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How Far Can I Trust You? The Impact of Distance and Cultural Values on Leaders' Trustworthiness

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Employees' level of trust in leaders has long been deemed an important key to successful organizational dynamics and performance. Utilizing survey data, the current study investigates differences in levels of trust between one's immediate manager and the organization's top leadership, the impact of individualism/collectivism on these levels of trust, and the influence of leader-follower distance on leadership trust. Results revealed higher levels of trust for direct leaders than organizational leaders among the U.S. sample. While individualism/collectivism was not found to significantly affect levels of leadership trust, perceptions of less leadership distance had a positive impact on levels of leadership trust.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization, multinational organizations, and joint ventures create work situations in which leaders and followers must increasingly collaborate with widely dispersed team members. As technology mitigates the barriers of time and space, employees are increasingly asked to work with and for individuals they have never met face to face, with different cultural, social, and national backgrounds. These circumstances have highlighted the importance of interpersonal trust as the ''glue'' that binds disperse teams together and facilitates global collaboration.

An increasing amount of research in organizations has examined the concept of trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Kramer & Isen, 1994). Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer (1998) define trust as ''a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another'' (p. 395). Trust involves both cognitive and affective processes, and both of these components facilitate prosocial interactions across a variety of task-oriented and interpersonal settings (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Considerable research has demonstrated the robust impact of trust on positive attitudinal and behavioral outcomes across a variety of domains (Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007; Hosmer, 1995; House & Aditya, 1997; McKnight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998).

More specifically, perceptions of a leader's trustworthiness are an important aspect of successful managerial environments (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). Trust in one's leader has been found to be strongly associated with organizational success, job satisfaction, cooperation, and performance (Barney & Hanson, 1994; Bennis, 1999; Lindskold, 1978; Sundstrom, De Meuse, & Futrell, 1990; Watson & Adler, 1984). Trust also is widely recognized as a key element of effective leadership, and features prominently

in theories of both transformational and charismatic leadership (Bass, 1985; 1990; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990). Fostering an organizational culture of trust is important with regard to employer-employee interactions, communication, job satisfaction, commitment to the organization, and other prosocial elements of the corporate environment (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Greenleaf, 1996; Gulati, 1995; Luke, 1998; Jones & George, 1998; Owen, 1996).

However, Crouch and Yetton (1988) maintain that levels of trust also tend to vary markedly, particularly between different leader-follower relationships. In addition, more recent findings support the notion that trust is not always necessarily reciprocated equally (Schoorman, Mayer, & Davis, 2007). While growing empirical evidence acknowledges trust as a critical mechanism in fostering positive leadership perceptions, researchers have only begun to examine leader-follower trust relationships within broader organizational contexts. As a result, developing a better understanding of trust across different hierarchical levels or within similar dyadic worker relationships is warranted (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000).

Despite the obvious importance of developing trusting relationships between leaders and followers, many factors may deter its development. As noted by Fairholm and Fairholm (2000), common barriers that hinder trust in an organization include poor accountability, prior accounts of poor trust, weak corporate authority or leadership, and the structure of the organization. These authors also mention the impact external society can have on trust development. Recent scandals both nationally and internationally have also eroded confidence in leaders, including Bernie Madoff and the Security and Exchange Commission (Chew, 2009), Enron, Merrill Lynch, HealthSouth, and Arthur Andersen (Cohan, 2002). In many of these cases, leaders were blamed, leading to a crisis of trust in top leaders.

As the pressures of globalization strengthen, leaders find themselves operating across both time zones and cultures. For this reason, there is a strong need for more research on how leader-follower trust is developed and maintained (Javenpaa, 1999). In addition, it is important to understand how differences in cultural values, such as individualism-collectivism, potentially interact with perceptions of leader-follower distance to impact trust in leaders.

Leader-Follower Distance

Recent changes brought about by globalization suggest that an overlooked factor in understanding leader-follower trust includes the notion of 'distance' (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Bogardus, 1927; Henttonen & Blomqvist, 2005). Leadership distance has emerged as an important factor in studying organizational cultures due to structural shifts from more traditional collocated workplace environments to increased geographic dispersion among companies, as well as increased technology-based communication and globalization throughout organizations (Avolio, 2000; Napier & Ferris, 1993; Rosen, Furst &Blackburn, 2006; Weisband, 2008). The concept of distance between leaders and their followers has recently been a focal point of many leadership and organizational theories (Bligh & Riggio, in press; Hofstede, 1984; Meindl, 1995).

