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The Emergence of Leader-Society Value Congruence: A Cross-Cultural Perspective

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Abstract

Previous research on cross-cultural leadership has focused on the outcomes associated with leadership factors consistent with national cultural values without exploring how leaders' individual cultural orientations become congruent with the societal culture in different national settings. The purpose of this paper is to provide a deeper understanding of how leader-society value congruence is produced and how the degree of such congruency varies across cultures. This paper conceptually clarifies the mechanisms that mediate the influence of cultural context on leader-society value congruence; suggests that the effects of societal context are only distal antecedents of producing congruence between leaders' individual and societal level cultural values; and concludes that their effects are manifest via their impact on self-construal and communication patterns.

Introduction

Cross-cultural leadership research suggests that cultural forces affect the kind of leader behavior that is commonly accepted, enacted, and effective within a collective (Den Hartog et al., 1999; Dorfman, Javidan, Hanges, Dastmalchian, & House, 2012; Elenkov, 2002; Hofstede, 1980; House, Wright, & Aditya, 1997; Javidan, Dorfman, de Luque, & House, 2006; Javidan & House, 2001). As such, behavior that is reflective of collective values will be more acceptable and leaders tend to behave in a manner consistent with the desired leadership found in that culture (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004). For example, the cultural congruence proposition would assert that high power distance and in-group collectivism societies (Hofstede, 1980; House et al., 2004) tend to accept leader behaviors that are consistent with high scores on these dimensions. Several researchers (e.g., Dorfman & Howell, 1988) have shown that strong importance placed by Asian managers on paternalism and group maintenance activities (Schweiger, Sandberg, & Ragan, 1986) is consistent with countries that are culturally highly collective. More recent findings (Dorfman, Sully de Luque, Hanges, & Javidan, 2010) further support the congruence proposition by showing that leaders tend to behave in a manner consistent with the expectations of their respective societies.

This stream of research, however, has focused on congruence between leadership behaviors and national culture while the issue of congruency between leaders' individual and societal values on underlying dimensions has received negligible attention. Nonetheless, there is a sparse body of cross-cultural psychology and leadership literature that suggests that the individual-society value congruence tends to be higher in cultures where discrepancy from societal values is not tolerated and/or wherein certain values are communicated during formative stages in one's life (Fischer, 2006; Mustafa & Lines, 2012, 2013; Triandis, 1989), but these studies have not addressed the question of how such cultural effects are transmitted. Thus, little is known about the emergence and extent of leader-society value congruence, that is, how leaders' cultural orientations become congruent with societal culture and whether the degree to which leader-

individual level values correspond to the values of the larger society varies across cultures.

To address this gap in the literature, this paper identifies "self-interdependent orientation" and "high-context communication" as two potential mechanisms that mediate the influence of cultural context on leader-society value congruence. The paper suggests that the effects of societal context are only distal antecedents of producing congruence between leaders' individual and societal level cultural values and their effects are manifest via their impact on self-construal (Markus & Kitayama, 1991) and communication pattern (Hall, 1976), and their subsequent effects on such congruence. Understanding these mechanisms may help construct a clear picture of the cross-level effects of culture on leadership behaviors and may be important for carrying out selection and training of cross-cultural managers.

To develop propositions, this paper reviews and integrates the following categories of literature: literature on cultural effects in shaping members' individual values, self-construal theory, low/high-context communication, and the literature that provides a potential link between different cultural value dimensions and self-construal and communication patterns. The discussion begins with a review of the individual-society value congruence. The paper then discusses how differences in values associated with leaders' national cultures shape the self-construal and communication pattern of leaders differently as well as how self-interdependent orientation and high-context communication are linked with high leader-society value congruence. Lastly, the paper suggests implications for practice and identifies avenues for future research.

Cultural Setting and Leader-Society Value Congruence

There is a high level of consensus in cross-cultural literature (e.g., Hofstede, 1980; Javidan & House, 2001; Schwartz & Bardi, 2001) that societal culture influences perceptions and values of societal members, and that a set of cultural orientations — such as egalitarianism or power distance, collectivism or individual autonomy, and assertiveness or femininity — is deeply internalized in societal members through different means of socialization. Hence, values held by members of a society are partly a social phenomenon and since leaders are members of societal cultures, the value systems they hold are also likely to be reflective of the larger society (Hanges, Lord, & Dickson, 2000).

For leaders, societal culture has a direct impact on their values by societal socialization and the influence of societal culture is mediated by the organizational culture. This is evident from the fact that national culture plays an important role in shaping organizational culture (Dickson, BeShears, & Gupta, 2004; Hofstede & Peterson, 2000; Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007), which may lead to behaviors within organizations that correspond to a society's predominant values (Shane, Venkataraman, & MacMillan, 1995). Over time, leaders in organizations respond to the organizational culture (Schein, 1992; Trice & Beyer, 1984), and the cultural elements within the organization lead to an indirect effect of societal culture on their values. The point to argue is whether societal culture has a direct effect on leader values or an effect that is mediated by organizational values and the value systems leaders hold that are partly shaped by the larger society (e.g., Hanges et al., 2001). The direct effect stems from societal socialization; these values are brought by leaders to the organization. The mediated effect is a result of the socialization that takes place within the boundaries of an organization. Since organizational culture is reflective of the surrounding national culture, organizational socialization is not limited to one's organization alone, but occurs within the broader milieu of the whole societal context (Morrow, 1983; Wiener, 1982).

