

# Adaptations of a Global Organizational Culture in China, the UK and the US: Does Social Culture Make Any Difference?

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## ABSTRACT

This research examined the extent to which organizational subunits of a single organization adapted the organizational culture to different social cultural contexts, and the implications of such adaptations on individual level outcomes. Patterns of observed organizational culture significantly differed in Hong Kong compared to the US and the UK, although most differences were in degree rather than in kind. Respondents indicated no significant differences in job satisfaction, role clarity, stress, turnover intentions or motivation although respondents from Hong Kong reported significantly higher role conflict. Individuals from the UK indicated a higher turnover intention.

**Key words:** organizational Culture, Social Culture, Turnover.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Industrial and organizational psychology has become increasingly interested in the effect of social cultural contexts on work attitudes and behaviours. This follows, in part, from the rapid growth of international management associated with an increasingly complex and global business environment (Adler, 1997; Robert, Probst, Martocchio, Drasgow & Lawler, 2000). Central to the challenges organizations that operate across national boundaries face is the challenge of finding a balance between standardization across these borders and responsiveness to circumstances that are unique within borders. This is especially true for managing organizational culture. For example, in the past number of years, more and more multinational enterprises (MNEs) headquartered in western countries have moved part of their operations to China. Managing organizational cultures across such disparate social cultural contexts poses unique challenges. The Chinese social cultural context, for example, places higher value on group orientation than western cultures (Hofstede, 2001; House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman & Gupta, 2004). Imbedded relationships are important in the Chinese concepts, with supervisor-subordinate relationships characterized by loyalty (Cheng, Jiang & Riley, 2003) and the uniquely Chinese cultural construct of *guanxi* (Chow & Ng, 2004). This research addresses the challenges of managing organizational culture in multiple social cultural contexts by examining the organizational culture of three industrial sites of one large, multinational organization: Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and the United States, assessing which aspects of organizational culture

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are similar and which differ across these contexts. In order to understand the degree to which these differences may be adaptive, individual level outcomes related to organizational culture in each of these locations are also examined.

Systems theory suggests that the environment within which organizations operate is an important agent in determining intra-organizational phenomenon (e.g., Tracy & Swanson, 1993; Vancouver, 1996; Kwantes, 2003). From this perspective, organizational culture can be seen as a means by which organizations integrate internal processes in order to survive in the external environment. Thus, the larger context within which an organization exists has a large effect on the specific organizational culture itself. One of the most pervasive contextual effects is arguably social culture, as it plays a large role in employee attitudes, beliefs (Leung, et al., 2002), behaviors (Triandis, 1994), and values (Schwartz, 1994; Hofstede, 2001).

Culture at the social level has been variously termed national culture and social culture. The reference to a national culture results from a focus on shared experiences, meanings, and beliefs that may be found within the borders of a single nation, or nation state. The shared experiences, symbols and artefacts of those who share membership in a political entity or nation, are considered to be the basis on which one culture can differ from another. Social culture, on the other hand, refers to the shared experiences, meanings and beliefs without referring to politically defined geographic boundaries as the basis for culture membership and is more heavily dependent on the extent to which social interactions occur. We have opted to use the term “social culture” in this paper in recognition of the fact that, while some common characteristics may exist in any given national context, individuals within that context may endorse characteristic values and beliefs to varying extents.

A recent approach to understanding the interaction between social and organizational culture is to view it as either convergent or divergent. The convergent approach to understanding the interaction suggests that, since all organizations have similar functions that must be managed, the management of these functions transcends social culture, as industrialized societies converge in their approaches to managing common industrial functions (McGaughey & De Cieri, 1999). The divergent approach, on the other hand, highlights the fact that organizations exist within a social milieu, and that factors unique to an organization’s context are likely to have a strong effect on the organization and its members. As McGaughey and De Cieri note, “the divergence hypothesis postulates that the form and content of functional specialization that develops with growth would vary according to [social] culture” (p. 237). Kelley, MacNab and Worthely (2006) suggest that a third approach, crossvergence, may also occur. This approach results in a new value set being formed that is different from both the values of the social culture and values from the organization related to “ideology, policy and trends” (p. 70).

Consistent with a convergent approach, developing and maintaining a global corporate culture is important in establishing the identity of an organization, and there must be some consistency across all locations, even across national boundaries, for this identity to exist. Yet, and consistent with a divergent approach,

employees bring many aspects of social culture to the workplace as an integral part of who they are, even if they work for a foreign-based company. Therefore, any organizational culture must also be sensitive to both the greater context within which it operates and the needs of its employees from that context. Finding the right balance, or blend, of convergent and divergent approaches to organizational culture within all units of a multinational enterprise can be a challenge.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

### 2.1 Organizational Culture

Organizational culture has been defined as relatively stable beliefs, attitudes and values that are held in common among organizational members (Williams, Dobson & Walters, 1993), shared normative beliefs and shared behavioral expectations (Cooke & Szumal, 1993; 2000), or a particular set of values, beliefs and behaviors that characterize the way individuals and groups interact in progressing toward a common goal (Eldridge & Crombie, 1974). Organizational culture has been researched qualitatively (e.g., Martin, 2002; Rosen, 1991; Sackmann, 1991) as well as quantitatively (e.g., O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991; Ashkanasy, Broadfoot & Falkus, 2000) and plays a central role in understanding organizational behavior.

The importance of organizational culture, and therefore the importance of managing it in order to balance global and local effects appropriately, rests in the fact that organizational culture has been linked with leadership and employee effectiveness (Kwantes & Boglarsky, 2007), productivity (Dolan & Garcia, 2002; Denision & Mishra, 1995; Schneider, 1995; Marcoulides & Heck, 1993), and satisfaction (Fey & Denison, 2003).