The dynamics between leaders and followers can vary for many reasons including number of followers, level of leadership, and types of work being conducted. Previous research strongly supports the notion that many leaders are positioned to directly influence the efforts and productivity of their followers (Cascio, 1999; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996; Northouse, 2001). Although some findings suggest that leadership distance can be beneficial to an organization's culture by reducing "micromanagement" issues and other leadership problems (Howell, Neufeld, & Avolio, 2005), commonly reported negative ramifications of physically distant leaders can include poor relationship development, schedule or management coordination difficulties, lower worker performance, or being perceived by followers as uninvolved or less knowledgeable (Bass, 1998; Cummings, 2008; Erskine, 2007; Yagil, 1998).

Antonakis and Atwater (2002) propose a theory of leadership distance that describes three independent dimensions as a result of a thorough review of proposed leadership distance theories. The resulting dimensions were strongly influenced by the leadership distance theory originally proposed by Napier and Ferris (1993). These dimensions include physical distance, perceived social distance, and

perceived interaction frequency. Antonakis and Atwater (2002) define social distance as "perceived differences in status, rank, authority, social standing, and power, which affect the degree of intimacy and social contact that develop between followers and their leader" (p. 682). Individuals who have more frequent interactions with their leader are likely to perceive having a "closer" relationship with their leader. Similarly, Shamir (1995) examined the effects of social distance on charisma and found that charismatic leadership may differ depending on whether the leader is either socially "close"(direct relationship) or "distant" (indirect relationship). His findings suggest that social distance affects the way trust in a leader develops. Shamir goes on to state that in socially "distant" situations, followers look towards their leaders' past accomplishments and future goals in developing trust. In contrast, followers in socially "close" relationships look for information concerning honesty, fairness, openness, and a sense of humor.

Although references to the importance of leader-follower distance can be found throughout the current literature, it is unclear how leadership distance impacts leader-follower trust. Hoyt & Blascovich (2003) conducted a study on leadership style, trust, performance, job satisfaction, and physical distance, and found that physical distance did not have a relationship with the other variables. DeRosa, Hatula, Kock, & D'Arcy (2004) also address the need for further research on the links between trust and physical distance, particularly in relation to virtual teams. Blau's early work suggests that social exchange – but not economic exchange – can bring about feelings of obligation and trust (Blau, 1964). However, there is little research on how the various aspects of leadership distance potentially impact the positive outcomes of social exchange such as reciprocity and trust. A meta-analysis conducted by Dirks and Ferrin (2002) revealed an absence of studies measuring trust towards organizational and immediate leadership within a single study. Results from their study demonstrated a stronger relationship between trust in immediate leadership and outcomes such as organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance than the relationships with organizational leadership.

Antonakis and Atwater (2002) state that all three dimensions of distance (social distance, physical distance, and interaction frequency) are independent; therefore, a comparison will be conducted between those leaders who are "close" on all three dimensions with those who are considered "distant" on all three dimensions.

> Hypothesis 1: Employees will display higher levels of trust for direct leaders than for organizational leaders.
> Hypothesis 2: The more 'distant' a leader is perceived to be, the less their employees will trust them.

Exploring Trust Cross-Culturally: Individualism-Collectivism

Despite an increase of studies researching organizational trust and leadership, relatively few have examined organizational trust cross-culturally. Collectivistic cultures have been described as tightly knit societies in which individuals protect the interests of the group, as a whole, over their own interests (Hofstede, 1984). Doney, Cannon, and Mullen (1998) found that collectivistic cultures exhibit high levels of trust and benevolence, while individualistic cultures tend to have weaker relationships and lower levels of trust. Research on trustworthiness in organizations indicates that certain collectivistic cultures exhibit greater emphasis on fostering relationship development than individualistic cultures (Chen, Chen, & Meindl, 1998). In a unique study, Huff and Kelley (2003) found that collectivistic nations tend to have lower propensities to trust and higher propensities to distrust than more individualistic societies.

