

Work Attitudes, Values, Interpersonal Relationships,  
and Job Characteristics across Cultures:  
A Comparative Study of Korea, China, and the U.S.A.\*

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目次	
I. Introduction	III. Method
II. Theoretical Views: Corporate Welfarism and Culturalist Perspectives	IV. Results V. Discussion and Conclusions

## I. Introduction

Cross-cultural interactions have become increasingly a matter of fact for many Korean managers whether they want them or not. Large Korean companies had competed vigorously with each other to expand their operations beyond Korea (Ungson, Steers and Park, 1997) until the recent economic difficulties (so-called the "IMF Crisis") placed a temporary hold on them. Billions of dollars were spent on acquiring foreign companies in growing industries such as electronics and multimedia. LG Electronics, for instance, acquired control of Zenith in 1995. In the same year, Samsung bought the shares (40.25%) of AST Research (Kraar, 1996). Unfortunately, however, both of the investments have turned out to be unsuccessful. LG's

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loss from the investment has increased to about \$700 million during the last three years (Kim, 1998). AST also has lost money continuously for the past few years that it had to make a massive layoff: A total of 2,110 out of 4,000 employees had been laid off between April, 1997 and February, 1998 (Kimberly, 1998). Anecdotal evidence suggests that the miserable experiences of LG and Samsung are more of a norm than an exception among large multinational Korean corporations.

It is not uncommon for multinational corporations to experience failures in their overseas operations. Interestingly, overseas failures most frequently result from manager's inability to understand foreign ways of thinking and acting rather than from professional incompetence (Tung, 1981). It appears that the failures of Korean multinationals are also attributable to Korean managers' inability to understand the foreign ways of thinking and acting. In other words, the lack of professional knowledge and skills in managing cross-cultural differences might have contributed to the common failures among Korean multinationals.

To better understand the reasons for the overseas failures of Korean companies, I conducted a pilot study of a leading Korean company. According to the survey results, most of the Korean expatriate managers did not receive proper cross-cultural training programs before or after their departure from Korea. While more vigorous research needs to be done to generalize such a finding to other Korean companies, it appears that Korean companies simply have failed to recognize the importance of managing cross-cultural differences for successful international operations. Korean managers, who have a naive assumption that what works for Koreans will also work for people in other cultures, are likely to mismanage their non-Korean human resources.

With the rapid globalization of business environment today, it becomes increasingly common for Koreans interact with non-Koreans. One does not

even have to go overseas to work with foreigners: many foreigners are already here in Korea, and the number appears to be increasing. Since the IMF crisis, many Korean companies have been sold to foreign MNCs that the number of Korean workers working for foreign superiors is on the rise. Thus, there is a growing need for Korean managers and workers to better understand cross-cultural differences in organizational behavior such as work-related values and attitudes. Foreign managers in Korea also need to understand how Korean workers are different from their own nationals. Insensitivity to and ignorance of cross-cultural differences may lead to unexpected but costly problems in managing culturally diverse human resources.

The purpose of this research is help practitioners and scholars better understand cross-cultural differences in variables related to work motivation. I examined the differences in work-related values, attitudes, and job characteristics across three countries - Korea, China and the U.S.A. China and the U.S.A. are among the most important countries for Korean multinational corporations. Mismanaging cross-cultural interactions with Americans and the Chinese would lead to the loss of business opportunities, which many Korean companies cannot afford to take.

There has been growing research suggesting cross-cultural differences in work-related variables. There has been growing research For instance, Chow (1994) examined organizational commitment and its predictors between Chinese managers in Hong Kong and Taiwan. Lau and Pang (1995) studied work attitudes of Chinese graduates in Hong Kong. Bae and Chung (1997) examined Korean workers. Near (1989) and Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990) compared the U.S. and Japan. Luthans, McCaul, and Dodd (1985) compared the U.S., Japan, and Korea. However, no research has examined Korea, China, and the U.S. directly on a wide range of work-related variables. To my knowledge, this is research one of the first attempts to

compare the three countries directly with regard to work values, attitudes and job characteristics.