Schwartz (1999) suggests that managers in different cultural settings tend to emphasize work goals that are reflective of the core values of their respective societies.

However, national cultures are thought to differ in the intensity of their influence in creating convergence between individual and societal level values (Mustafa & Lines, 2013). In their respective studies on value transmission and assimilation in the family system, Boehnke (2001) and Schönflug (2001) found that collectivistic (embeddedness) values tend to be more internalized than individualist (intellectual autonomy) values. In a similar vein, Fischer (2006) reported a strong convergence between individual and societal level value ratings for embeddedness and affective autonomy values. Fischer (2006) argues that these values might be deeply ingrained during socialization processes because they are related to culturally appropriate experiences and expressions of connectedness.

The strength of a culture to create congruence has been argued to depend on how strongly a culture's values are communicated to the societal members and to what extent a national culture deals with discrepancy from societal values by creating a certain degree of tolerance. Triandis (1989) argues that compared to loose cultures, members in tight cultures show greater homogeneity in values, that is, they closely share norms and values that characterize their society. In such societies, people attempt to harmonize social expectations with individual preferences in order to exhibit steady conformity to societal values. As a result, social expectations become an internal norm of obligation (Vauclair, 2009; Yao & Wang, 2006), which tends to produce a close alignment between personal and societal values. For instance, fostering harmonious interdependence among in-group members is a core cultural norm in Japan (Kim & Nam, 1998). Since Japanese employees are expected to display a high level of value congruence, Japanese organizations rely on long socialization processes to pass on collective behavioral patterns to organizational members (Hogg & Terry, 2000; Ouchi, 1981).

That is to say, the predictive ability of societal values on leaders' individual level values will be stronger in a cultural context where social norms are more salient and demanding. For instance, personal and communal goals are more closely aligned in collectivist cultures than in individualist cultures (Triandis, 1995). Conversely, the basic motive structure of people in individualistic cultures reflects their internal beliefs and capacities — including the ability to effect change and to withstand social pressure (Triandis, 1995). According to Yaveroglu and Donthu (2002), individuals in collectivist cultures are more likely to imitate each other in an effort to fit in to gain social standing and acceptance. This line of argument is supported by earlier evidence which suggests that social norms rather than personal values are a useful predicator of behavior in collectivist societies, while personal values and attitudes play an important role in predicting one's behavioral intentions in individualist cultures (Bontempo & Rivero, 1992). Similarly, role obligations and other normative influences are said to play an important part in the development of self-identity of people in cultures (e.g., China) marked by traditional values (Westwood, Chan, & Linstead, 2004).

The above reveals that a general consensus in research is that cultural context directly affects the extent of congruence between individual and societal values. Also, it is more prevalent in cultures where certain societal norms are more pervasive and demanding. The current literature, however, does not provide a deeper understanding of the potential causal relationships between cultural dimensions and member-society value congruence. The existing studies have shown that value congruency is higher in some cultures than others, but the question being raised is how such cultural effects are transmitted. The

insertion of mechanisms between cultural dimensions and value congruence may extend our understanding from the effects of societal context *per se* to the underlying processes that are responsible for such effects and may also help explain why, in some cultures, value congruence occurs more than in others.

Figure 1: Leader-Society Value Congruence
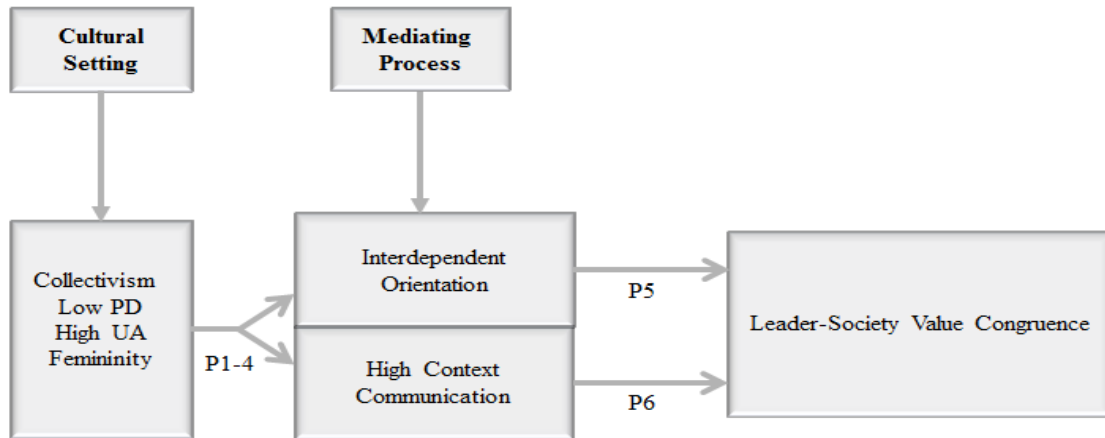
In view of the above, this paper identifies "self-interdependent orientation" and "high-context communication" as two potential mechanisms that mediate the influence of cultural context on leader-society value congruence. The paper suggests that differences in societies' values shape the communication pattern and self-construal of the leaders differently such that in some cultures, they tend to develop an interdependent orientation of self and are exposed to high-context form of communication which, in turn, positively affects the extent of leader-society value congruence.