Most discussions and definitions of organizational culture implicitly refer to it as basically a group-level phenomenon. Yet, at the individual level, organizational culture is also reflective of individual sense-making efforts of employees, as it reflects how individuals within a given culture try to make sense of how the organization operates (Harris, 1994) and may be referred to as perceived organizational culture. It is at this individual level of the sense-making process that social cultures exert a strong effect on organizational culture, as individuals bring their learned assumptions to judgements and decisions in the work environment (Aycan et al., 2000). Recent emphasis on cross-cultural and cross-national research has resulted in numerous findings regarding ways in which social cultures differ and the impact these differences in national contexts have on organizational culture (Kwantes & Boglarsky, 2006) and specific aspects of work-related attitudes and behaviors (e.g. Chen & Francesco, 2000; Vandenberghe, 1999). Additionally, the interaction between social and organizational cultures has been shown to affect the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of employees (Kwantes & Boglarsky, 2003; Kwantes, Arbour & Boglarsky, 2007). This may be seen most clearly during times of change. Herguner and Reeves (2000), for example, conducted a longitudinal

study of organizational culture change in a higher education context in Turkey. From data gathered through surveys and interviews the authors concluded that, in their sample, the influence of social culture exerted a strong effect on how organizational members responded to change. The Total Quality Management initiatives made by the organization in order to effect an organizational culture change resulted in an organizational culture that was not always consistent with social culture characteristics. They noted that the TQM effort enhanced individualism and reduced power distance in the organization, relative to the cultural norms of the Turkish nations. Furthermore, when the initiative concluded management reverted to a management style that was more in tune with social cultural norms.

Other research highlights the interactive effect of social and organizational cultures on organizational initiatives and practices. Manwa and Black (2002) examined organizational culture in Zimbabwean banks, and suggested that organizational and social cultures interact to restrict female access to the upper levels of management in Zimbabwe. Khilji (2003) compared human resources management practices and policies at both local and multinational organizations in Pakistan, and found that both the parent companies of multinational firms and the local culture of Pakistan had an influence on the organization. In these multinational organizations, even though some policies remained identical to those of the parent companies, the actual practices differed due to cultural norm differences between the parent company's culture and the local culture. Kwantes and Boglarsky (2007) examined the extent to which national culture context affected employee perceptions of the link between organizational culture and both leadership and personal effectiveness in six countries. They found that organizational cultures that promote individual employee satisfaction and fulfillment were viewed as most strongly linked to effectiveness in all national contexts, but that perceptions of the relationship between effectiveness and other aspects of organizational culture were affected by the context within which employees worked. American employees, for example, viewed organizational cultures that support quick and decisive action as more supportive of leadership effectiveness than did employees from the other countries.

## 2.2 Multinational Enterprises

Hennart (2001) defines multinational enterprises (MNEs) as “private institution[s] devised to organize, through employment contracts, interdependencies between individuals located in more than one country” (p. 127) and points out that MNEs exist because they are the most efficient organizational form for a given business. This transactional cost approach to understanding MNEs further suggests that the benefit of this form of organization exists only to the extent that it is more efficient to manage the business across multiple national boundaries than within a single boundary. Understanding the balance between global and local forces on the development and maintenance of organizational culture, therefore, is important to understanding the degree to which an MNE can function efficiently. MNEs are

unique in that each different locale within the enterprise blends the social cultural influences of that particular context with the shared goals of one organization, and the necessity of functioning smoothly as units of a single, global entity. In examining facets of organizational culture across multinational contexts, however, it is clear that more than behavior is involved and needs to be taken into account. Geppert (2003), for example, points out that sense-making in the MNE often involves synthesizing both the global and the local contexts for individual employees. In discourse analysis research conducted in the lifts and escalator industry, Geppert found evidence that a shared industry and organization provided some convergence in sense-making, but that local, national and social contexts still had a very strong and deep effect on individual sense-making.

A certain degree of convergence seems likely. McGaughey and De Cieri (1999) point out that both industrialization and globalization have resulted in some similarities across all cultural boundaries. They argue that the nature of industrialization supports particular organizational structures, and that the forces of industrialization override any specific cultural forces. In addition, globalization forces such as electronic communication, ease of travel and increasing interdependence among geographically disperse organizations have contributed to certain commonalities in all organizations. Sethi (1999) noted that many organizations, including MNEs, have formalized codes of conduct that are expected to govern employees' behavior, regardless of the national context within which the employee actually works. Kelley et al. (2006) provide the example of Hong Kong's history of strong ties with the West as a situation that has promoted convergence in ideas between the two cultures. This convergence in ideas can be expected to result in convergence between organizational cultures in the two areas as well. Organizations, by necessity then, will have some similar aspects of organizational culture that can be found in each of their locations, regardless of where those subunits are located (McGaughey & De Cieri, 1999).

There are also forces that promote a divergence between social and organizational cultures. This has typically been the prevailing view in organizational literature, starting with the work of Hofstede (1980). In their examination of banking sectors in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and the United States, Kelley et al. (2006) point out that the same economic, political and institutional ties that promoted convergence between Hong Kong and the United States also promoted a degree of divergence between Hong Kong and the People's Republic of China (PRC), resulting in weaker cultural similarities between the two countries. Different societies have different historical, political and economic situations, and the divergent perspective suggests that these perspectives have influenced prevailing values and beliefs among groups of people that are long standing, deeply ingrained and resistant to change. These values and beliefs in turn influence how employees make sense of their organization and how organizational events are interpreted.