## II. Theoretical Views: Corporate Welfarism and Culturalist Perspectives

Whether we do business locally or globally, one of the challenging tasks of management is to elicit positive work attitudes from our employees. Research evidence suggests that workers who are satisfied with their job are committed to their organization across countries (Lincoln and Kallerberg, 1990). Committed workers may go extra miles to help their company succeed by showing flexible and productive organizational behaviors (Hunt, Wood, & Chonko, 1989). As a result, considerable amount of research has been devoted to identifying predictors of organizational commitment (Glisson & Durick, 1988). On the other hand, unhappy and uncommitted workers could be costly to their organizations. They may become 'free-riders' in their organization, or overtly display tardy and uncooperative behaviors. Unhappy workers often intentionally cause harm to their company through such activities as strikes, sabotages and work place violence.

There are two theoretical views to explain cross-cultural differences in work attitudes: corporate welfarism and culturalist views. Lincoln and Kallerberg (1990), in their pioneering cross-cultural study on work attitudes, initially found that US workers were more committed to their organization than Japanese workers. That finding was surprising because it went directly against the common observation that Japanese workers displayed stronger commitment to their companies than their American counterparts. Japanese workers usually spend extra time to socialize with

others in their company, offer suggestions for improvement, and work long hours without asking for overtime pay. Such behaviors were generally viewed as an indication of the exceptional commitment that Japanese workers made to their companies. Puzzled by the findings, Lincoln and Kallerberg did further analyses of their data. They controlled the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and found that Japanese workers were more committed to their companies than the U.S. workers. Lincoln and Kallerberg (1990) argued that the country difference in organizational commitment stemmed from the difference in corporate welfarism rather than in cultures between the two countries.

The corporate welfarism view argues that employee commitment is elicited by organizational characteristics that provide employees with enterprise welfare, greater stability of employment, and integration of workers as 'full members' of the organization. In other words, employees are thought to respond positively in return for various welfare benefits, and thus, psychologically attached to the organization. Implicit in the corporate welfarism view is the notion of social exchange between employees and the organization. Organizational commitment, then, is reciprocation. Research findings that certain job or organizational characteristics are associated with organizational commitment (Glisson & Durick, 1989; Mowday et al., 1982; Steers, 1977) support the welfarism view.

An alternative to the social exchange (corporate welfarism) view is the culturalist view. According to this view, employee commitment is a reflection of widely shared and deeply rooted cultural values such as collectivism. Werkmeister (1967) argued that the act of commitment was simply a manifestation of the individual's own self, and the value considerations leading to commitment reflected value standards that were basic to the individual's existence as a person. Thus, it can be reasonably argued that organizational commitment is influenced by one's self-concept

that is largely shaped by his/her cultural values. Little research directly tested the relationship between cultural variables and organizational commitment. A line of research, however, has consistently found that work values are strongly associated with organizational commitment (Dubin, Champoux, and Porter, 1975; Kidron, 1978). In general, values about work and organization are a function of culture: culture prescribes how and why work is important and what the relationship between an individual and his/her organization (Hofstede, 1980; Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

In addition, it has been found that wide range of personal characteristics are also related to organizational commitment (Glisson & Durrick, 1988; Mowday et al., 1982). Older workers are, in general, more committed to their organizations (Angle & Perry, 1981; Steers, 1977). As age increases, the individual's opportunities for alternative employment may become more limited. This decrease in an individual's degree of freedom may increase the perceived attractiveness of the present employer, thereby leading to increased psychological attachment to the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). For the same reason, women are expected to be more committed to the organization than men. A number of recent studies have found that women, at least in the US, are more committed to their organizations than men (Angle & Perry, 1983; Hrebiniak & Allutto, 1972). Lincoln & Kalleberg (1990) replicated all these findings in both the U.S. and Japan.