An Overview of Self-Construal and Communication Pattern
Independent versus Interdependent Orientation of Self

According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), the identity orientation of a person consists of two different loci: the self as an independent entity and the self as an interdependent being. Each orientation of the self is connected with two distinct motives among individuals: the emphasis on pursuing and/or securing personal interests or adopting a group's perspective. The independent orientation of self underscores a sense of individual autonomy and uniqueness. People with a salient independent orientation are motivated by self-interest; they strive to express themselves and tend to act in furtherance of their own goals (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Being independent entails seeing oneself as a unique entity who is detached from the social context and for the most part, whose behavior and attitudes are shaped and organized by reference to the individual's own thoughts and feelings (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Interdependent orientation, on the other hand, implies a psychological merging of self with the collective that leads an individual to perceive others as included in one's own self-representation (Hogg, 2001; Sedikides, 2002). Markus and Kitayama (1991) argue that a dominant interdependent orientation makes people see themselves integrated with others in an encompassing social context. People are responsive to the thoughts and preferences of other individuals in the social relationships when the definition of self is associated with the surrounding social environment (Yamazaki, 2005).

High versus Low-Context Communication

From a cross-cultural perspective, Hall's (1976) taxonomy of high-context and low-context communication constitutes the two widely discussed communication patterns. High-context communication refers to a relational approach to communication (Pekerti & Thomas, 2003) and is indicated by associative, polite, less confrontational, and both indirect and implicit actions (Adair, 2003; Gudykunst & Matsumoto, 1996; Murphy & Levy, 2006). In a high-context form of communication, much of what is meant cannot be said outright; this implies that an implicit meaning of a message is embedded in the contextual clues (Hall, 1976; Kitayama & Ishii, 2002). Individuals in high-context interactions would particularly emphasize another's feelings in the communication process. In order to be responsive to the feelings of the audience, the speaker/writer expresses his/her thoughts and intentions in a way that tends to be indirect, implicit, and less impersonal (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hall, 1998; Mintu-Wimsatt & Gassenheimer, 2000; Niikura, 1999). Past evidence (Bello, Ragsdale, Brandau-Brown, & Thibodeaux, 2006) reveals that in cultures (e.g., China, Taiwan, and Colombia) where a high-context form of communication is prevalent, people tend to use less direct and less explicit messages in communication compared to cultures (e.g., Australia) more inclined to use equivocal or direct communication styles. Adair's (2003) study provides further evidence for context orientation as an indicator for directness, confirming that unlike their counterparts in low-context societies, negotiators in high-context cultures are more likely to adopt an indirect communication behavior. In a similar vein, it has been observed that people involved in high-context interactions are more polite and less confrontational while communicating with others (Murphy & Levy, 2006).

In a low-context form of communication, explicitness and unambiguity in generating messages is greatly emphasized; attention to surrounding social and contextual circumstances is less crucial in the message encoding and decoding process (Bello et al., 2006; Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hall, 1976). In such a form of communication, interpersonal relationships are less emphasized and the major focus of communicators remains on rationally-detached analyses (Hall, 1976; Yamazaki, 2005). In low-context communication, both speaker and audience expect directness and explicit verbal expression of intentions, thoughts, and wishes (Abdullah, 1996; Adair, 2003). This is why low-context interactions tend to be objective and impersonal with a primary emphasis on promptness and task accomplishment (Burgoon & Hale, 1987).

Influence of Culture on Leaders' Self-Construal and Communication Patterns

Differences in values associated with a national society influence the way individuals perceive themselves. Individuals native to certain cultures tend to develop independent orientation of self, and for people brought up and socialized in certain other cultures, interdependent construal of self becomes salient. In previous studies, linkage of different orientations of self has been provided to the extent of cultural dimensions of collectivism and individualism. Triandis (1989), for example, argues that people in collectivist cultures may develop an interdependent construal of self, while individualistic values are linked to the perceptions of independent self-construal.

Likewise, societal values also define norms for interpersonal communication and help to determine how individuals in different societies generate and interpret messages (Leonard, Van Scotter, & Pakdil, 2009; Pekerti and Thomas, 2003). For example, in the United States clarity and unambiguity is expected in communication, that is, people are supposed to express their thoughts explicitly (Gallois & Callan, 1997). In contrast, the communication pattern in other societies, such as China and Indonesia, is relatively more indirect and implicit (Pekerti, 2003). In the past, there have been negligible empirical and conceptual attempts to clarify the relationships of cultural values and communication

styles. A few studies, however, (e.g., Gudykunst et al., 1996) have provided support that a high-context form of communication prevails in collectivist cultures, while individualist societies prefer a low-context communication pattern.

The present article attempts to provide a separate logic for linkage of each cultural dimension with the leaders' construal of self and communication pattern, and contend that, on average, cultural values characterized by collectivism, low power distance (PD), high uncertainty avoidance (UA), and femininity have more pronounced effects in shaping an interdependent orientation of self and a high-context communication pattern in leaders. This, in turn, is likely to mediate the influence of cultural context on leader-society value congruence.

Collectivism-Individualism

Self-Construal. Collectivism is characterized by a closely-knit social framework where individuals have a tendency to see themselves from a holistic perspective (Triandis, 1995) and tend to keep the interests of the collectivite above their personal priorities (Hofstede, 1980; Schwartz, 1999). By virtue of the strong group orientation, collectivists are more likely to activate information that facilitates achieving collective welfare, which in turn motivates behaviors that focus on interdependence (Triandis et al., 1993). Empirical evidence suggests that people in collectivist cultures (e.g., China) work well on interdependent group tasks, while people from individualist societies (e.g., the US) report higher incidences of social loafing and free riding while working on tasks that require interdependence (Earley, 1989). Sosik (2005) contends that leaders with a collectivist orientation tend to build a collective identity; their efforts are likely to be directed towards promoting team work and mutual goal attainment. This implies that leaders in collectivist cultures acquire much of their construal as interdependent beings.