## **2.2 Models of Organizational Culture at Local Levels**

Bartlett and Ghoshal (1998) suggest that there are three models which describe the degree to which the social or organizational culture of a MNE's headquarters affects organizational culture at the local level. The first model was developed on the practices of Japanese companies, where control over subsidiaries tends to be very centralized. In this case, local organizational cultures tend to be highly reflective of the organizational culture of the headquarters of the organization. The second model was termed socialization, developed from the management styles and practices of European multinational organizations, where localization is emphasized, along with intentional attempts to be sensitive to local norms and behavioral expectations. This model results in organizational cultures at the local level bearing a resemblance to the organizational culture at the headquarters only to the extent to which the national contexts are similar. The third model, formalization, was built on the American management style. According to Bartlett and Ghoshal, American organizations tend to set formal policies and practices at headquarters, and then expect that these policies and practices will be adhered to in local subsidiaries as well. This approach is somewhat more flexible than the centralized approach, yet more structured than the socialization approach. Some evidence supports the existence of these three models and further indicates that the model of organizational culture used in an MNE does, indeed, have an effect on local organizational behavior. For example, Couto and Vieira (2004) found that the management style used by Japanese organizations did differ significantly from that of American and European organizations in their sample, and that these styles had a strong effect on the research and development activities of the subsidiaries of organizations they examined, with R&D functions occurring more frequently at the local level for American and European organizations, and more frequently at the headquarter level for Japanese organizations. These models may therefore be useful in understanding which culture (organizational or social) employees turn to in order to make sense of their experiences in the organization, why certain aspects of organizational culture are affected more by local social culture than others, and how this adaptation affects employee behavior in organizations.

### **3. THE CURRENT RESEARCH**

#### **3.1 Background**

For this research, we examined three units of one American multinational enterprise – these units were located in the United States, the United Kingdom and Hong Kong. While the social cultures of the United States and the United Kingdom share a number of similarities, and despite the convergence phenomenon noted by Kelley et al. (2006), the Chinese culture in Hong Kong is considerably different from these social cultures on a number of dimensions (Hofstede, 2001; Yang, 1992). Furthermore, as the organization was headquartered in the United States, and based on typical American practices, we assumed that the formalization model of organizational culture management was used by the MNE. Previous research

suggests that the extent of differences between cultures may be more of a pivotal factor in determining specific organizational strategies than any specific cultural factors themselves (Hennart & Larimo, 1998). Therefore it was expected that most local adaptations would occur in the Chinese context of Hong Kong rather than in the Western contexts of the United Kingdom and the United States.

Further, accumulative evidence has linked typical Chinese organizational structures to the distinctiveness of its cultural orientation (Smith & Wong, 1996), particularly as it relates to the Confucian social ideology (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Hofstede, 1980). As an outgrowth of this cultural perspective, familism, nepotism, paternalism, personalism, and face saving are concepts that have been used to describe the collective nature of organizational behaviors in the Chinese context (Smith & Wang, 1996; Redding & Wong, 1986). Redding and Hsiao (1990), additionally identified filial piety, collectivism and strong work ethic as the unique cultural driving forces behind successful overseas Chinese entrepreneurs from Hong Kong and Taiwan.

In line with calls to examine both convergence and divergence simultaneously (Khilji, 2002), both aspects of the interaction between social and organizational cultures were taken into account. For example; research has indicated that employees' ideal organizational culture (i.e., the extent to which members ideally should exhibit the behavioral styles to maximize individual and organizational effectiveness) usually emphasizes a preference for behaviors that maximize employee participation, goal setting and individual growth across social cultural contexts. In the U.S., Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the U.K., employees have indicated that an organizational culture characterized by strong self-actualizing and self-determination behaviors, moderate to weak levels of managing work relationships and weak levels of managing how one approaches one's tasks in order to keep one's job secure by is preferred (Szumal, 2001). In non-Anglo countries (e.g., Latin Europe, Latin America and East Asia), organizational cultures with high levels of participation, goal setting and individual growth behaviors are still seen as ideal, however higher levels of the aspects of organizational culture where one must manage relationships and tasks in a protective manner are considered more acceptable than in the Anglo countries (Cooke & Szumal, 2000).

### 3.2 Hypotheses

The formalization model of organizational culture suggests both commonalities and differences in local variations of an organizational culture, based on the specific social cultural context of an organizational unit. Since the MNE is headquartered in the US, and that the social cultures of the United States and the United Kingdom are more similar to each other than to Hong Kong Chinese culture, it is expected that the organizational culture as perceived and experienced by employees in the United States and the United Kingdom will be more similar to each other and the Hong Kong Chinese employees' perception and experience of their organizational culture will be distinctly different from that of employees in the United States and the United Kingdom. Previous research with indigenous

organizations (Kwantes & Boglarsky, 2006) suggests that organizational cultures in Hong Kong reflect a stronger emphasis on aspects of organizational culture that promote attention to security-enhancing behavioral norms, in that the members are lead to focus on what people are doing (e.g., competing tasks, conforming) rather than how people are doing (e.g., complementary tasks, creativity). We expect that the same emphasis will occur in a unit of an MNE, and that this difference will be distinct to the unit from Hong Kong (Hypothesis 1).

H1: The organizational unit in Hong Kong will be perceived as having an organizational culture with a stronger emphasis than the British or American units on performing tasks than on how those tasks are performed.

Since the responses come from a single organization in three national contexts, with American management practices in place, it is expected that there will be both similarities and differences in the perceived organizational culture, reflecting convergence and divergence in the balance of two contexts: global and local cultures. As this pattern of similarities and differences is expected to reflect facets of the common, global, organizational culture with unique variations due to the local sociocultural environment, it is expected that the unique variations will be adaptive, and therefore reflective of the national cultural context. Specifically, we expect that, in each national context, overall there will be more positive than negative individual outcomes, even if some variation of organizational cultures occurs (Hypothesis 2).

H2: Despite variations in perceptions of organizational culture, individual level outcomes will be more positive than negative across all three national samples.