In contrast to age, education has often been found to be inversely related to commitment (Angle & Perry, 1981; Mowday et al., 1982). This inverse relationship may result from the fact that more highly educated individuals have higher expectations that the organization may be unable to meet. Moreover, more educated individuals may also be more committed to a profession. Hence, it would become more difficult for the organization to compete successfully for the psychological involvement of such members

(Mowday et al., 1982). Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990) also replicated this finding both in the U.S. and Japan.

In this study, I examined work-related values (representing culturalist view) job characteristics (representing corporate welfarism view) and demographic variables as antecedents to work attitudes. Consistent with the previous research findings, it was hypothesized that there would be significant differences in work-related values and job characteristics among the three countries. It was also hypothesized that both job characteristics and work-related values would be correlated with work attitudes. In addition, it was expected that the functions of work attitudes would differ across cultures.

### III. Method

#### 1. Sample

The data were collected from various companies across both manufacturing and service industries in the three countries. The numbers of responses analyzed in this study are 498 (a response rate of 71.1%) in Korea, 429 (a response rate of 61.3%) in China and 453 (a response rate of 60.7%) in US.

There were country differences in the demographic variables. The American respondents were older (35.7 years old) than the Chinese (32.6 years old) and the Koreans (31.6 years old). The Korean sample (0.11; 0=male, 1=female) was more male-dominant than the Chinese (0.48) and American (0.51) samples. The educational level of the Chinese sample (4.47; 4=high school diploma, 5=some college, 6=college degree) was lower than their Korean (5.37) and American (5.28) counterparts.

## 2. Measures

1) Organizational commitment. The initial six-item scale, selected from a well-tested OCQ scale (Mowday, Steers, and Porter, 1979), was used to measure organizational commitment. However, one item "I would take almost any job to keep working for this company" did not load on the same factor, and thus was removed from the scale. The remaining five items were: (1) I am willing to work than I have to help this company succeed, (2) I feel very little loyalty to this company (reverse scored), (3) I find that my values and the company's values are very similar, (4) I am proud to be working for this company, and (5) I would turn down another job in order to stay with this company. The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

2) Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured by the question, "All in all, how satisfied would you say you are with your job? (3=very satisfied, 0=not at all satisfied)"

3) Collectivism. Collectivism-individualism is one of the most popular cultural values that are used in cross-cultural research. Collectivism is the extent that individuals put group's goals ahead of their own goals. This represents an Asian value. Earley's (1989) three items were used to measure collectivism. They were: (1) In general, working with a group is better than working alone, (2) Individuals are responsible for the successes and failures of work groups, and (3) Each worker is responsible for the outcomes of his or her company. The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

4) Company familism. Company familism measures employees' expectation that company should treat their employees like family members. This represents an Asian value. The questions were: (1) A company should take care of its employees, since a company and its employees are like a family



and its members, (2) Employees at a company should have an advantage over outsiders in competing for job openings. The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

5) Company orientation. Company orientation is a value that company should put company's interest ahead of employees. This represents a Western value orientation where layoffs are common practices. It was measured by three questionnaire items: (1) Companies must raise productivity even if it means that people lose their jobs, (2) If the demand for a company's product goes down, it is OK for a company to lay off employees, and (3) It is OK for a company to fire or lay off employees if new machines begin doing their work. The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

6) Work centrality. Work centrality was measured by five items, using a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree). It intended to measure the extent to which an individual values work over other life activities, and the degree of identification with the work. The questions were: (1) I have other activities more important than my work, (2) To me, my work is only a small part of who I am, (3) I used to care more about my work, but now other things are more important to me, (4) The most important things that happen to me involve my family rather than my work, and (5) How I feel about myself depends more on what I do at my work than what I do in my spare time.

7) Task variety. Task variety was measured using a four-item scale (0= a few hours, 6 = 5 years or more): (1) My job requires a high level of skill, (2) My job makes keep learning new things, (3) There is a lot of variety in the kinds of thing that I do in my job, and (4) How long would it take to train someone to do your work?