In individualistic cultures, the individual is viewed as an autonomous entity who is encouraged to find meaning in his/her distinctiveness and act or behave in relation to his/her own thoughts and motives (Schwartz, 1999; Triandis, 1994). People from cultures characterized by individualistic values tend to activate information and behave in ways that facilitate the goals of independence and self-achievement (Triandis et al., 1993). Earlier findings report that social loafing disappears among group members of individualist cultures when individual responsibility is fixed for group outcomes (Weldon & Gargano, 1988). This suggests that in individualistic cultures, perceptions of self are less likely to be influenced by the norms of the social setting, and people tend to perceive their private self as salient (Earley, 1989; Uskul, Hynie, & Lalonde, 2004). Leaders in such societies are, therefore, expected to construe themselves in an acontextualized manner.

Communication Pattern. Members of collectivist societies stress a high degree of behavioral conformity to the codes of behavior established by the collectivite (Doney, Cannon, & Mullen, 1998; Kagitcibasi, 1997). They maintain harmonious relationships and show concern for the needs and feelings of others in the group (e.g., Jordan & Surrey, 1986). The norms in such cultures define appropriate ways of interacting with others and they provide implicit rules about how to behave in given roles and situations (Schall, 1983). It has been noted that people in collectivist cultures emphasize others' feelings in social interactions and frequently engage in face-saving behaviors in the communication process (De Mooij, 2010). The strength of members' connectedness to the group dictates their pattern of communication; they tend to pay more attention to the socially-accepted cues and symbols in communicating with others. Bello et al.'s (2006) findings suggest that collectivist cultures, such as China, Taiwan, and Colombia, are

more inclined to use implicit and indirect communication styles than cultures characterized by individualist values, such as Australia. Based on this, it would be expected that a high-context form of communication will prevail in organizations of collectivist cultures and leaders would also be attuned to such a pattern of communication.

In individualistic cultures, members are less concerned about others' needs and feelings and emphasize objectivity, directness, and explicit logic in the communication process (Ting-Toomey, 1988). Individuals in such cultures are less responsive to the social and contextual clues in the communication process and tend to seek ways that facilitate the expression of what they mean, feel, or think (Earley, 1989; Yamazaki, 2005). This suggests that leaders in such societies would prefer a low-context form of communication. Based on the above discussion, the following is proposed:

- **Proposition 1(a).** *The greater the collectivist values associated with a leader's national culture, the greater the leader will develop an interdependent orientation of self.*

- **Proposition 1(b).** *The greater the collectivist values associated with a leader's national culture, the greater the leader will adopt a high-context communication pattern.*

Power Distance (PD)

Self-Construal. Power distance in a culture signifies to what extent inequalities among societal members are maintained (Hofstede, 2010). High PD cultures emphasize verticality, which is expressed in senior-junior relationships where superiors lead and those who occupy low ranks in the hierarchy occupy an obedient position (Javidan et al., 2006; Smith, Peterson, & Schwartz, 2002). In principle, superiors are socialized to take control while people in subordinate positions refrain from voicing personal opinions and show deference to the wisdom, knowledge, and expertise of superiors (Bu, Craig, & Peng, 2001; Dorfman et al., 2012; Pasa, 2000). Norms in such cultures tend to confer on leaders significant prerogatives and ample latitude for action (Hambrick & Finkelstein, 1987). This allows leaders to demand obedience from followers and force action as they deem fit (Farh & Cheng, 2000). For instance, both leaders and followers from high PD cultures, such as The Philippines, Venezuela, and India see any bypassing of superiors as inappropriate (Adler, 1997). The supremacy attached to the leadership positions in high PD societies is expected to promote a construal of self that implies that the actions of a leader are not guided in relation to the preferences and values of subordinates.

In contrast, people in low PD societies tend to recognize each other as moral equals (Sagiv & Schwartz, 2007; Yan & Hunt, 2005) and seem to cooperate and act for the benefit of others as a matter of choice (Clugston, Howell, & Dorfman, 2000). Management practices in such societies are characterized by inclusion and attention to the well-being of all (Sagiv & Lee, 2006). Evidence from the Nordic countries suggests that norms in such cultures support little managerial discretion in Nordic firms; leader-follower interactions are based on mutual understanding and concern (Selmer & De Leon, 1996). The above suggests that managers in low PD cultures view themselves as not detached from the surrounding social environment and understand their roles as reflective of the feelings and responses of employees.

Communication Patterns. In high PD cultures, superiors wield strong authority over followers. Thus, it is improper for followers to show any resentment to leaders' decisions (e.g., Cheng & Jiang, 2000; Smith et al., 2002). There is a strong norm that leaders issue

instructions and directives emphasizing a top-down communication instead of sharing or delegating decision-making authority (Hui, Au, & Fock, 2004). Thus, in high PD cultures, the behaviors of leaders are directed towards exerting control to induce follower compliance and conformity, and as such, leaders tend to ascribe less priority to the thoughts and feelings of subordinates. For this reason, a task accomplishment role of communication will dominate for leaders in such societies and they will be more direct, explicit, and sender-centered in their communication with subordinates.

