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ABSTRACT: This paper examines the differences in the conception of the Positive Organizational Behavioral construct of hope between a strongly individualistic culture like the United States, and strongly collectivistic cultures like China, the Philippines and Vietnam. The differences are explained by the varying conceptualizations of autonomy, interconnectedness and self between the two cultures. The insight from this comparison should serve both to help accommodate cultural level differences among employees as well as offer a further step in the refinement of the application of individualist/collectivist interpretations to western based managerial and psychological models as well as practices.

INTRODUCTION

In these times of globalization and technical connectedness, events in one region quickly impact all areas of the globe. Interestingly, even when news and information concerning a particular event is nearly identical across the world, the meanings gleaned from this real time information can be drastically different across cultures. Statements by policy makers, business leaders and celebrities yield varying interpretations by the public. Even within a nation like the U.S., disparate perspectives of sub-cultures frequently offer members embedded within one culture assumptions and reasoning perplexing to another. An example of this is the US immigrant protests of May 1, 2006 where pro immigrant protesters saw a mass walkout as a legitimate means of demonstrating. Temporarily removing themselves from work was considered a reasonable avenue of showing their impact on local economies. Meanwhile, many in the US public at large interpreted the walkout as coercive and a reaction by self-interested opportunists for personal gain.

A dual edged cultural characteristic of Americans as well as many westerners in

general is what Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) refer to as universalism. This cultural tendency of westerners imbues a culture with ideals of egalitarianism and justice, but also guides them into the tendency to see all things as similar and to believe that there is an ultimate right or wrong that is self evident. This has served well for the growth of science as the embodiment of knowledge that consists of general explanations (Toulman, 1962). This pursuit of generalities has lead to the precepts of positivism such as generalization, objectivism, determinism and causation (Donaldson, 2003). The idea is that since nature is a reality external to the mind of the individual, social science too is a reality outside the perceptions of the individual. John Maynard Keynes (1965) noted the hazards of this belief in objective knowledge in social science; "Practical men who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences are usually slaves of some defunct economist….It is ideas, not vested interests that are dangerous for good or evil."

The previous discussion is critical to this paper in that the preponderance of theory and models of human behavior and cognition has been built both from, and about, western philosophies. However, when applying these models across cultures, fundamental assumptions not only blind us to the results, but also cause institutional change in the target cultures in a self-fulfilling manner (Ferraro, Pfeffer & Sutton, 2005). This is particularly acute in management literature due to the influence of the field of economics, where frequently the fundamental assumptions of individuals' behaviors include unbounded rationality, insatiable appetite for utility and unlimited self-interest (March, 2006).

This paper contributes to the literature in two ways. 1) Looking at the construct of hope in another culture, which has applications to performance outcomes which offer competitive strengths to organizations that commit to developing it, hope being "unfairly biased towards individualism" in the literature (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002). 2) Examining a well established psychological capacity in a context that has been demonstrated to have a different perspective of rationality, utility and self interest.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH

Hope is a reflection of a person's generic attitude in being successful at his/her tasks and with resolving his/her problems. It is viewed as a general disposition to engage in conscious efforts to reach and obtain goals consisting of both trait and state components (Snyder, Harris, Anderson, Holleran, Irving, Sigmon, Yoshinobu, Gibb, Langelle, and Harney, 1991). Hope positively influences people's perceptions that their goals can be met. People use these positively influenced perceptions to judge the trade off between the costs of their present actions to the future returns. Higher hope people, as a result, engage in activities despite transient setbacks or delayed payoffs. Hope is instrumental for perseverance and commitment in achieving long term and abstract goals. Hope is comprised of two facets—*agency* (one's sense of successful determination in meeting goals in the past, present and future) and *pathways* (one's response repertoire and strategies for goal attainment) (Poole, 2003). People with high hope tend to set more goals compared to people with low hope. People with high hope also tend to have confidence in their

ability to solve problem and tend to have a broader range of problem solving skills (Snyder et al., 1991).