8) Autonomy. Autonomy was measured by a three-item scale: (1) My job gives me freedom as to how I do my work (1=strongly agree,

5=strongly disagree), (2) My job does not let me help make decisions that affect me (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree), and (3) The degree to which "my judgment" was cited (1=least effective, 5=most effective) in response to "What has the most effect on what you actually do on your job?"

9) Teamwork. Teamwork is the extent that the job requires teamwork. The question was, "I have to work close to others to perform my task effectively." The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

10) Task Challenge. Task challenge was measured by two questions: (1) I am often bored with my job (reverse scored), (2) The problems I solve in my job are very challenging. The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

11) Task Meaningfulness. Task meaningfulness was measured by the question, "The work I do on my jobs is meaningful to me." The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

12) Task Identity. Task identity was measured by two questions: (1) My job lets me complete the work that I start. (2) My job lets me see the results of my work. The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

13) Job Complexity. Job complexity was measured by "My job let me use my skills and knowledge." The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

14) Supervisory contact. The degree of supervisory contact was measured by two questions: (1) How often do you talk with your supervisor about your work? (0=seldom or never, 1=monthly, 2=weekely, 3=daily), and (2) How often do you talk with your superior about things other than work? (0=seldom or never, 1=monthly, 2=weekely, 3=daily).

15) Vertical tie. The strength of vertical tie was measure by two

questions: (1) Your immediate superior is someone you can confide in about your personal life. (2) Your immediate superior encourages teamwork. The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

16) Horizontal tie. The strength of horizontal tie was measured by "People in my unit are friendly and helpful." The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

17) Promotion chance. Promotion chance was measured by "The chances of promotion are good on my job." The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

18) Extrinsic rewards. Extrinsic rewards were measured by three questions: (1) My job pays well, (2) The job security is good, and (3) My fringe benefits are good. The scale has a 5-point Likert format (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

## IV. Results

The mean for each variable is reported in Table 1.

TABLE 1: MEAN COMPARISONS

Variables	Korea	China	US
Age	31.55	32.60	35.65
Education (0=none, 7=more than college)	5.37	4.47	5.28
Sex (0=male, 1=female)	0.11	0.48	0.51
Collectivism	N/A	3.58	3.38
Company Orientation	2.47	3.35	3.07
Company Familism	4.42	4.03	4.26
Work Centrality	2.97	2.95	2.57
Supervisory Contact	2.76	2.12	1.69
Vertical Tie	2.72	2.89	2.82
Horizontal Tie	2.82	2.75	3.25
Autonomy	3.23	3.37	3.65
Task Challenge	3.07	2.95	3.63
Task Identity	3.83	3.50	3.92
Task Meaningfulness	3.26	3.17	3.70
Job Complexity	3.35	3.53	3.74
Teamwork	3.99	3.55	3.53
Promotion Chance	2.61	2.63	2.92
Extrinsic Reward	2.72	3.00	3.01
Job Satisfaction	1.33	1.30	1.80
Organizational Commitment	3.68	3.38	3.67

All mean differences are significant at  $p < .001$

## 1. Antecedents to Work Attitudes

It was found that American workers were more satisfied with their jobs (1.80 out of 3) than Korean (1.33) and Chinese (1.30) workers. Both Korean (3.68 out of 5) and American workers (3.67) displayed higher levels of organizational commitment than their Chinese counterparts (3.38).

Collectivism was measured among only U.S. and Chinese workers. It was found that Chinese workers were more collective than U.S. workers, consistently with previous findings (Earley, 1989). Koreans (2.47) had lower company orientation than Chinese (3.35) and Americans (3.07). It is interesting to note that the Chinese workers displayed higher company orientation than American workers. Koreans (4.42) has the highest company familism among the three countries. Chinese were 4.03, and the U.S. was 4.26. Although it was expected that Koreans would have higher company familism than Americans, it was surprising that Americans had higher company familism than the Chinese. Both Korea (2.97 out of 5) and China (2.95) displayed higher work centrality than US (2.57) .