This study also found that when compared to individualistic nations, collectivistic countries exhibit higher levels of trust for those within their organization than for those seen as external to the organization, such as partners or suppliers. Huff and Kelley (2003) maintain collectivistic nations trust members of their in-group more than out-group members. Other studies similarly posit that employees in collectivistic cultures tend to have difficulty interacting with out-groups and display higher levels of avoidance behaviors (Wakins & Liu, 1996). Yamagishi, Cook, and Watabe (1998) suggest that as a result of this in-group bias, employees in collectivistic cultures may struggle to develop trust outside of pre-existing

cultural boundaries.

> *Hypothesis 3: Employees with higher levels of collectivism will exhibit less trust for leaders than employees with lower levels of collectivism.*

In addition, both differences in cultural values and perceptions of distance likely have important implications for a variety of other variables critical to successful organizational functions, yet little to no research has explored the role of trust as it relates to leadership distance. Thus, further research is warranted to better understand how these constructs impact the development of trusting leader-follower relationships across individualistic and collectivistic settings.

> *Hypothesis 4: The difference in trust towards an organizational leader and a direct leader will be greater for those with higher levels of collectivism than for those with lower levels of collectivism.*

METHOD

Participants

To maximize the variance in individualism and collectivism, participants were sampled from two different locations. One sample was collected in Singapore from students attending an MBA program at the Singapore Institute of Management. A snowball sampling method was utilized to recruit additional participants among these individuals. A comparable sample was collected in the United States in the Southern California region from students at a small private university.

The sample yielded a total of 241 cases (U.S. $n = 130$; Singapore $n = 111$). Mean demographic variables reported among the U.S. and Singaporean samples, respectively, included number of years employed with the organization ($M = 3.2$; $SD = 3.05$; $M = 4.96$; $SD = 3.69$), level of employment ($M = 3.02$; $SD = 1.12$; $M = 3.96$; $SD = 0.73$), age ($M = 27.20$; $SD = 6.20$; $M = 36.28$; $SD = 7.30$), and gender (49.6% male; 50.4% female; 61.3% male; 38.7% female).

A series of *t*-tests were conducted between the U.S. and Singapore samples to ensure they did not vary on any of the variables of interest. The variable pertaining to the number of years participants were employed with their organization was skewed; therefore, the natural log of the variable was used in the *t*-test comparison. Bonferroni's correction was utilized to prevent inflation of the family wise error rate, resulting in an adjusted alpha of .0033. Results from these analyses revealed no significant differences on all variables, with the following exceptions: the U.S. sample was significantly younger ($t = -10.20$; $p < .003$), possessed fewer years of employment ($t = -3.87$; $p < .003$), and reported lower levels of employment ($t = -7.60$; $p < .003$). These three variables are utilized as control variables in subsequent analyses. A full list of all means, standard deviations, and *t*-values is displayed in Table 1.

When the two samples were aggregated, the average age was 31.5 years (with a range from 20 to 62), and the majority of participants were male (66%). On average, participants reported approximately 4.0 years of work experience, many of whom (50%) held mid-level positions. Participants also represented a variety of ethnicities, with the majority consisting of Chinese (36%), White/Caucasian (29%), and Asian Indian (10%).

Procedures

Following consent, participants were then asked to fill out a standardized questionnaire comprised of questions related to organizational leaders, immediate leaders, leadership distance, collectivism, and in-group membership. Additional measures used as control variables included propensity to trust and various demographic variables including as age, gender, and ethnicity. Participants were either provided a paper and pencil version of the survey or entered their information online. The majority of participants completed the paper and pencil format ($n = 224$), as opposed to the electronic version ($n = 17$), and the two groups did not vary significantly.