In contrast, members in low PD cultures do not wish to maintain inequalities and status differences between incumbents of different hierarchical levels (Hofstede, 2001). Low PD societies provide an environment that supports a smooth vertical and horizontal flow of data and information within organizations. Organizational members are respected as independent workers and their input in decisions is appreciated (House et al., 2004). This encourages a leadership process that is built on consultation and open communicative interaction between leaders and followers (Selmer & De Leon, 1996). This suggests that leaders in less hierarchical (egalitarian) cultures would have a strong tendency to adopt a communication pattern that involves consciousness of fitting in with their environment. The above discussion leads to suggest the following:

- **Proposition 2(a).** *The lesser the PD values associated with a leader's national culture, the greater the leader will develop an interdependent orientation of self.*

- **Proposition 2(b).** *The lesser the PD values associated with a leader's national culture, the greater the leader will adopt a high-context communication pattern.*

Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)

Self-Construal. Uncertainty avoidance reflects how comfortable individuals in a culture are with ambiguous situations (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). In societies marked by UA values, members focus on stability and engage in greater risk- avoiding behaviors (House et al., 2004; Kueh & Voon, 2007). When encountering a new situation, they engage in a less cognitive assessment of the situation and tend to rely on information gathered from those around them (Sorrentino, Bobocel, Gitta, Olson, & Hewitt, 1988). As a strategy to reduce uncertainty, people in such cultures are likely to base their decisions on the opinions and experiences of others (Dawar, Parker, & Price, 1996). Prior studies suggest that managers in high UA cultures are averse to novel behaviors and their actions and decisions are guided by shared societal norms and expectations (Hambrick & Brandon, 1988). In their study on the role of social environment in technology adoption, Strite and Karahanne (2006) found that social influences play a significant role in technology adoption and utilization for individuals characterized by UA values. Thus, we expect that leaders in high UA cultures would be more susceptible to social influences and, as such, an interdependent orientation would be more desirable for them.

Conversely, low UA cultures allow new initiatives and encourage individuals to use their own knowledge and analytical capabilities instead of relying on social and environmental cues (Petty & Capioppo, 1996). Strite and Karahanne (2006) contend that individuals not characterized by UA emphasize rational elements rather than being mobilized by social influences in making decisions — such as in adopting and utilizing a particular technology. Further, managers in such cultures have been found to prefer novelty and experimentation over using tested patterns and procedures (Hambrick & Brandon, 1988). This suggests that leaders in low UA societies tend to be less regulated by social influences, thus allowing them to emphasize their own uniqueness and become more independent from others.

Communication Pattern. Members of high UA cultures will prefer to communicate in a manner that provides enough information to reduce ambiguity and resolve unclear and unstructured situations (Money & Crotts, 2003). People in such cultures tend to heavily rely on environmental cues (Strite & Karahanne, 2006) because direct and verbal messages not supported by symbols and overt cues will be less informative in reducing ambiguity. Conversely, a communication style that carries symbols and non-verbal cues reflecting societal norms and beliefs will provide needed structure. Smith's (2004) research shows that an acquiescent response style in communication representing agreeableness and modesty in verbal statements (Javeline, 1999) is more common within cultures that are high in uncertainty avoidance. It is, therefore, expected that leaders in such cultures will prefer a high-context form of communication in that they will be more responsive to social influences and will pay more attention to cues social environmental cues.

Low UA cultures are tolerant of ambiguity; a developed structure is generally not advocated in such societies (Hodson & Sorrentino, 2001; Hofstede, 2001). Members low on UA orientation tend to generate and interpret messages based on objective judgment instead of relying on environmental cues (e.g., Chaiken, 1980). Earlier studies indicate that less acquiescent response behaviors reflecting clarity, precision, and explicitness in verbal statements are more common among individuals embedded in low- uncertainty avoidance cultures (Smith, 2004). This suggests that leaders in low UA cultures will exhibit low-context communication behaviors because the communication pattern that is suitable for storing and transferring data and objective information tends to align with the norms prevalent in low UA cultures. Consequently, the following is suggested:

- **Proposition 3(a).** *The greater the UA values associated with a leader's national culture, the greater the leaders will develop an interdependent orientation of self.*

- **Proposition 3(b).** *The greater the UA values associated with a leader's national culture, the greater the leader will adopt a high-context communication pattern.*

Masculinity-Femininity

Self-Construal. People in masculine societies are assertive, competitive, achievement-oriented, and generally less motivated by affiliation and belongingness needs (Hofstede, 1998; Randal, 1993). Previous evidence suggests that people with a masculine orientation are less receptive to others' opinions (Pornpitakpan, 2004), objective in their judgment, and rely more on their own experiences and understanding (Meyers-Levy, 1989; Strite & Karahanne, 2006). People marked by a masculine orientation tend to be overwhelmed by the motives of success and accomplishment (Hofstede, 1980; Kale & Barnes, 1992), and might afford less importance to affiliation and belongingness needs (Hofstede, 1980; Lam, Lee & Mizerski, 2009). Earlier studies support this view by arguing that masculine values indicate pragmatism (Rakos, 1991) and pursuing a cost-benefit calculation in social exchange relations (Randall, 1993). At the workplace, a tilt towards masculinity may represent placing higher value on individual material incentives than on social exchanges, such as attention, sensitivity, and nurturance (Hofstede, 1998; Newman & Nollen, 1996; Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998). This suggests that leaders in masculine societies are less likely to see themselves as part of an encompassing social relationships and their self-representation will reflect less inclusion of others.