## 4. METHOD

### 4.1 Participants

Employees from one multinational organization, which manufactured promotional plastic games and other products, headquartered in the United States ( $n = 105$ ), and with similar units in the United Kingdom ( $n = 106$ ), and Hong Kong ( $n = 76$ ) were selected from a larger population of employees whose responses to the *Organizational Culture Inventory®*<sup>1</sup> (OCI®) were scored by the publisher of the inventory between 1996 and 1999. Respondents in the United States and the United Kingdom predominantly identified themselves as White/Caucasian (United States: 68.4%, United Kingdom: 85.7%) while those in Hong Kong predominantly identified themselves as Asian (88.9%). In the United States, the next largest ethnic groups were Black/African American (3.4%) and Hispanic (3.4%). In the United Kingdom, Asians comprised the next largest group (3.9%), while in Hong Kong, no other ethnic group comprised more than 2% of the sample. Each of the three national groups had the same modal level of education (Bachelor's degree). In the United States, 51 identified themselves as female, and 39 as male, while in Hong

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<sup>1</sup> Organizational Culture Inventory® is a registered trademark of Human Synergistics International.

Kong, 31 identified as female and 52 as male, and in the United Kingdom, 58 identified as female and 44 as male. Due to the archival nature of the data no other demographic information was available.

#### 4.2 Measures

Organizational culture. The *Organizational Culture Inventory®* (OCI®, Cooke & Lafferty, 1987) was used to measure organizational culture, and was administered to all participants in English. The OCI is an assessment of an organization's operating or current culture in terms of the behaviors that members understand are required to "fit in and meet expectations" within their organization (Cooke & Szumal, 2000). Specifically, the OCI assesses 12 norms that describe the thinking and behavioral styles that characterize the operating culture of an organization. These behavioral norms specify the ways in which members of an organization are expected to approach their work and interact with one another (Cooke & Szumal, 2000), and are defined by two underlying dimensions, the first of which distinguishes between *a concern for people* and *a concern for task*. The second dimension distinguishes between expectations for behaviors directed toward fulfilling higher-order *satisfaction* needs and those directed toward protecting and maintaining lower-order *security* needs. Based on these dimensions, the 12 sets of norms measured by the OCI are categorized into three general "clusters" or types of organizational cultures, which are labelled Constructive, Passive/Defensive, and Aggressive/Defensive<sup>2</sup> (e.g., Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Cooke & Szumal, 1993, 2000; Xenikou & Furnham, 1996).

The Constructive cluster reflects organizational cultural characteristics that encourage members to "interact with others and approach tasks in ways that will help them meet their higher-order satisfaction needs" (Cooke & Szumal, 1993, p.1302) and includes the Achievement, Self-Actualizing, Humanistic-Encouraging and Affiliative styles. The Achievement style reflects an organizational culture where completing tasks well is valued, and employees are encouraged to set and accomplish their own goals. The Self-Actualizing style reflects an emphasis on creativity and quality. Similar to the Achievement style, both individual growth and task accomplishment are valued. The Humanistic-Encouraging style characterizes a culture that is person centered and involves employee participation in decision-making. The Affiliative style indicates a culture that places a high priority on appropriate and constructive relationships among employees. This cluster of organizational culture styles has been shown to result in both high satisfaction and high productivity in the workplace (Cooke & Szumal, 2000; Cooke & Lafferty, 1987).

The second cluster of styles in the OCI is the Passive/Defensive cluster. Individuals in cultures where this cluster predominates "believe that they must interact with *people* in a way that will not threaten their own *security*" (Cooke & Szumal, 1993, p. 1302). The organizational cultural styles represented in this cluster are Approval, Conventional, Dependent and Avoidance. An organizational

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culture typified by the Approval style is a culture where individuals strive to keep interpersonal relationships pleasant, at least on the surface, by avoiding conflicts. The Conventional style of organizational culture characterizes organizations that have strong bureaucratic control and emphasize conservatism and traditionalism. An organization that is hierarchically controlled and discourages input from employees typifies the Dependent style of organizational culture. Behaviors exemplifying the Avoidance style may be seen in organizations where mistakes are punished and success is not rewarded.

The third cluster of organizational culture styles measured by the OCI is labelled Aggressive/Defensive. This cluster represents cultures "in which members are expected to approach *tasks* in forceful ways to protect their status and *security*" (Cooke & Szumal, 1993, p.1302). The Oppositional, Power, Competitive and Perfectionistic styles comprise this cluster. The Oppositional style reflects patterns of behavior where negativity and confrontation in interactions occur frequently and are expected. An organizational culture where the Power style predominates results in employees working to build up their power base by controlling subordinates and acceding to the demands of supervisors. When an organizational culture constructs a win/lose situation for employees, employees compete against each other and operate on the belief that to do well they must win at another's expense. This typifies the Competitive organizational culture style. When an organization emphasizes the Perfectionistic style, employees know that mistakes will not be tolerated, that attention to detail and hard work toward very narrowly defined objectives are expected.

Respondents are asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale the extent to which they are expected or implicitly required to behave in specific ways in order to be successful and "fit in" in their workplace. Evidence for the reliability of the OCI includes a high level of internal consistency with coefficient alphas ranging from .67 to .92 (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Cooke & Szumal, 1993), high inter-rater reliability of  $r_{wg(j)}$  adjusted (Cooke & Szumal, 1993), and high test-retest reliability over a two year period (Cooke & Szumal, 1993). Validity evidence includes support from research that examined its construct validity (through principle-components analysis) (Cooke & Rousseau, 1988; Rousseau, 1990; Cooke & Szumal, 1993) and criterion validity (Cooke & Szumal, 2000).