TABLE 1
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND T-VALUES FOR
U.S. AND SINGAPORE SAMPLES ($N = 241$)

Variable	U.S. Sample		Singapore Sample		t-value
	M	(*SD*)	*M*	(*SD*)	
Immediate leadership trust	5.68	(1.15)	5.47	(1.19)	1.35
Organizational leadership trust	5.44	(1.05)	5.55	(1.19)	-0.76
Trust Difference	0.25	(1.21)	-0.08	(1.31)	1.91
Immediate leadership – Social distance	2.59	(1.23)	2.88	(1.20)	-1.80
Immediate leadership – Interaction frequency	6.40	(0.81)	6.45	(0.80)	-0.75
Immediate leadership – Physical distance	3.07	(1.47)	3.31	(1.54)	-1.21
Organizational leadership – Social distance	3.72	(1.18)	3.74	(1.17)	-0.14
Organizational leadership – Interaction frequency	3.54	(2.10)	2.73	(1.88)	3.09*
Organizational leadership – Physical distance	4.77	(1.38)	5.06	(1.52)	-1.50
Collectivism	4.07	(0.56)	4.20	(0.68)	-1.64
Propensity to Trust	3.91	(0.61)	3.95	(0.70)	-0.44
Years of Employment	3.17	(3.05)	4.96	(3.69)	-3.87*
Level of Employment	3.02	(1.12)	3.96	(0.73)	-7.60*
Gender	1.50	(0.50)	1.39	(0.49)	1.80
Age	27.20	(6.20)	36.28	(7.30)	-10.20*

Note. *$p < 0.01$.

Measures

A 7-point Likert scale was utilized for each of the measures (1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*), and survey items are included in the Appendix.

Organizational Trust

The Organizational Trust Inventory (Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997) is a popular measurement tool in leadership studies that has been shown to be both highly reliable and valid with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from .87 to .96 (Joseph & Winston, 2005; Nyhan, 2000; Nyhan & Marlowe, 1997; Thau, Bennett, Stahlberg, & Werner, 2004). The OTI was split into two components: trust in the top leadership and trust in the direct supervisor.

Collectivism

A 9-item measure constructed by Early (1993) was used to assess levels of collectivism. Cronbach's alpha coefficients for this collectivism scale are high with a range from .70 to .91 (Early, 1993; Dyne, Vandewalle, Kostova, Latham, & Cummings, 2000). Items were coded to indicate that larger values indicate higher levels of collectivism.

Leadership Distance

A review of the literature failed to uncover any commonly used measure of leadership distance, so we constructed items using the theoretical framework developed by Antonakis and Atwater (2002). Other previously used measures of physical distance were also adapted (e.g., Klauss & Bass, 1982; Kerr &

Jermier, 1978). There were 14 items in total designed to measure the three dimensions of leadership distance.

To determine the factor structure and whether it resembled the three-dimension construct as theorized, a series of exploratory factor analyses were conducted on the leadership distance measure. The principal axis extraction method was utilized for these analyses due to its improved ability to uncover underlying constructs in the data (Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCullum, & Strahan, 1999). Using orthogonal varimax rotation allowed the independent underlying factors to emerge. Upon examining scree plots and results from the analyses, it was determined that forcing a 3-factor solution was best suited to the data for both the immediate and organizational leadership distance measures and was also consistent with Antonakis and Atwater's proposed theory. After rotation, this factor structure accounted for 50.9% of the variance in the variables for immediate leadership distance and 50.5% of the variance in organizational leadership distance once rotation. The majority of items loaded on to the factors they were designed to measure. Factor loadings ranged from .52 to .85, which are well above the .32 cut-off recommended by Tabachnik and Fidell (2007). One item loaded onto both the interaction frequency factor as well as the physical proximity factor: "How frequently do you interact with your boss/employer?" As this item is theoretically a core component of interaction frequency (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002), it was retained as a part of that factor.

One item that did not fit well with the three-factor structure was, "On average, how long does a typical interaction with your boss/employer take?" When considering the highly technological forms through which many interactions transpire in modern organizations, it is not surprising that this item did not fit. It may be difficult for an individual to answer this question when interacting through interfaces such as e-mails, faxes, text-messages, or even pre-recorded video messages. As this item did not load well onto any factor, it was removed from further analyses. In addition, the question, "I feel uncomfortable when he/she approaches me" did not achieve a factor loading above .32 and was thus removed from further analysis. A full list of factor loadings, eigenvalues, and factor properties is provided in Tables 2 and 3.

Propensity to Trust

Propensity to trust was assessed using an 8-item measure adapted from Harnett and Cummings (1980). Prior research using this measure reported a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .72 (Dyne, Vandewalle, Kostova, Latham, & Cummings, 2000).