While hope is implicated with other psychological constructs in positive organizational behavior (POB) literature; it is similar in its state-like nature, and it can be developed to influence performance outcomes, (Luthans, 2002; Snyder, Sympson, Ybasco, Borders, Babyak, & Higgins 1996). Hope is similar to self efficacy with respect to agency and outcome expectancies (Luthans & Jensen, 2002; Carver & Scheier, 2002) Hope has been positively linked to work outcomes such managerial appraisals of Chinese workers (Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa & Li, 2005) and financial returns in an aerospace manufacturing firm from an intervention to increase hope and related constructs (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman & Combs, 2006). It may also be similar to self efficacy in its specificity to context or tasks (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002), and has been described as a construct with little difference from self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001). Hope's close implications with self-efficacy imply a strong association with positive work outcomes (Bandura, 1991).

Individualism/collectivism has been typically defined as the reflection of the degree to which a culture reinforces individual or collective achievement and interpersonal relationships (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). According to the conventional conceptualization of individualism and collectivism, individualistic societies reflect core beliefs of individual responsibility to themselves. Americans tend to exhibit more of this individualized nature than people from other cultures (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000) This results in a social pattern of loosely linked individuals who

see themselves as independent of the collective (e.g. families, work groups). Strong individualists value individual rights of freedom, choice, self-fulfilment, and autonomy (Miller, 2003; Triandis, 1989). Similarly, these same individualists maintain weak family, religious, work, and social ties and tend to make choices that establish them as different from others, even if such choices do not maximize their other personal preferences (Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003). In individualistic cultures, self esteem is tied to success in achieving personal goals and others' respect and recognition for accomplishing these personal goals (Yang, 2003).

In comparison, a collectivist culture by traditional collectivist definition (e.g., Hofstede 1980), typifies a society with close ties between individuals. Extended families and collectives where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group are an integral part of a collectivist culture (Davis, 2000). An example would be an East Asian culture such as that found in Vietnam where culture reflects a social pattern of closely linked individuals who view themselves as part of a collective. Being a collective culture, individuals may willingly subordinate (Triandis, 1990), or pre-emptively incorporate (Miller, 2003) their personal goals with those of the collectives (e.g. families, work groups) and emphasize values of obligation, common fate, nurturance, compliance, interdependency and duty. Each group member is more dependent on the greater group's well-being, making collective efforts less likely to fail from the hazards of self interest (Hardin, 1982). In return, the greater group assumes responsibility for each of its members (Kim, Triandis, Kagitchibasi, Choi & Yoon, 1994). Within a collective culture, the individuals avoid

being alone, maintain strong family ties and prefer group decisions. Employees in such a culture expect their organizational leaders to provide order, duty, security and expertise (Hofstede, 2001). Collectivists make choices based on conformity. They prefer to be swayed towards what they observe others doing, even if these choices differ from their initial personal preferences (Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003). Self-esteem is tied to success in achieving socially and relationally defined goals and to gaining positive social evaluation for accomplishing those collectively defined goals (Yang, 2003).

In this study, the concept of individualist and collectivist will be represented by a more refined distinction of the autonomous and interdependent self. This is in keeping with Bandura's (2002) criticism that conventional construction of individualism and collectivism fails to capture the underlying distinctions between the cultures that they represent. Using a continuum between individualist and collectivist has been also criticized on the grounds that they may be somewhat orthogonal characteristics (Triandis, 1989) or factors representing a more fundamental construct not readily accessible via western epistemology (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987). Moreover, the individualistic self that is common in social cognitive theories champions the view of self in self-centeredness and self-indulgence which Bandura labels "jaundiced" (Bandura, 2002). The distinction of autonomous and interdependent self avoids the framing of the cultural differences as goal subordination (Triandis, 1990) or as the self-aggrandisement that Bandura refers to. The autonomous self can be associated with individualistic characteristics. More

specifically though, the individual tends to see her/himself as an independent self contained unit that can and is expected to ultimately rely on her/himself for needs and preferences (Bloom, 1989). The interdependent self can be associated with collectivistic characteristics. The individual tends to see him/herself as part of a larger group (Bandura, 2002).