In contrast, people who espouse feminine values would be more concerned with showing empathy and fostering interpersonal harmony (Hofstede, 1984; Schuler & Rogovsky, 1998). To look agreeable, people with a dominant feminine orientation tend to be more

responsive to the suggestions of others (Kim, Lehto, & Morrison, 2007), show high social influenceability (Venkatesh, Morris, Sykes, & Ackerman, 2004), and are more likely to conform to group pressures (Bem, 1975). For leaders in feminine cultures, the desire to achieve is less important than supporting people through benevolent and nurturing practices (Hofstede, 2001). Further, a drive to maintain and achieve interpersonal harmony may take precedence over emphasis on recognition and advancement for leaders of such societies. Thus, leaders in feminine cultures are more likely to develop an interdependent orientation of self.

Communication Pattern. People in masculine cultures tend to be overwhelmed by the motives of success and accomplishment and are likely to prefer pragmatic, decisive, and daring actions in social interactions (Hofstede, 1998, 2001; Randall, 1993). Earlier studies suggest that individuals with a predominant masculine orientation are more verbally assertive, use more direct statements (Hogg & Garrow, 2003), and are less likely to display acquiescent behaviors in the communication process (Johnson, Kulesa, Cho, & Shavitt, 2005). This suggests that leaders in masculine societies will be less influenced by the needs and preferences of others (Pornpitakpan, 2004) and are expected to show low levels of reliance on social clues (Morden, 1991; Rodrigues, 1998), leading them to adopt a low-context communication style.

Femininity represents a communal orientation (Chang, 2006) wherein people build and maintain friendly social ties with others and their actions are embedded within relationships (Hofstede, 1998). Communication may serve as a basis for nurturing relationships in such cultures. As such, members of feminine societies are likely to be accommodative, non-confrontational, and obliging in interacting with others. Johnson et al.'s (2005) findings indicate that response behaviors that are linked to agreeableness and group harmony tend to be more prevalent in cultures low on masculine values. This implies that a high-context form of communication will be prevalent in cultures characterized by feminine values. Thus, leaders in such cultures will show stronger concern for feelings and thoughts of subordinates in the communication process. Based on the above discussion, the following is proposed:

- Proposition 4(a). *The greater the femininity values associated with a leader's national culture, the greater the leader will develop an interdependent orientation of self.*

- Proposition 4(b). *The greater the femininity values associated with a leader's national culture, the greater the leaders will adopt a high-context communication pattern.*

Interdependent Orientation and Leader-Society Value Congruence

An individual with an interdependent orientation subordinates his/her personal priorities to those of the collective in many domains of social life and becomes attuned to perspectives of salient others (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1995). For instance, in collectivist cultures, children are exposed to a sociocentric orientation (e.g., consideration, nurturance, and benevolence). As a result, children in collectivist cultures tend to develop strong perceptions of interdependence with regard to the relationship between the individual and the social group (Fischer, 2006). Likewise, people in paternalistic cultures are taught that the expectations and wishes of other members in the family system come before their own needs and feelings (Kakar, 1978). To uphold family coherence and harmony, individuals in such cultures hold other members in high esteem when self and relational preferences are incompatible (Seymour, 1999). This, in turn, influences the development of interdependent perceptions of self in their later lives.

According to many past studies, people with an interdependent orientation place more emphasis on display of behaviors that fulfill their sociocentric and associative needs. For instance, Cross, Morris, and Gore (2002) reported that people with a relational self-construal emphasize connectedness to other people and act or behave in a manner conducive to promoting and strengthening the existing relationships. Ybarra and Stephan's (1999) findings suggest that Asians are more attuned to situational factors such as cultural norms. In contrast, people with low interdependent orientation exhibit low intensities of affiliative motives that segregate self from the context, thus making them less attuned to the external sources of guidance in determination of behavior (Al-Zahrani & Kaplowitz, 1993; Morris & Peng, 1994; Triandis, 1989).

In the workplace, members with a prevalent, interdependent self-react positively to the organizational goals and practices that promote group accomplishment while members with a salient independent orientation tend to evaluate the meaning of such goals and practices in terms of their likely capacity to enhance or inhibit opportunities for individual success (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989). Leaders with an interdependent orientation might be responsive to, and hence accommodate, the needs, priorities, and values of others. The act of giving primacy to the feelings and preferences of others over one's own value priorities will lead to deep social patterning of individual level values and erode personal-societal value inconsistencies over time. This suggests that individual-level values of leaders, who have dominant perceptions of interdependence and develop the ability of relating to others in the collectivitive, are likely to be less incongruent with the socio-cultural values. In the light of above, the following is suggested:

- Proposition 5. *Self-construal mediates the influence of cultural context in producing congruence between a leader's individual and societal values such that leader-society value congruence will be higher in cultures where a leader's interdependent orientation is dominant.*

High-Context Communication and Leader-Society Value Congruence

One key distinction between high and low-context forms of communication is their relative susceptibility to social influences. High-context communication needs a higher intensity of social and emotional cues to build and foster relationships whereas a low-context form of communication places more value on the efficiency of communication to get the job done (e.g., Hall, 1998; Niikura, 1999). Contrary to low-context communicators, who in general are more direct and sender-centered, speakers/writers in high-context interactions are more indirect and receiver-centered (Ting-Toomey, 1988). This suggests that high-context communication involves a strong consciousness of relatedness to the surrounding social environment (Hall, 1976; Yamzaki, 2005). Moreover, fitting in and gaining social acceptance is considered more important in high-context interactions.

