Inkeles & Smith, 1974). Indirect evidence can be brought to bear in that more developed countries typically are high on individualistic values but low on collectivist ones. Indeed, individualistic values seem to become more dominant as economies develop (Ralston, Egri, Stewart, Terpstra, & Kaicheng, 1999).

Yet researchers have argued that quality relationships are critical, especially for organizations to transfer knowledge, innovate and in other ways compete in the demanding, global marketplace (Barney, 1991, 2001 Gersick, et al, 2000). It may be that economic development both increases the demands that diverse people work together to produce for this marketplace and strengthens individualistic values and thereby the difficulties for partners to collaborate. Future research is needed to explore the speculation that economic development promotes individualist values, thereby undermining the quality relationships colleagues need to work productively in developed economies with their intensely competitive marketplaces.

Limitations

The sample and operations restrict the implications of this study. The data are self-reported and subject to biases, and may not accurately describe

the relationships, although recent research suggests that self-reported data are not as limited as commonly expected (Spector, 1992). These data are also correlational and do not provide direct evidence of causal links between values, quality relationships, and outcomes. However, Chinese colleagues completed measures of values, and their Korean partners completed measures of productivity and confidence for future collaboration. This procedure should reduce the possibilities of same source method as an alternative explanation of the results.

Spector and Brannick (1995) have argued that the most effective way to overcome recall and other methodological weaknesses is to test ideas with different methods. It would be desirable to provide direct experimental verification of the role of collectivist and individualist values on quality relationships and productivity in diverse settings.

Practical Implications

In addition to developing theoretical understanding, the hypotheses, if they can continue to be supported, have important practical implications for structuring diverse teams, especially in collectivist cultures. Results indicate that collectivist values can be very useful for developing work relationships that in turn help diverse people work together productivity. Managers can help their teams create a team vision and mission that incorporate collectivist values (Tjosvold, 1989). To support these values, colleagues together develop shared goals and rewards, team identity and vision, and social norms that emphasize joint action and success (Kim, et al, 1994; Triandis, 1995; Yamagishi, 1994. In this way teams can develop a micro-culture of collectivist values that support their collaboration.

This study contributes to the emerging effort to develop the empirical base for how diverse colleagues can develop a common platform to help them cope with the challenges of working across cultural boundaries. Korean and Chinese colleagues, to the extent that they drew upon collectivist values and established them in their relationship, had quality collegial relationships that promoted productivity and confidence. However, individualistic values are also a possibility and these values were found to hinder cross-cultural relationships development and collaboration. This study's results coupled with previous research suggest that collectivist values and quality collegial relationships provide a basis for productive, inter-cultural work in China and perhaps other countries as well.

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Figure 1
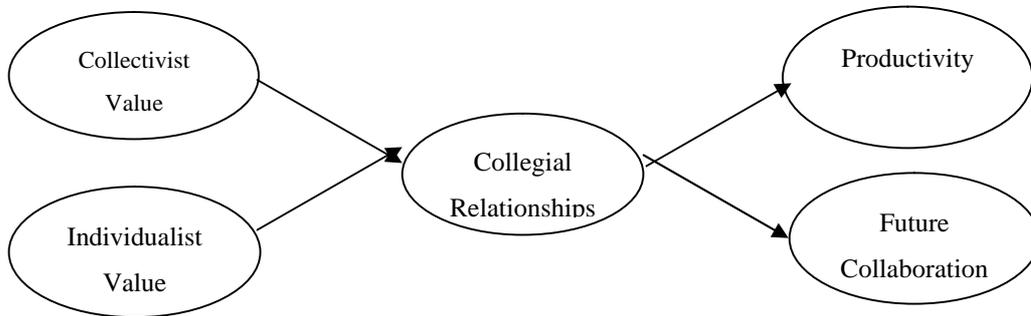
Table 1 Correlations among Variables

	Mean	Std. Deviation	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Collectivist	5.16	.91	(.73)				
(2) Individualist	4.84	1.61	.12	(.92)			
(3) Collegial Relationships	4.96	1.24	.28*	-.21 +	(.83)		
(4) Productivity	5.21	.99	.22+	.11	.33**	(.87)	
(5) Future Collaboration	5.82	1.00	.17	.21+	.25*	.43**	(.78)

Note: [a] Numbers in the diagonal are coefficient alpha estimates. * $p<.05$; ** $p<.01$. + $p<.10$

Table 2 Parameter Estimates for Structural Model

	Hypothesized Model			Direct Effects Model	
Path from	**Path to**	**Path Coefficient**	**Path from**	**Path to**	**Path Coefficient**
Collectivist	Collegial Relationships	.42**	Collectivist	Productivity	.23
Individualist	Collegial Relationships	-.19*	Collectivist	Future Collaboration	.16
Collegial Relationships	Productivity	.26**	Individualist	Productivity	.05
Collegial Relationships	Future Collaboration	.20*	Individualist	Future Collaboration	.12
Model χ^2	20.01		Model χ^2	34.33	
d.f.	6		d.f.	6	
NFI	.98		NFI	.97	
CFI	.99		CFI	.97	

Note: **$p<.01$; *$p<.05$

Appendix A

Measures

Collectivism

Our team's happiness depends very much on the happiness of our colleagues.

My colleagues and I like sharing little things with each other.

The well-being of each of us is very important to this team.

If I were in financial difficulty, my colleagues would help within His/her means.

If I get a prize, my colleagues would feel proud.

To this team, pleasure is spending time with each other.

Individualism

My colleagues and I like to do their own thing.

Being unique individuals is important to my colleagues and me.

My colleagues and I would rather depend on ourselves than on each other.

My colleagues and I rely on ourselves most of the time, rarely on each other.

Our personal identity independent from each other is very important to us.

My colleagues and I own personal identity is very important to us.

My colleagues and I enjoy being unique and different from each other.

Co-worker Relationships

This colleague and I care about each other's work problems and needs.

This colleague and I recognize each other's colleague's potential.

This colleague and I are inclined to pool our available resources to solve each other's problems.

This colleague and I are confident in each other's capability.

This colleague and I are satisfied with each other's work.

Productivity

I have a high work performance.

I accomplish tasks quickly and efficiently.

I set a high standard of task accomplishment.

I achieve a high standard of task accomplishment.

I always beat our team targets.

Future collaboration

I hope I can work with this colleague in the future.

I hope this colleague can help me to recognize and correct my mistakes in the future.

I will try to seek opportunity to work with this colleague in the future.

I would be very pleased if this colleague continued to be in my team in the future.