PROPOSITIONS

Foundation

Hope has two components: agency and pathways. In this section, I will also treat goals as part of hope in that the nature of goals by logic would seem to affect the sense of agency and pathways mustered in hope. Another reason for the disassembly of hope is that each of the three components mediates the final sense of hope between individuals who see themselves and others as a relationship (collectivists), and those who create a less contextual distinction between themselves and others (individualists) similar to the construction of individualism and collectivism from Hofstede (1980, 2001) and Triandis (1990). As referred to earlier, American culture has built an institution of "self" with self development, "self" respect, "self" determination and "self" awareness. US culture has been criticized for having few if any relationships remain for which social norms support, or at least refrain from judging negatively an individual appearing to subordinate her/his preferences for another's (Bloom, 1988). Conversely, many people from strongly collectivistic cultures don't provide salience in the appearance of a commitment to another's interest as subordinating their own (Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003). The key is

the definition of collectivism from the perspective of "subordination" of goals such as Hofstede used in his study (Hofstede, 1980; 2001). Triandis 1990 frames the difference in a more complex model, but disparages collectivism as an outcome of lower levels of development in a group. Collectivism is also seen through its subordination of individual preferences to the collective. Both views impute irrationality for individuals to act outside of self-interest and hint at a consistent and objective concept of self across people and across cultures. This concept of "self" is static, with a word assigned to it depending on what language/culture we have been embedded within, what Bandura labels a "deterministic" view of the "biological potential for a wide variety of cultures" (Bandura, 2002).

Researchers such as Bandura (2002) and Chia, (2003), suggest the idea of self as socially constructed. Other literature suggests further that the "self" may also be a concept formed by language. Categorization is an underlying component of perception cognition language and behavior (Lakoff, 1987). Research on cross linguistics has demonstrated differences between English speakers and Chinese speakers in features used to describe objects, (Subrahmanyam & Chen, 2006), and between English speakers and Welsh speakers in their ability to conceptualize individual items and people and collection of items or people (Roberts & Gathercole, 2006). In the latter study, it was found that the Welsh speakers, by age eleven, were able to more quickly recognize various collections of items than their English counterparts and attributed this difference in the meaning and architecture of the Welsh language. Both studies show no difference between infants up to age three

in their ability to recognize the concepts, suggesting a period of crystallization of concepts delineated by the language and a weakening of the ability to perceive attributes in the environment not accommodated by their language. This difference strengthens as the conceptual complexity of the user's language increases, and affects the language user's conceptual organization (Subrahmanyam & Chen, 2006).

Research showing that language shapes conceptual differences between people at a group level offers that a language with a clear distinction of "self" and "you", like English, and one that uses a mildly distinguished the difference between "self" and "you", like Vietnamese, should reveal some insight to possible differences between collective and individual concepts of hope. The Vietnamese language, for example, employs more or less 12 terms that are interchangeably used for "you", "me" and third person pronouns. The distinction between the case of first, second or third person use of the word can be made through the context of the conversation, but it is not always clear that the distinction is relevant so that it often appears that conversations are conducted entirely in the third person. A typical speaker will address him/herself in terms of a role according to his/her age and that of the target. Age, gender and status such as teacher, close friend, or religious deference of one participant affect the title of all other people in a story or circumstance. Unfamiliar strangers often begin conversations with questions about age to ascertain the correct title. Mismatch of status and referent is a source of dissonance. In few specific situations, the term "toi" (equivalent to "I" in English) is used with the clear intention to show that

there is no relationship with the other participant in a conversation. These referent distinctions are accompanied by expectations of roles and behaviors that if violated, result in social sanction (Scott, 1973). This is not unlike Chinese Confucian status orientation according to age where younger members of a relational network are expected to confer obedience and respect while the older members are expected to protect and support the lower status associates. This Confucian framework for obedience, while present in a Confucian society at large, is strongest within families; where western concepts of self interest are strongly shunned and maintenance of the family hierarchy and collective utility is expected (Davis, 2000).