Koreans made more contacts with their superiors (2.76 out of 3) than Chinese (2.12) and Americans (1.69). However, the Koreans had a weaker vertical tie (2.72 out of 5) than the Chinese (2.89) and Americans (2.82). Korean's horizontal tie (2.82 out of 5) was stronger than the Chinese (2.75), but weaker than Americans (3.25).

Koreans (3.23 out of 5) had lower autonomy on their jobs than the Chinese (3.37) and Americans (3.65). It is surprising to find that the Chinese enjoyed higher task autonomy than Koreans. Koreans (3.07 out of 5) had higher task challenge than the Chinese (2.95) but lower than Americans (3.63). Koreans (3.83 out of 5) had higher task identity than the Chinese (3.50) but lower than Americans (3.92). Koreans (3.26 out of

5) had higher task meaningfulness than the Chinese (3.17) but lower than Americans (3.70). Koreans (3.35 out of 5) had lower job complexity than the Chinese (3.53) but lower than Americans (3.74). Koreans had higher requirement for teamwork on their jobs (3.99) than the Chinese (3.55) and Americans (3.53)

Koreans (2.61) felt their chances for promotion were lower than the Chinese (2.63) and Americans (2.92). Koreans (2.72) felt that they received lower extrinsic rewards than the Chinese (3.00) and Americans (3.00).

## 2. Functions of Work Attitudes

### 1) Korea

(1) Demographic Variables. Age was positively and education was negatively related to organizational commitment. However, no significant gender effect was found. For job satisfaction, education was negatively related to job satisfaction. There were no age and gender effects on job satisfaction.

(2) Values. Collectivism was not measured for Korean workers. Among the three values, work centrality, company orientation, and company familism, company familism was positively related to organizational commitment. On the other hand, only work centrality was positively related to job satisfaction. Given that work familism reflects the cultural orientation of Koreans, this finding suggests that organizational commitment is affected by culture.

(3) Interpersonal Relationships. Horizontal tie was positively related to organizational commitment. Supervisory contact and vertical tie did not affect organizational commitment. On the other hand, vertical tie was positively related to job satisfaction.

(4) Job Characteristics. Autonomy, task challenge, task identity, task meaningfulness, job complexity and teamwork were measured as job characteristics in Korea. Job complexity and teamwork were positively related to organizational commitment. On the other hand, task challenge, task meaningfulness, and job complexity were positively related to job satisfaction.

(5) Organizational Rewards. Promotion chances and extrinsic rewards were measured as organizational rewards. Extrinsic rewards were positively related to organizational commitment. It is surprising that promotion chances were not related to organizational commitment. On the other hand, both promotion chances and extrinsic rewards were positively related to job satisfaction.

## 2) China

(1) Demographic variables. There was a gender effect on organizational commitment in China. Female workers were more committed to their companies than male workers. Both age and education have no effect on organizational commitment. On the other hand, only education was positively related to job satisfaction.

(2) Values. Collectivism was positively related to organizational commitment. Work centrality, company orientation, company familism did not affect organizational commitment. Job satisfaction was not affected by values.

(3) Interpersonal relationships. All of the three variables of interpersonal relationships, supervisory contact, vertical tie, and horizontal tie were positively related to organizational commitment. On the other hand, only vertical tie and horizontal tie were positively related to job satisfaction.

(4) Job characteristics. Among the six job characteristics, only

autonomy was positively related to organizational commitment. On the other hand, only tasks challenge was positively related to job satisfaction.

(5) Organizational rewards. Promotion chances were positively related to both organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Extrinsic rewards had no effect on both work attitudes.

3) U.S.A.

(1) Demographic variables. Among age, education and sex, only education was negatively related to both work attitudes. Age and sex had no effects on both organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

(2) Values. Both collectivism and work centrality were positively related to organizational commitment. Both company orientation and company familism had no effect on organizational commitment. Among the four values, only work centrality was positively related to job satisfaction. The other three values had no effect on job satisfaction. It is interesting to note that organizational commitment was affected by collectivism among Americans who usually value individualism.