Previous research suggests that high-context communication places a high priority on maintaining harmony and social order and fulfills an associative function of communication while low-context interactions are more concerned with a functional role of communication that is directed towards task accomplishment (Burgoon & Hale, 1987). Pekerti and Thomas's (2003) findings confirm that high-context communicators (e.g., Asians) tend to display high levels of people-oriented communication styles consistent with maintaining harmony and promoting one's integration into the surrounding world. The authors reported that low-context communicators (e.g., Westerners) demonstrated communication behaviors that were more idiocentric. This means that the focus in such communication pattern was on task accomplishment. Evidence from other studies also provides support for differences between high- and low-context communication patterns.

For example, such studies purport that Chinese communicators are more sensitive to cultural cues and are inclined to reconcile their communication styles to that of their partners while Americans are more context- independent and tend to be less aware of cultural differences in communicating with others (Wang, Fussell, & Setlock, 2009).

The above findings suggest that people with high-context communication ascribe a high degree of importance to context and embedded relationships and may expect the communication process to play an affiliative role (Pekerti & Thomas, 2003). They tend to be situational, meaning that they may place great emphasis on fitting in with their environment during organizational interactions. As opposed to the low-context form of communication, use of symbols and non-verbal cues are also afforded high importance in high-context forms of communication. When selecting symbols and non-verbal cues in generating a message, one is less likely to use personal judgment; he/she must look towards the social environment to select those symbols and cues that are widely recognized. It seems that leaders involved in high-context interactions would be more receptive to social influences in sending and interpreting messages and are more likely to follow culturally agreed-upon cues with respect to what constitutes the right way of communicating. Thus, a leader socialized in a culture where high-context communication prevails has to regulate his/her communication styles according to organizational goals and values. As a result, the personal priorities of leaders will be attuned to the societal influences leading to high leader-society value congruence. Consequently, the following proposition is suggested:

- Proposition 6. *The communication pattern mediates the influence of cultural context in producing congruence between a leader's individual and societal values such that leader-society value congruence will be more demonstrable in cultures where leaders adopt a high-context communication pattern.*

Implications for Research and Practice
Future Theory and Research

The theoretical model developed in the present paper has a number of significant implications for future research. Several interesting avenues would be to empirically examine how each cultural dimension affects a leader's construal of self and his/her communication pattern; how a leader's identity orientation and communication pattern transmit effects of cultural values in producing leader-society value congruence; and how such congruency is related to leadership effectiveness. It would be interesting to examine the cultural congruence for lesser or greater degree of convergence between leaders' individual and their societies' values by assessing the level of value internalization — external regulation, introjected regulation, identified regulation, and integrated regulation — echoed in self-determination literature (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Connell, 1989). These studies suggest that in "external regulation" and "introjected regulation," one acts or behaves in the face of regulatory or normative pressures while in "identified regulation" a particular value is consciously endorsed as if it is personally important for him or her. In integrated regulation, a societal value is synthesized into an individual's everyday life and becomes part of his/her self-conception. This will help explore the relative strength of value congruence in different cultural settings. Further, future research might examine the interaction between a leader's identity orientation and communication pattern as well as the relative importance of each mediating construct in determining the level of leader-society value congruence.

The present paper assumes the emergence of cultural congruence as a top-down process and does not explicate the role of leaders' individual level factors in shaping their

communication patterns and identity orientations. Future research should examine the influence of a leader's individual level factors such as self-management to observe and regulate his/her public appearance (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000; Sosik & Dinger; 2007). Another promising direction for future research is to understand the effects of an experiential learning process on value congruence; that is, how leaders observe subordinate reactions and over time learn to shift their emphasis toward group/individual orientation and produce alternative communication styles presumed to be consistent with follower-cultural values (Kolb, 1984; Mustafa & Lines, 2013). In addition to assessing the role of individual-level factors, it would be important to examine the separate role of societal and organizational culture in the relative importance of a leader's self-construal and communication style. This is important for developing a better understanding of the role of acculturation through organizational socialization to achieve the benefits of cultural congruence (e.g., minimizing the role of formal control).

While discussing cultural congruence, the current paper posits that people's values and psychological tendencies develop in ways that their overlap with societal values tends to be more salient in certain cultures compared to others. It was postulated that some cultures promote "interdependent orientation" and "high-context-communication" more than other cultures, which in turn help leaders to produce value congruency with their societies' values. But, given the contention that people are socialized to fit in with, and adapt to, the cultural milieu in which they are embedded (Gelfand et al., 2011), it will be interesting if future studies suggest theoretical reasons regarding acontextuality of cultural congruence to justify that the degree of convergence between personal and societal level values is not subject to any particular cultural influences. For instance, this paper proposes that the egalitarian cultures will evoke higher levels of interdependent orientation than hierarchical cultures, but earlier studies show that in paternalistic cultures where PD is a prevalent cultural characteristic, managers not only guide professional activities of followers but also attempt to promote their well-being by exhibiting concern for their personal matters (Pasa, Kabasakal, & Bodur, 2001). In such societies, the leader is seen within the role of a guardian who is expected to provide support and protection to all under his control as a caretaker of the work unit (Kerfoot & Knights, 1993; Martinez, 2005). Thus, the expectation that managers in low PD cultures will develop an interdependent orientation of self may also hold for paternalistic PD cultures because managers in such cultures are likely to be very in tune with their employees. Future research might propose theoretical rationales to present a more sophisticated view of the means and processes that help leaders to fit in with their cultures — whether the culture is individualistic or collectivistic, egalitarian or hierarchical. Further, the arguments and logic of lack of variability (greater congruence) in some cultures is supported by examples that are linked to theory and research on cultural values. But the theory of cultural tightness-looseness takes a slightly different perspective and suggests that the cultural value dimensions like collectivism-individualism, PD, UA, and masculinity-femininity do not focus on pressures for conformity to general external standards. Rather, the importance of congruence with societal norms is something that is explained by cultural tightness and looseness (Gelfand, et al., 2011). Thus, it's possible to make a stronger case about the importance of conformity to a particular societal standard by bringing in the theory of cultural tightness-looseness.