The difference between "self" and "other" concepts in an individualist culture like the US and a collectivist culture like, for example, Vietnamese arises from language, cultural and institutional origins. For this examination, the categories autonomous self and interdependent self will be used to distinguish the differences between the two cultures in place of the traditional individualistic and collectivistic dimensions, or the Confucian and western dimensions preferred by East Asian literature. The autonomous and interdependent self dimension avoids the value laden history of collectivism seen in terms of subordination and is consistent with Bandura's elaboration of the self (Bandura, 2002) and the consideration that members of interdependent cultures do conduct their lives with more permeable boundaries between themselves and their relevant group (Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Miller, 2003). This consideration is also made with knowledge that every culture is not composed of homogeneous members uniformly dispersed within one or two

categories; or that individuals are incapable of recognizing or engaging, or falling completely within the characteristics of what is categorized as another culture.

Goal Setting

Hope theory is implicated with goal setting in that the essence of hope is its nature in striving towards goal achievement. Luthans & Jensen (2002) see a need for examining the role of hope in goal setting through its nature of empowering the individual in goal achievement. Snyder et al. (1991) proposes that hope is an iterative process where its components of agency and pathways build off of one another to create the hope capacity to achieve a goal. Given the variety of goals formed either by or for an individual to aspire, the question of "unrealistic hope" arises. Unrealistic hope consists of a mismatch between a goal and the individual's potential agency and pathways to achieve this goal (Luthans & Jensen, 2002). The existence of these possible mismatches presupposes the existence of a range of fits between goals and hope.

Goal setting theory offered by Locke theorizes the nature of the goals in terms such as difficulty, commitment, and possible moderators such as self-efficacy, participative input, authority of goal administrator, and the nature of reward. Goal setting tends to be viewed as a result of an explicit and conscious processes, yet the impact of less conscious or intentional effects strongly influence goals and goal formation (Locke, Latham & Erez, 1988). Goal setting suggests more of a conscious and intentional process, but goal formation and pursuit may arise outside of a person's awareness. Social environment influences

Goals
Independent of influence from others.
Goals are "Owned"

Autonomous Self

Pathways:
Success viewed as accomplished
via personal attributes, resources

Hope

Agency
"Will Power" comes from within

Goals
Interdependent Influence. Others'
preferences and evaluations of success
incorporated into one's own goals.

Interdependent Self

Pathways
Success is accomplished via
collective's attributes, resources

Hope

Agency
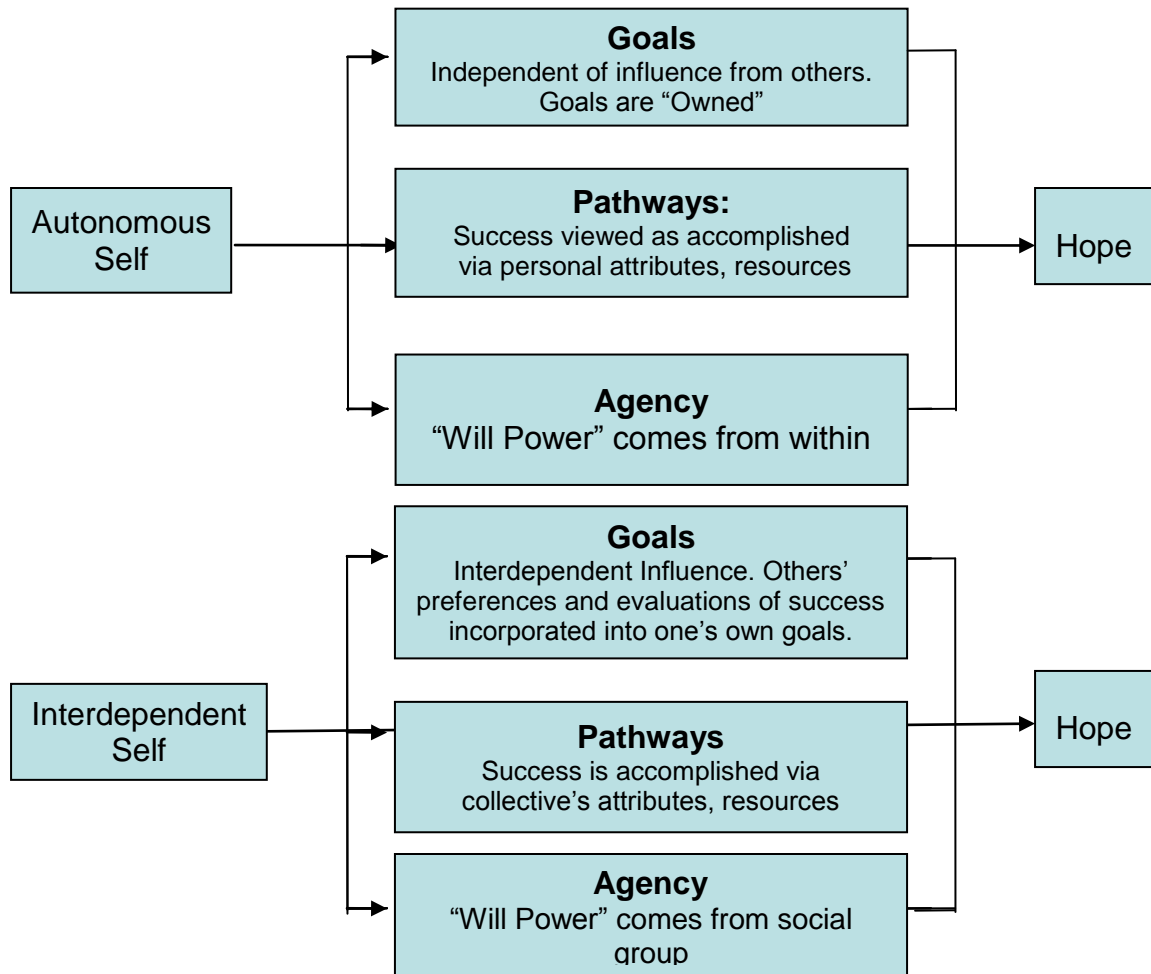"Will Power" comes from social
group