(3) Interpersonal relationships. Both supervisory contact and horizontal tie were positively related to organizational commitment. Vertical tie had no effect on organizational commitment. On the other hand, vertical tie was positively related to job satisfaction. Supervisory contact and horizontal tie had no effect on job satisfaction.

(4) Job characteristics. Among the six job characteristics, only task meaningfulness was positively related to organizational commitment. The other five characteristics had no effect on organizational commitment. On the other hand, task meaningfulness and job complexity were positively related to job satisfaction. The other four characteristics had no effect on job satisfaction.

(5) Organizational Rewards. Both promotion chances and extrinsic



rewards were positively related to both job attitudes.

## V. Discussion and Conclusions

The primary purpose of this study was to compare Korea, China, and US to examine similarities and differences in work attitudes, values, job characteristics, and organizational rewards. Several interesting differences were found. First, the Chinese workers were more collectivistic than American workers, which was consistent with previous findings (e.g., Earley, 1989). Second, American workers had lower work centrality than Koreans and the Chinese. This may mean that it would be problematic if Korean managers demand the same kind of work ethic from American workers as they do from Korean workers. Third, Koreans have a lower company orientation than the Chinese and Americans. Koreans also have the highest company familism among the group. This means that Korean workers' view of the relationship between themselves and their company would be different than the Chinese and Americans, who had higher company orientation. Koreans view the relationship between workers and company as familial rather than contractual. In return for their loyalty to the company, they expect the company to take care of their welfare.

There were also interesting differences in interpersonal relationships. Korean workers had the most frequent supervisory contacts, whereas their vertical ties were weaker than the Chinese and American workers. The degree of contact did not strengthen the relationship between superiors and subordinates in Korea. This may mean that Korean organizations are more hierarchical than their Chinese and American counterparts. Horizontal ties were strongest in the U.S. This was surprising because Korea and China were known to be more collectivistic than the U.S. Higher collectivism may

not necessarily mean strong horizontal ties at work.

There were differences in their job characteristics. Overall, American workers enjoyed more job enrichment than the Chinese and Korean workers. This was consistent with the expectation. Surprisingly, however, Koreans had the lowest job autonomy. That was surprising because China, which is later in its industrialization, gives more job autonomy than Korea. This suggests that it would be effective for Korean managers to give more job autonomy to their Chinese or American workers. Korean jobs require most teamwork than American and Chinese ones. While Korean jobs require more teamwork than Americans, Americans enjoyed stronger horizontal ties than Koreans. This may mean that the quality of teamwork is not as good in the U.S. It was also interesting to note that both promotional chances and extrinsic rewards were lowest among Korean workers. It may mean that the Korean companies do not reward their workers as much as American or Chinese companies.

### 1. Theoretical Implications

It is interesting to note that collectivism was a strong determinant of organizational commitment. Lincoln and Kallerberg (1990) argued that culture did not affect organizational commitment. The finding of this research suggests that Lincoln and Kallerberg (1990) were not right, who did not examine the relationship between collectivism and organizational commitment in their research. This research offers clear evidence suggesting that culture affects organizational commitment. On the other hand, elements of corporate welfarism such as enriched job and organizational rewards also affected work attitudes, although there were subtle cross-cultural differences in their functions. This study suggests that organizational commitment is perhaps a function of both corporate

welfarism and culturalism. In this sense, the corporate welfarism and the culturalism are not necessarily competing theories as Lincoln and Kalleberg (1990) implied. I argue that they are rather complimentary with each other, and when taken together, they can explain underlying structures of organizational commitment more completely.

This research also suggests that there are both universal and cultural antecedents to work attitudes. There were two universal determinants of organizational commitment. Both horizontal tie and collectivism were positively related to organizational commitment across countries. In particular, the positive relationship between collectivism and organizational commitment suggest strong evidence for culturalist view on work attitudes.