Moreover, our discussion has been based on the assumption that the proposed mechanisms operate independent of each other. However, they may be somewhat related and influence each other in a particular manner and there may be the possibility of some overlap existing between the proposed mechanisms. Future research might explore interaction effects of the proposed mechanisms on outcome variables. Clarifying

and testing such interactions would likely make a valuable contribution to a more holistic understanding of the strength of mediating mechanisms and their effects on leader-society value congruence. Likewise, the assessment of the cultural dimension of individualism-collectivism may fetch some criticism for not stipulating whether this study uses the in-group collectivism dimension or institutional collectivism dimension. Although the characteristics of the dimension posited by Hofstede (1980) do not stipulate this and merely refer to individualism-collectivism, according to this notion, people in collectivistic cultures experience stronger pressures to conform to a generalized external, societal standard than individuals in individualistic cultures. But other studies (House et al., 2004) suggest that there are two dimensions of collectivism (i.e., institutional and in-group) which focus on two different levels. According to this conceptualization of collectivism, people of in-group collectivist cultures do not conform to the societal standards, but rather to the expectations and needs of a specific in-group within which they are embedded. Depending on the focus, future studies need to delineate which dimension is being used.

Lastly, the focus of the present study is on the effects of culture from a unidimensional perspective. The propositions imply that culture has its impact one dimension at a time. However, a more realistic situation is that the strength of a particular mechanism is the result of the combined influence of all cultural dimensions. This is important in view of the reason that all national cultures embody multidimensional characteristics. One ideal situation is a culture with characteristics that all promote a particular mechanism, i.e., interdependent orientation or high-context communication. The situation becomes more complex in cultures that have some characteristics which may promote independent orientation but others that may promote interdependent orientation of self. For example, just from a two-dimensional perspective, a culture may have collectivistic and feminine characteristics and there may be other cultures that have individualistic and feminine characteristics at the same time; these characteristics may have an equal or unequal combined influence on a leader's construal of self. An in-depth discussion of the multivariate aspect and testing the propositions in a multivariate way will help construct a more complete picture of the effects of cultural values on the strength of mediating mechanisms in different national settings.

Practical Implications

For organizations, the proposed conceptual model can be a useful tool for selection of managers. In cultures where a high-context communication and an interdependent orientation tend to prevail, managers are likely to pay more attention to contextual information including other members' cultural emphases and the behavioral or value discrepancies between self and others. Conversely, in societies where a low-context communication and an independent orientation prevail, managers tend to overlook peripheral and contextual information and may be more concerned about task accomplishment, taking others' cultural backgrounds for granted and thus failing to adjust to social and cultural differences (e.g., Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Markus & Kityama, 1991; Yamazaki, 2005). While carrying out selection of managers for overseas assignments, managers with a high-context communication and an interdependent orientation should be considered for countries where organizations emphasize shared goal setting and consensus decision making. Selection of such managers will be suitable for projects with interdependent teams and organizations that practice long-term planning. Conversely, managers with a low-context communication and an independent orientation are preferred for cultures where organizations emphasize swift decision making, members of work teams prefer independent accountability for their performance,

and setting short-term goals take precedence over long-term plans. Such managers may be in a better position to lead projects and assignments that have an agenda of fast and efficient mobilization of resources and turning out immediate results. They may also be allowed to assume leadership roles in situations where circumstances warrant prompt and tough decisions by leaders for the benefits of the organization.

This conceptual framework has many practical implications for training of managers who might serve on foreign assignments. Managers socialized in cultures with a high-context communication and an interdependent orientation need less adaptation-oriented training before sending them overseas. The reason is that they tend to be more receiver-centered and are likely to be more concerned about their discrepant behaviors in communicating and collaborating with others. Thus, they show high self-monitoring tendencies across different cultural contexts and tend to regulate their public appearances according to expectations of the target social group (Sosik & Dinger, 2007). However, for expatriate assignments, preference needs to be given to those managers who produce culturally-correspondent behaviors in the face of normative and other cultural influences, but their personal values reflect a moderate internalization of societal values. Individuals who have a deep imprint of societal values on their personal values may experience identity conflict when they attempt to adapt to the behavioral demands of another culture (Molinsky, 2007). On the other hand, managers from cultures with low-context communication and a dominant, independent orientation pay less attention to cultural cues and tend to engage in rationally-detached analyses which lead them to display consistent behaviors across different cultural contexts. This warrants cultural sensitization of such managers through specially-designed training programs.

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