Figure 1.

goals and activates implicit goals such as maintaining self esteem or fairness to others, social responsibility and power abuse. These and other goals can be pursued without realization by the individual of even having them, which has been empirically supported as well as suggested by neurophysiological evidence (Chartrand & Cheng, 2002).

The notion that goals may exist, but not within the person's distinct awareness complicates the idea of agency given that an individual would seem to be without a means of calculating the will power necessary to accomplish the goal. The realm of awareness and unawareness in goal formation allows for the introduction of external influences on what a person considers their "own" goals.

Much has been made of the notion of choice in goal setting, and efforts to demonstrate the effectiveness of participative goal setting have offered mixed results (Welsh, Luthans & Sommer,

1993; Locke, Latham & Erez, 1988). The perception of choice is considered a fundamental tenet of American culture and has been considered the means by which the social and legal system was structured and the people determine their identity of "self" (Friedman, 1990). The self is implicated in goal setting and decision making through constructions of emergent personal self interest games in some literature explaining group behaviors (Hardin, 1982; Lichbach, 2003) by offering that the individual "submits" to the choices expressed by others for collective gains. The submission is determined as a conscious process of weighing cost and benefits of the choice.

Conversely, the notion of individual self interest was denounced by Communist leaders of many Confucian nations: Mao and his pronouncement that individualism was the single biggest threat to Chinese Society (Short, 2005), and Ho Chi Minh's proclamation of his intention to eradicate individualism in South Vietnam (Popkin, 1979). Even given the global collectivist aspirations of the two leaders and their political regimes, the cultures still to this day tend to attenuate the composition of what the collective is defined as. They distinguish between "in-group" and "out-group" members. The in-group members enjoy the ties of the group and contribute to the collective efforts of the larger group, while the individuals in the out-group are treated with different standards of consideration (Bandura, 2002). Choices and preferences made by the other in-group members reflect themselves in an individual's choices, of which the individual may not necessarily be aware of even possessing a choice. As a result, they will make their decisions using others' preferences in tandem with their own. For

individualists, particularly in the US, the choice making activity is considered with a clear sense of personal preferences and the trade-offs generated by including others' preferences (Iyengar & DeVoe, 2003). This leads to:

> *Proposition 1a*: Individuals from "western" cultures will demonstrate a greater positive difference in goal commitment towards goals which they consider autonomously chosen than will individuals from eastern cultures.
> *Proposition 1b*: Individuals from Eastern culture will demonstrate a greater positive difference in goal commitment towards goals they consider chosen by their "in-group" over the "out-group" than will individuals from western cultures.