*Individual level outcomes.* The impact of organizational culture on outcomes at the individual level, and therefore the extent to which the organizational culture can be viewed as adaptive was also assessed. These individual level outcomes focus on the extent to which the organizational culture impacts the personal states and attitudes of its members. Specifically, we used four positive indices to measure the positive attitudes and opinions held by organizational members. These include motivation (the extent to which members are inspired to behave in ways consistent with organizational goals), role clarity (the extent to which members receive clear messages regarding expectations), satisfaction (the extent to which members feel positively about their work situation) and intention to stay (the extent to which members plan to remain with the current organization). Additionally we used two negative indices to measure the extent to which organizational members experience excessive stressors or strain. These included role conflict (the extent to which

members receive inconsistent messages and are expected to do things that conflict with their own preferences) and stress (the extent to which members feel they are pushed beyond their normal range of comfort by organizational demands, pressures or conflicts). The six individual level outcomes were measured on 5-point scales that range from 1 (disagree or not at all) to 5 (agree or to a very great extent). These six scales were taken from a larger organizational assessment (i.e., the *Organizational Effectiveness Inventory®* (OEI)<sup>3</sup>, Cooke, 1997; Szumal, 2001).

## 5. RESULTS

One of the first, and most fundamental, questions to be asked in transcultural comparative research is the extent to which any given construct developed and originally measured in one culture can exist and operate similarly in another cultural context. Some of that concern may be mitigated in this research study as, while the units examined were in three different social cultural contexts, the organization itself was one that was headquartered in the United States, and therefore employees in all geographical area had some familiarity with American culture and business constructs. While there are several procedures that can be used to assess construct equivalence (see van de Vijver & Leung, 1997), a comparison of factor structures in the different samples using correlational analysis (see Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989) can provide evidence for equivalence. Accordingly, we conducted post hoc comparisons between the factor structures obtained in each sample. The correlations indicate that the factor structures were similar in each country, supporting the idea that no significant measurement or methodological bias existed. The correlations for the Constructive styles of organizational culture were all significantly positive (United Kingdom and Hong Kong:  $r(94) = .78, p < .001$ ), United Kingdom and United States:  $r(94) = .93, p < .001$ , Hong Kong and United States:  $r(94) = .81, p < .001$ ). For the Passive/Defensive styles of organizational culture, the correlations were all positive and significant (United Kingdom and Hong Kong:  $r(94) = .33, p < .001$ ), United Kingdom and United States:  $r(94) = .43, p < .001$ , Hong Kong and United States:  $r(94) = .47, p < .001$ ). For the Aggressive/Defensive styles, the correlations were also significantly positive (United Kingdom and Hong Kong:  $r(94) = .78, p < .001$ ), United Kingdom and United States:  $r(94) = .75, p < .001$ , Hong Kong and United States:  $r(94) = .63, p < .001$ ).

Another important potential limitation has to do with potential response bias. Literature shows that social culture can affect how individuals respond to Likert-type surveys (Gelfand, Raver & Ehrhart, 2002) with some cultures, such as those in Asia, exhibiting an acquiescence bias (tending toward uniform responses) and others exhibiting an extreme bias (tending to use the highest and/or lowest end of the scale). Specifically, researchers need to be concerned with whether any differences found reflect actual differences in the underlying construct rather than methodological artefacts. An examination of the means and standard deviations

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<sup>3</sup> Organizational Effectiveness Inventory® is a registered trademark of Human Synergistics International.

from the samples in our study suggests that response bias was not likely an issue, as no distinct pattern emerged for the means or standard deviations across national samples. Additionally, no single sample has responses that were more extreme than the responses from other samples. If response biases were an issue, we would have expected to see either uniform responses or elevated responses in one sample compared to the others. Such was not the case in this dataset, however, response biases due to culture cannot be entirely ruled out as they may still have played an implicit role in how employees responded to the survey.

### 5.1 Hypothesis Testing

Scale scores for the organizational culture styles were computed by taking the sum of the ten items corresponding to each of the organizational cultural style. Means and standard deviations were obtained for each organizational cultural style, but separately for each national category. Internal consistency was estimated using Cronbach's alpha. Reliabilities for each scale varied across national location, with the lowest reliabilities found in the sample from Hong Kong, although generally the reliabilities were within acceptable ranges (Nunally, 1967; 1978) (See Table 1).

We used a profile analysis of the way organizational members in each of the three locations described their organizational culture to compare overall patterns of perceived cultural styles (Tabachnick & Fidell, 1989; Bray, Maxwell & Cole, 1995). Location served as the between-subjects factor and perceived organizational culture served as the within-subjects factor.

Table 1. *Organizational Culture Inventory® Cultural Style Scale characteristics by Location*

Cultural Style	United Kingdom			Hong Kong			United States		
	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	Mean	SD	$\alpha$
(1) Humanistic-Encouraging	29.41	4.9	.86	27.62	4.2	.86	26.81	6.8	.89
(2) Affiliative	30.48	4.2	.81	28.65	5.1	.89	29.79	6.4	.90
(3) Approval	22.18	5.4	.81	24.92a	3.7	.68	21.44	5.9	.81
(4) Conventional	22.53	5.1	.80	25.59a	3.4	.62	22.94	6.2	.83
(5) Dependent	23.07	5.2	.80	24.61	3.8	.67	24.00	5.7	.80
(6) Avoidance	17.01	5.6	.86	22.07a	3.9	.73	16.83	6.0	.83
(7) Oppositional	18.62	4.2	.70	23.03a	3.5	.59	17.81	4.6	.71
(8) Power	20.41	5.5	.83	23.29a	4.2	.75	20.08	6.5	.84
(9) Competitive	19.86	6.1	.89	23.18a	4.3	.77	19.65	6.5	.83
(10) Perfectionistic	24.99	4.5	.75	24.65	3.7	.70	23.48	5.6	.79
(11) Achievement	28.88	4.7	.83	27.53	3.8	.78	27.73	5.7	.84
(12) Self-Actualizing	27.14	4.2	.72	27.38	3.7	.72	24.94b	5.4	.77

Note: a: mean of subscale is significantly higher than that of other locations,  $p < .05$ ; b: mean of subscale is significantly lower than that of other locations,  $p < .05$ . Organizational Culture Inventory® is a registered trademark of Human Synergistics International. All OCI style names from Organizational Culture Inventory® by Robert A. Cooke, and J.C. Lafferty, Copyright 2010 by Human Synergistics International. Adapted by permission.