There were cultural differences in the functions of organizational commitment. In Korea, company familism, horizontal tie, job complexity, teamwork, and extrinsic rewards were positively related to organizational commitment. It is interesting to note that promotion chance and autonomy had no effect on organizational commitment in Korea. In China, collectivism, supervisory contact, vertical tie, horizontal tie, autonomy, and promotion chance were positively related to organizational commitment. In the U.S., collectivism, work centrality, supervisory contact, horizontal tie, task meaningfulness, promotion chances, and extrinsic rewards were positively related to organizational commitment.

There were unique Korean characteristics. First, supervisory contact has no effect on Koreans. Why is this the case? A further analysis shows that Korean workers got the highest degree of supervisory contact while their vertical ties were weakest among the three countries. This is probably because the nature of supervisory contact in Korea is autocratic. That may mean that Korean supervisors give orders rather than provide supports and coaching to their subordinates. It appears that such supervisory style was not well received by Korean workers. This suggests that Korean managers

need to change their hierarchical attitudes when they deal with the Chinese and American workers. Another unique aspect is that promotion chances did not affect organizational commitment in Korea. This is interesting because anecdotal evidence suggests that Koreans are very sensitive to promotion. This is perhaps because Korean workers see little chances for promotion because it is too competitive. Further research is needed to better understand this phenomenon.

There are also unique characteristics about the Chinese antecedents to organizational commitment. First, only China has gender effect: the Chinese female workers are more committed than male workers. Another unique aspect is that vertical tie has an effect only on the Chinese workers. It may mean that the role of superiors is more important for Chinese workers than Korean and American ones. Also autonomy affects only the Chinese. It is possible that those who have more job autonomy are higher in their ranks. Then, it is the hierarchical rank rather than the job characteristic that influences organizational commitment. Further research is needed to shed more light on this relationship. Extrinsic rewards had no effect on only the Chinese. This suggests that the social exchange theory (or corporate welfarism view) in general may not hold for the Chinese workers as long as pay, job security and fringe benefits are concerned.

There were unique American antecedents. Both work centrality and task meaningfulness affected the commitment of American workers only.

The functions of job satisfaction differed across countries, too. In Korea, work centrality, vertical tie, task challenge, task meaningfulness, job complexity, promotion chance, and extrinsic reward were determinants of job satisfaction. In China, vertical tie, horizontal tie, task challenge, promotion chance are the antecedents to job satisfaction. In the U.S., work centrality, vertical tie, task meaningfulness, job complexity, promotion

chance and extrinsic reward were antecedents.

In sum, this research suggests that the structure of work attitudes would be more complex than previously thought. There were many differences found across the three countries, but many of them could not be explained readily. Future research is needed to gain more insights into the complex nature of work attitudes in cross-cultural contexts.

## 2. Managerial Implications

The findings of this research may warrant a few managerial implications. First, managers should be aware that there are cross-cultural differences in work-related values across Korea, China and the U.S. All of their values, job characteristics, and the functions of work attitudes vary across countries. This means that managers should practice management tactics that fit with the cultural values of their workers. For instance, Korean workers had the highest company familism. Korean workers would be most committed to their company when the company treats them like family members. On the other hand, familial relationship between company and employees may not be effective in China, where workers have the highest company orientation. There were also significant differences in job characteristics. This suggests that managers should design jobs differently for the three countries. It would be effective for Korean managers to design more enriched jobs for Americans than Koreans.

More importantly, managers should be sensitive to the differences in the functions of work attitudes. There is every reason for practitioners to be interested in the antecedents of work attitudes. Control costs can be substantially reduced when employees have positive work attitudes. For instance, committed employees are self-directed and motivated actors. They become conscious of the needs of the organization and are willing to make

extra efforts for the sake of the company. They experience organization's performance as their personal success or failure. Thus, when managers find the means to elicit the commitment of its members, they have at their disposal a very powerful mechanism of control (Lincoln & Kalleberg, 1990).