Demographics

Demographic variables included gender, ethnicity, age, level of employment, and time employed at the organization. These questions were presented last to avoid attrition effects commonly associated with demographic questions (Crano & Brewer, 2002).

RESULTS

Cronbach's alpha of the leadership distance subscales revealed that the immediate leadership social distance ($\alpha = .86$), organizational leadership social distance ($\alpha = .81$), immediate leadership physical distance ($\alpha = .83$), and organizational leadership distance ($\alpha = .77$) measures each attained acceptable levels of reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

TABLE 2
ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR THREE FACTOR SOLUTION OF THE IMMEDIATE LEADERSHIP DISTANCE MEASURE

Item	Factor Loadings		
	Social	Physical	Interaction
I feel like I can talk about non-work related subjects with him/her.	.775	.102	.013
I feel like I can use humor in my interactions with him/her.	.808	.021	.030
I feel uncomfortable when he/she approaches me.	.268	.009	.158
I feel that I can fully express myself when interacting with him/her.	.830	.049	.091
I feel that I can fully understand him/her when we interact.	.779	.062	.038
I can communicate effectively when interacting with him/her.	.662	.151	.077
I usually avoid interacting with him/her.	.675	.125	.263
The nature of my job is such that he/she is seldom around me when I am working.	.137	.687	.362
In my job, my most important tasks take place away from where he/she is located.	-.032	.612	.245
My boss/employer and I are seldom in direct sight of one another.	.144	.719	.246
How frequently do you interact with your boss/employer?	-.155	-.519	-.047
On average how long does a typical interaction with your boss/employer take?	.096	.089	.172
Please click a circle to indicate your physical proximity to your leader.	-.045	.787	-.439
On average, rate the degree of your physical proximity to your leader.	.060	.786	-.100
Eigenvalues	4.51	2.93	1.10
% of variance (after rotation)	25.66	20.95	4.26

TABLE 3
SUMMARY OF FACTOR LOADINGS FOR OBLIMIN THREE-FACTOR SOLUTION FOR THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP DISTANCE MEASURE

Item	Factor Loadings		
	Social	Interaction	Physical
I feel like I can talk about non-work related subjects with him/her.	.673	.241	.183
I feel like I can use humor in my interactions with him/her.	.729	.212	.131
I feel uncomfortable when he/she approaches me.	.241	.017	.107
I feel that I can fully express myself when interacting with him/her.	.788	.078	.039
I feel that I can fully understand him/her when we interact.	.688	.104	-.135
I can communicate effectively when interacting with him/her.	.728	.105	-.114
I usually avoid interacting with him/her.	.538	.091	.127
The nature of my job is such that he/she is seldom around me when I am working.	.133	.153	.815
In my job, my most important tasks take place away from where he/she is located.	-.037	.147	.668
My boss/employer and I are seldom in direct sight of one another.	.203	.234	.736
How frequently do you interact with your boss/employer?	-.344	-.680	-.290
On average how long does a typical interaction with your boss/employer take?	.129	.011	.047
Please click a circle to indicate your physical proximity to your leader.	-.025	.153	.851
On average, rate the degree of your physical proximity to your leader.	.278	.195	.712
Eigenvalues	4.64	2.34	1.30
% of variance (after rotation)	23.06	13.81	13.64

The first hypothesis proposed that employees will report higher levels of trust for their direct leaders than for their organizational leaders. Controlling for propensity to trust, age, gender, ethnicity, level of employment, and time employed at the organization, a repeated measure ANCOVA did not revealed significant differences in trust levels. When the U.S. data was analyzed separately, however, significant differences in trust levels were revealed; on average, participants reported higher levels of trust for direct leaders ($M = 5.73$, $SD = 1.12$) compared to organizational leaders ($M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.00$), $F(1, 97) = 4.53$; $p < 0.05$). When the Singapore data was analyzed separately in an ANCOVA, no significant results emerged. These results support hypothesis 1 for the U.S. sample only.