A profile analysis may be conceptualized as a completely crossed factorial design (Bray, et al., 1995), and allows researchers to investigate three aspects of profiles. The first aspect is an assessment of flatness of the profiles, which is equivalent to testing the main effect of organizational cultural style in a factorial design. The second aspect involves an assessment of levels, or the average elevation, of the profiles for each location, which is equivalent to testing the main effect of location in a factorial design. Finally, the question of the parallel nature of the profiles may be assessed, testing the interaction of location and organizational cultural styles.

The main effect of cultural styles resulted in profiles that were not flat, as this main effect was significant using Wilks' Lambda (lambda = .257,  $F(11, 274) = 71.94, p < .001$ ). This was not surprising, as it was expected that employees would view the different cultural styles as having differing strength of expression in their organizational culture, therefore, no post hoc analyses were performed. Because sphericity could not be assumed, based on Mauchly's Test of Sphericity, a Greenhouse-Geisser adjustment was made for the between-subjects and interaction tests. The between subjects, or levels, test was significant ( $F(3.2, 913.4) = 169.25, p < .001$ ) indicating that the elevation of the profiles, in general, were different. Post hoc analyses using a Student-Newman-Keuls with a Scheffe adjustment indicated that respondents from Hong Kong generally responded with higher ratings on a number of cultural styles than did respondents from the United States and the United Kingdom.

A significant interaction between organizational cultural styles and location was also found using an adjusted Wilks' Lambda (lambda = .651,  $F(6.14, 913.4) = 7.80, p < .001$ ) for the parallelism test, indicating that the profiles for employees at each location were significantly different in terms of perception of their organizational culture (see Figure 1).

Since the flatness, levels, and parallelism tests were all significant, a post hoc analysis examining profile differences was conducted (see Table 1). Profile analysis indicated that the pattern of reported organizational culture significantly differed in Hong Kong compared to the United States and the United Kingdom, supporting Hypothesis 1. Post hoc range tests using the Student-Newman-Keuls adjustment indicated that five of the twelve styles of culture measured had no statistically significant differences across countries.

Employees in all three locations held similar views of the degree to which their organization exhibited Humanistic-Encouraging, Affiliative, Dependent, Perfectionist and Achievement norms. Significant differences in perspective emerged in seven other styles, though. Individuals in Hong Kong viewed the organization as higher in the Approval, Conventional, Avoidance, Oppositional, Power and Competitive styles. No differences were found between the samples from the United States and the United Kingdom on their perception of these styles. Employees in the United States reported the organizational culture as significantly lower in the Self-Actualizing style, while no differences in their perception of this style were found in the other samples.

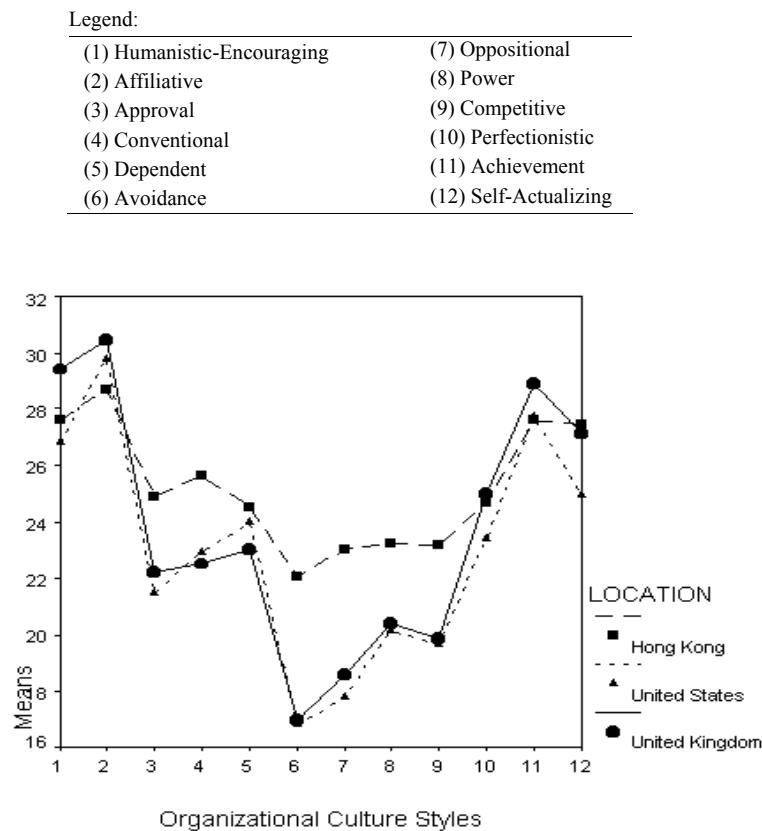


Figure 1. Organizational Culture by Location.

Note. OCI Style names from Organizational Culture Inventory® by Robert A. Cooke, and J.C. Lafferty, Copyright 2010 by Human Synergistics International. Adapted by permission.