What make Americans and the Chinese committed to their companies are different than what make Koreans committed. To elicit organizational commitment from their workers, managers should know the exact determinants of organizational commitment in each country. In addition, there are differences in the antecedents to organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Some factors contribute to organizational commitment but not to job satisfaction. For instance, promotion chance may increase job satisfaction but not organizational commitment for Korean workers.

Lastly, managers should be aware of the role of culture in work motivation. The increasing globalization of business suggests that there is a great need to develop a better understanding of differences that may exist across countries and cultures. To the extent such differences exist, they may manifest themselves in misunderstandings of the causes of organizational commitment, and thus mismanaging employee motivation. As individuals from different cultures increasingly come into contact with each other, both between and within companies, the importance of cross-cultural understanding grows.

TABLE 2: Multiple Regression of Work Attitudes on Other Variables

Regression Equation	Korea		China		US	
	OC+	JS++	OC	JS	OC	JS
1. Age	.10*	.00	-.00	.02	-.04	.00
2. Education	-.16***	-.09*	-.02	.09*	-.09*	-.09*
3. Sex	-.03	.02	.10*	.05	-.03	.02
4. Collectivism	N/A		.14**	.00	.15***	.07
5. Work Centrality	.07	.08*	.00	.07	.13***	.08*
6. Company Orientation	.02	-.01	.00	-.04	.02	-.01
7. Company Familism	.20***	-.05	.04	.02	.01	-.05
8. Supervisory Contact.	.02	.05	.12**	.07	.11**	.05
9. Vertical Tie	.06	.14***	.11*	.12*	.11	.14***
10. Horizontal Tie	.09*	.05	.19***	.13*	.12**	.05
11. Autonomy	.07	.02	.11*	-.04	-.01	.02
12. Task Challenge	.10	.17**	.10	.23***	.00	.17
13. Task Identity	.04	-.04	-.07	.06	-.05	-.04
14. Task Meaningfulness	.03	.14*	.00	.06	.29***	.14*
15. Job Complexity	.11*	.12*	.06	.08	.00	.11*
16. Teamwork	.08*	-.03	.01	.04	.03	-.03
17. Promotion Chance	.08	.13**	.16***	.16**	.13**	.13**
18. Extrinsic Reward	.22***	.17***	.08	-.06	.15***	.17**
Multiple R	.55	.52	.61	.58	.66	.67
R Square	.30	.27	.37	.33	.43	.45

+ OC=Organizational Commitment

++ JS= Job Satisfaction

\* p < .05

\*\* p < .01

\*\*\* p < .001

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## Work Attitudes, Values, Interpersonal Relationships, and Job Characteristics across Cultures: A Comparative Study of Korea, China, and the U.S.A.

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### ABSTRACT

This study examined cross-cultural/country differences in variables that are related to work motivation across three countries - Korea, China and the U.S. In particular, this study compared the antecedents to work attitudes such as values, job characteristics, and interpersonal relationships. Consistent with the previous findings in cross-cultural management literature, there were significant differences in the variables across the three countries. In addition, there were subtle differences in the functions work attitudes such as organizational commitment and job satisfaction. Implications for cross-cultural management were offered.

본 연구는 종업원들의 동기부여와 관련된 변수들에 관하여 한국, 중국, 미국의 세 나라를 비교하였다. 구체적으로 종업원들의 조직몰입도, 직무만족도, 회사 및 일과 관련된 가치관, 회사에서 대인관계의 성격 및 직무의 성격에 관해서 비교연구를 하였다. 이전의 연구와 마찬가지로 이 세나라 사이에 유의한 상이점이 본 연구에서 발견되었다. 특히 각 나라별로 조직몰입도와 직무만족도에 영향을 주는 영향변수들이 약간씩의 차이를 보였다. 본 연구가 이론과 실무에 주는 의미도 정리하였다.

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