Agency

One of the recognized critical components of hope, agency, has been described as the will power or determination to begin and maintain the effort to achieve goals (Luthans & Jensen, 2002). Initiating and maintaining the pursuit of goals is associated with goal commitment, as mentioned earlier. But on a behavioral level, it relies on an individual's feeling that they are able to motivate themselves through the process of goal achievement. This sense of agency is strictly confined to the individual as a "self" in much of the hope literature (see Snyder et al., 1991, Snyder et al., 1996, Snyder et al., 2000). While some hold that the collectivist is at a lesser stage of development where the individualist is perceived as better capable of agentic action (Triandis, 1990) more recent suggestions and research have

implicated a collective agency operating within an individual's will power. Bandura suggests several manifestations of agency by explaining the presence of personal, proxy and collective agency through which people manage events. What is more related to a collectivist nature, and not focused as much on autonomous control, is the influences of both proxy and collective agency. Proxy is agency of which people confer to others when they do not have the expertise or influence to wield the power to achieve a goal, so they relinquish the role of agency to another who can. Collective agency involves people's shared beliefs in their collective power to achieve goals (Bandura, 2000, 2002).

Given this, an individualistic person will generate agency from his/her own experiences and judgement of his/her choice in goals. The presence of social expectations may increase the sense of agency, but this increase is moderated by the feeling that personal goals are being subordinated to collective goods or that the expression of the collective agency does not represent their actual preferences (Miller, 2003; Markus & Kitayama, 2003). A collectivist will maintain goals that encompass both his/her own interest and the interest of the collective. The group's shared power (or will) will be pointed at the individual and contribute to the agency of the individual. Likewise the member will be aware of her/his value of achievement to the larger group's well being. The awareness of personal accomplishment and responsibility to others will result in stronger goal commitment by the collectivist as demonstrated by Locke et al. (1988). These "others" within a group must be in-group members for the increased agency to be engaged.

Proposition2a: There will be a larger positive correlation between quantity of relationships and agency for individuals from collectivist cultures than for those from individualist cultures.

Proposition2b: There will be a larger positive correlation between strength of immediate ties and agency for collectivists than individualists.

Pathways

An individual's confidence in her/his capacity to derive alternative plans for achieving a goal, in the event that the present avenue is blocked, relies on the person's assessment of his/her knowledge, creativity, as well as a factor of the goals that the person typically sets for his/herself that he/she is using as a baseline for determining what a "jam" might be. When doing an assessment of others, a westerner typically takes an inventory of tangible resources and attributes of the person, while individuals from East Asian cultures more frequently include an assessment of the other's relationships and his/her status within them (Lovett, Simmons & Kali, 1999). Another disparity in foci between east and west cultures linked to agency is the differing models of agency that are used as ideals of "how to be" between the two cultures. American culture holds that the ideal model is composed of positive personal attributions as explanations for successful behavior. Whereas, East Asians hold a "conjoint" model of agency as the root of successful behavior, believing that success is created by positive social and familial ties (Markus, Uchida, Omoregie, Townsend & Kitayama, 2006).

In either culture, there are times when people give us hope or challenge the hope that we have; "It may not be necessary for people to believe that they can personally solve their problems, but instead believe that someone or something can do so." (Aspinwall & Leaf, 2002). However, the tendency for western cultures to see themselves as a discrete unit possessing characteristics that are either fit or otherwise to their environment leads to:

> *Proposition3a*: There will be a larger positive correlation between quantity of relationships and pathways for Vietnamese individuals than for American individuals.

Given that the individuals that can be counted on to assist in goal achievement would tend to be in-group members:

> *Proposition3b*: There will be a larger positive correlation between strength of immediate ties and pathways for Vietnamese and American individuals.