Table 2. *Outcome scale characteristics by Location*

Outcome Scale	United Kingdom			Hong Kong			United States		
	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	Mean	SD	$\alpha$	Mean	SD	$\alpha$
Role Conflict	2.41	0.8	.68	2.75a	0.6	.72	2.47	0.9	.76
Role Clarity	3.82	0.9	.76	3.78	0.6	.69	3.72	0.9	.85
Motivation	3.91	0.8	.71	3.61	0.8	.64	3.84	1.0	.81
Satisfaction	3.86	0.8	.80	3.77	0.7	.85	3.85	0.9	.88
Intention to Stay	3.27b	1.2	.85	3.95	0.8	.42	3.87	1.2	.86
Stress	2.87	0.8	.64	2.78	0.6	.53	2.85	1.0	.80

Note: a: mean of subscale is significantly higher than that of other locations,  $p < .05$ ; b: mean of subscale is significantly lower than that of other locations,  $p < .05$ .

An ANOVA was performed on the six outcome variables related to organizational culture: motivation, role clarity, stress, role conflict, job satisfaction and intention to stay with the organization to assess differences between the national settings (see Table 2). Hypothesis 2 was partially supported, as no significant differences were found for stress ( $F(2,238) = .29, p > .05$ ), motivation ( $F(2, 237) = 2.76, p > .05$ ), role clarity ( $F(2, 300) = .416, p > .05$ ) or for job satisfaction ( $F(2, 299) = .07, p > .05$ ). There were, however, differences reported in role conflict, with respondents from Hong Kong reported significantly higher levels than respondents in the United States or the United Kingdom ( $F(2, 300) = 5.12, p < .01$ ). More specifically, respondents from Hong Kong indicated that they felt that their job requires that they think and behave in ways that are different from how they would normally think and behave. Role conflict for these respondents was significantly related to the Passive/Defensive and the Aggressive/Defensive styles of organizational culture, but was not significantly related to the Constructive styles (see Table 3). Differences also emerged across samples in intention to stay. Employees in the United Kingdom reported significantly lower degrees of intention to stay with the organization than did employees in Hong Kong or the United States ( $F(2, 267) = 12.61, p < .001$ ). The intention to stay with the organization for those in the United Kingdom was related only to the styles of organizational culture that promote productivity and effectiveness in the Constructive cluster.

Table 3. *Correlations by National Sample*

<b>United Kingdom</b>	Stress	Role Clarity	Motivation	Satisfaction	Intention to Stay	Constructive	Passive/Defensive	Aggressive/Defensive
Role Conflict	.559**	-.548**	-.472**	-.529**	-.302*	-.239*	.559**	.517**
Stress	1.000	-.441**	-.503**	-.554**	-.256*	.000	.199	.298**
Role Clarity		1.000	.682**	.517**	.309**	.370**	-.202*	-.156
Motivation			1.000	.663**	.341**	.389**	-.208	-.145
Satisfaction				1.000	.649**	.421**	-.324**	-.219**
Intention to Stay					1.000	.218*	-.165	-.091
Constructive						1.000	-.069	.073
Passive/Defensive							1.000	.851**
<b>Hong Kong</b>								
Role Conflict	.454**	-.471**	-.303**	-.265**	-.262*	-.160	.320**	.500**
Stress	1.000	-.386**	-.247*	-.412**	-.391**	-.368**	.014	.308**
Role Clarity		1.000	.474**	.520**	.270*	.400**	-.021	-.046
Motivation			1.000	.535**	.432**	.249*	-.005	-.077
Satisfaction				1.000	.611**	.582**	.090	.045
Intention to Stay					1.000	.263*	.032	-.103
Constructive						1.000	.123	.115
Passive/Defensive							1.000	.639**

Table 3. *Correlations by National Sample* (continued)

United States	Stress	Role Clarity	Motivation	Satisfaction	Intention to Stay	Constructive	Passive/Defensive	Aggressive/Defensive
Role Conflict	.658**	-.640**	-.652**	-.641**	-.463	-.478**	.577**	.518**
Stress	1.000	-.515**	-.624**	-.684**	-.527**	-.443**	.481**	.556**
Role Clarity		1.000	.582**	.597**	.323**	.508**	-.398**	-.311**
Motivation			1.000	.758**	.491**	.449**	-.600**	-.447**
Satisfaction				1.000	.700**	.636**	-.519**	-.459**
Intention to Stay					1.000	.441**	-.324**	-.254**
Constructive						1.000	-.448**	-.237*
Passive/Defensive							1.000	.724**

*Note.* OCI Style names from Organizational Culture Inventory® by Robert A. Cooke, and J.C. Lafferty, Copyright 2010 by Human Synergistics International. Adapted by permission.

## 6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Managing Organizational Culture

The results of this research are reflective of the formalization model of managing organizational culture in a multinational corporation with headquarters in the United States. Across three countries, employees in this organization viewed almost half of the organizational culture styles similarly, indicating both a degree of commonality of experience in the organization and differences based on the local context of the organizational locale, as the perceived differences in organizational culture that emerged were consistent with research on differences in social culture (c.f., Bu & McKeen, 2001).

### 6.2 Organizational Culture in the Hong Kong Chinese Context

Just as the social culture of the United States and the United Kingdom share more commonalities with each other than either does with the social culture of Hong Kong, China, the organizational culture experienced in the Hong Kong Chinese context by employees in this study was distinctly different than the organizational culture in either the United States or the United Kingdom. The Chinese respondents' perception of their organizational culture may be seen to, at least in part, reflect the social culture of Hong Kong Chinese (Smith & Wang, 1996). For example, the high Avoidance and Approval styles among the Hong Kong Chinese employees could both be explained by the pre-eminence of collectivism in this group (Bond, 1996). Avoidance exemplifies a common Asian coping approach in dealing with interpersonal conflict through escapism, diversion, and "waiting-it-out" (Kuo, Roysircar & Newby-Clark, 2006), while Approval relates to the desire for social acceptance – a concept deeply entrenched in the Chinese way of thinking (Bond, 1996; Hofstede, 2001). The motivation of both is

embedded in the common goal of preserving social harmony which underlies collectivism.

Chinese workers in Hong Kong further rated their organizational culture as higher in Conventional and Oppositional styles than did those from the United Kingdom or the United States. The Conventional style relates to an adherence to rules and structures, while the Oppositional style relates to resistance to change (Cooke & Lafferty, 1987). Schwartz (1994) found that, as compared to Americans, Hong Kong Chinese were less open to change and were more likely to conform to tradition, while Hofstede (1980) found Hong Kong Chinese to be low in Uncertainty Avoidance (i.e. tolerance of ambiguity). The relatively high emphasis on an organization's Competitive style appears to stand in contrast to the Chinese values of cooperation and deference (Redding & Wong, 1986). However, conceptualizing Chinese workers' perception from Hong Kong's westernized, capitalistic economic context (Bond, 1996), one may speculate that the organization's "competitive" norms are products of the high commercialization and capitalism in Hong Kong, as well as the recent history of British influence (Kelley et al., 2006). The perceived high emphasis on Power style of the unit in Hong Kong is likely to be related to high Power Distance (Hofstede, 1980) and the strong hierarchical social structures (Schwartz, 1994) that are often associated with Chinese samples (Hui & Tan, 1996). For instance, Cheng et al. (2003) found that the supervisor-subordinate relationship in Chinese context is characterized by "vertical linkage" and is bound by "loyalty." Given this relational arrangement, it is not surprising to find that Chinese workers find more power-related behavioral norms to exist as compared to the employees in the United States and United Kingdom.

### **6.3 Individual Adaptations to Organizational Culture in an MNC**

However, employee responses indicated that working for a multinational organization resulted in employee adaptations as well. Although respondents from Hong Kong reported the same degree of job satisfaction as the respondents from the United States or the United Kingdom they reported a significantly lower person/organization fit than did the others. Individuals working in Hong Kong reported feeling that they must change the way they think and behave each day when they arrived for work more than individuals in the United States and the United Kingdom did. It has been suggested that the Chinese take a more relativistic approach than do those in the West (Leung, 2004), and that social behaviors are often correlated more with relational and situational factors than to internal factors (Yang, 1981). A qualitative study by Hung (2004) may further help to illuminate this. Hung interviewed Chinese nationals working for foreign multinational corporations and concluded from the interviews that many feel they live a "double life," behaving according to Western norms while at work and adhering to Chinese norms after work. Based on the interviews, Hung suggests that this is the result of "li" or ritual – the deeply rooted requirement in Chinese culture for context based proper behavior.

This finding may also be partly attributed to Chinese's acceptance of unequal, hierarchical human relationships and of obligatory social networks (Cheng et al.,

2003; Hofstede, 2001) - a concept aligned with Hofstede's (1980) notion of high Power Distance. As such, Chinese workers might have resorted to internally (self)-oriented methods, in the form of deference, compliance and cooperativeness (Redding & Wong, 1986), and acceptance of the situation and self-constraint (Kuo et al., 2006), to maintain a harmonious relationship with the organization. When changing the institutional status quo seems futile and even inappropriate, adjusting oneself to match the organizational mode and demands would be a more viable alternative.

Thus, the adaptations of the corporate organizational culture to the social culture of Hong Kong may be seen as an adaptive response where the unique variation of the organizational culture is suited to the context and expectations of the employees in that location. The fact that employees report no significant differences in stress, motivation, job satisfaction, or role clarity supports the positive adaptive nature of the changes. In the United Kingdom, however, the variation of the corporate organizational culture resulted in a more mixed picture. The only significant difference in employees' perceptions of their organizational culture was in the cultural style of Self-Actualizing. This difference was directly correlated with a decrease in employees' intention to remain with the organization. Although no significant differences were found between the employees in the United Kingdom and other employees in the domains of job satisfaction, role clarity, motivation, or stress, there is clear evidence that the local variation of the corporate organizational culture was not adaptive in the context of the United Kingdom. The findings, however, are in line with theory that would predict that organizational cultures that have lower levels of creativity and quality will result in less positive employee environments (Cooke & Szumal, 2000; Cooke & Lafferty, 1987). It is possible, therefore, that the lower levels of these organizational culture factors in the United Kingdom may be more reflective of specific individuals in management, or specific working conditions rather than a cultural level adaptation of the global corporate organizational culture.

Finally, it is important to note that the data for this research came from only one organization. While the findings are intriguing, further research is warranted in order to determine how generalizable these findings are. This particular organization was voluntarily involved in an effort to measure organizational culture, and therefore it may be somewhat unique in its attention to, and focus on, this aspect of a multinational organization.

The results of this research indicate the importance of managing organizational cultures in a multinational corporation in such a way that both the need for establishing a common organizational culture identity and the context-specific, or local, expectations for behavioral norms are taken into consideration. Despite the differences in descriptions of organizational culture, respondents in this study indicated no significant differences in motivation, job satisfaction, role clarity, or stress. Some variations in organizational culture are expected in large organization (Schein, 1992), and this finding underscores the notion that variations in organizational culture may evolve, at least in part, in response to the social culture of the organization's environment. Executives in multinational organizations frequently indicate that there is a priority in their organizations to have a common corporate culture. The results of the current

research suggest that, while maintaining some commonalities across multiple locations in an MNE may be desirable, the global corporate culture must also have room for adaptation to local conditions, as was clearly seen in the findings for the Chinese employees in this research.

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