DISCUSSION

Given that American culture tends to fall into the highest, if not the highest ranking cultures in terms of individualism (Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000), the cultures of the immigrants' countries of origin would be less oriented towards individualism and likely more towards interdependence. Immigrants are a self selected group, generalizing between countries of origin and their emigrants offers some serious shortcomings. However, language may reify and shape the speakers' conceptualizations of their social world and is a fundamental component of culture (Hofstede 1980). Using primary language as a proxy for cultural diversity, Nebraska's population is diversifying. Between the years 1990 and 2000 the number of people speaking languages other than English at home had increased from 70,000 to 126,000 in the state. As for East Asian languages, the number increased from 5,600 to 15,000 during the same period (US census, 1990; 2000) As discussed earlier, language influences people's perceptions and is a strong component of culture (Smith, Bond & Kagitcibasi, 2006).

With the growing number of immigrants comes the likelihood that their conceptualization of themselves with respect to others may be different from American or Midwestern cultures and the organizational systems built to accommodate these traditional workers. For example, these differences have implications for goal setting where persons with more interdependent mindsets may not require participative goal setting and autonomous person may experience more goal commitment if given some influence over their goals (Latham, 2000). Implications may also exist for organizational/group structure where interdependent individuals may hold implicit expectations of who should serve which role within a work group allowing the group to leverage economies of specialization if the expectations align with the task at hand, or diseconomies if they do not. Hiring practices in the U.S. tend towards hiring "strangers" based on their personal records, whereas interdependent persons expect to work better with friends and family members (Erez, 2000). Rewards systems based on group reinforcement would be more viable with interdependent groups rather than groups consisting of

autonomous individuals. Tournament rewards which serve well for independent performance which benefits little from cooperation would tend to be less effective for interdependent groups than for autonomous individuals (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006). Organizational behavior theory in general should be re-examined with respect to the static assumptions of "self". The exclusive focus on individual level behavior limits group level phenomenon like culture.

The institutionalization of "self" in American culture (Markus et al., 2006) combined with the general western drive to identify universal concepts (Hofstede, 2001; Hampden-Turner & Trompenaars, 2000) leads us to apply our models to different environments without question. Chia (1996) points to the problem of being lulled into a sense of static realism, where there is an objective reality that can be objectively perceived and measured. The concept of the self is intuitively a common reference point for all. It is also a convenient level of analysis given that we are all "separated by skin" as Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) advised when they cautioned against reductionism as an avenue of explaining organizational behavior.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is an example of a concept that has been reworked through cross cultural application, (Yang, 2003) In practitioner fields, the idea of corruption and varying definitions of ethical behavior is leading to interpretations of guanxi, cronyism and informal exchange networks as other forms of relational networking (Snell & Tseng, 2001)

The connection of hope to collective agency suggests possibilities for interventions that involve group level adjustments. Means of creating in-group, or even increasing the perceptions of others

being in the out-group (this may be ethically questionable) would serve to increase the sense of shared goal setting, agency and pathways that characterize hope.

An opportunity for further study would be the examination of transactive goal formation. Assigning goals to one another in a group explicitly, or the implicit assumption of a goal with other's also assuming that the group member maintains that specific goal would be interesting in that it builds on the group level manifestation of hope. The possibility of hope as a group emergent concept rather than an aggregation of individuals' sense of the group as a whole would further demonstrate the fundamental differences between strongly autonomous and strongly interdependent selves. These differences distinguish many individualist and collectivist cultures (Bandura, 2002; Markus & Kitayama, 2003).

CONCLUSION

A typical point of view is that undeveloped nations lack the institutions necessary to develop. As a result, the tendency is to look at differences between western and non-western nations with universalistic eyes and see all differences as dysfunctions. This view may lead us to see such immigrants who hold varying senses of autonomy as products of disadvantaged environments who will over time adopt the strong sense of self and rights that accompany a strongly autonomous culture like that of the U.S. Given the need for effectively engaging our workforce and the growing diversity of its background it is misguided to wait for this cultural convergence. Even more importantly, recognizing that these cultural differences exist and that they have points that can be

leveraged is an opportunity which businesses have yet to fully tap.

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