The second hypothesis of this study states the more 'distant' a leader is perceived to be, the less their employees will trust them. To test this hypothesis, each of the leadership distance dimensions were correlated with trust levels in the corresponding referent of leadership (see Table 4). Social distance was found to be negatively correlated with trust in direct leadership ($r = -0.48$; $p < 0.05$) and with trust in organizational leadership ($r = -0.33$; $p < 0.05$). These results suggest that individuals who have lower perceptions of social distance between themselves and their leader also have higher levels of trust for that leader. No relationship was found between trust in leadership and physical distance. Interaction frequency was not significantly correlated with either trust in direct leadership or trust in organizational leadership. Social distance was significantly correlated with physical distance ($r = 0.17$; $p < 0.05$) and interaction frequency ($r = -0.22$; $p < 0.05$) for immediate leadership. Social distance also was significantly correlated with physical distance ($r = 0.29$; $p < 0.05$) and interaction frequency ($r = -0.45$; $p < 0.05$) for organizational leadership. These results show that higher levels of social distance are associated with lower levels of trust. Although physical distance and interaction frequency were not associated with trust, these results partially support the second hypothesis of this study.

TABLE 4
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS OF DIMENSIONS OF LEADERSHIP DISTANCE SCALE AND TRUST VARIABLES

Leadership Distance Subscale	*M*	*SD*	Measure	
			DL Trust	OL Trust
DL Social Distance	2.80	1.39	-0.48*	--
OL Social Distance	3.68	1.27	--	-0.33*
DL Frequency	3.85	0.80	0.06	--
OL Frequency	4.69	0.88	--	0.09
DL Physical Distance	2.27	1.59	-0.02	--
OL Physical Distance	4.43	1.88	--	0.08

Note. DL Trust = Direct Leadership Trust; OL Trust = Organizational Leadership Trust; DL Social Distance = Direct Leadership Social Distance; OL Social Distance = Organizational Leadership Social Distance; DL Frequency = Direct Leadership Transaction Frequency; OL Frequency = Organizational Leadership Transaction Frequency; DL Physical Distance = Direct Leadership Physical Distance; OL Physical Distance = Organizational Leadership Physical Distance.
*p < 0.05.

Following this analysis, a collectivism score was calculated and then correlated with both types of leadership trust to examine the third hypothesis of this study: employees with higher levels of

collectivism exhibit less trust for leaders than employees with lower levels of collectivism. Collectivism did not appear to be correlated with either trust in direct leadership or trust in organizational leadership (see Table 5). Therefore, Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Hypothesis 4 stated the difference in trust towards an organizational leader and a direct leader will be greater for those with higher levels of collectivism than for those with lower levels of collectivism. To test this hypothesis, a difference score between trust in immediate leader and trust in organizational leader was calculated for each participant and then treated as the dependent measure to be correlated with collectivism. However, no significant relationship between these two variables emerged (see Table 5). These results indicate that there is no relationship between collectivism and differences in trust levels for the two referents of leadership, providing no support for Hypothesis 4.

TABLE 5
MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND CORRELATIONS OF COLLECTIVISM AND TRUST VARIABLES

	OL Trust	Trust Difference	Collectivism	*M*	*SD*
DL Trust	0.39*	0.58*	0.07	5.59	1.17
OL Trust		-0.52*	0.06	5.49	1.11
Trust Difference			-0.01	-0.10	1.26
Collectivism				4.13	0.62

Note. DL Trust = Direct Leadership Trust; OL Trust = Organizational Leadership Trust.
*$p < 0.05$.

DISCUSSION

As the field of organizational behavior expands, an increasing amount of research is dedicated to trust and leadership. Prior research demonstrates a strong link between employee trust in leaders throughout a variety of organizational settings (Aronson, 1995; Clark & Mills, 1993; Fukuyama, 1995; Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Luke, 1998). Leadership distance is also an important factor in understanding leadership and trust in leaders (Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Henttonen & Blomqvist, 2005). The current research sought to expand the concept of trust as it applies to employees with different cultural value orientations and different levels of distance from their leaders.

Among the U.S. sample, there was evidence that participants tend to have higher levels of trust for their immediate leaders than for their organizational leaders. This finding provides some preliminary evidence that organizational leaders face a larger challenge in building trusting relationships with employees at lower levels of the organization. In addition, our findings suggest that perceptions of leader-follower distance are significantly related to leadership trust. Our initial prediction was that less leadership distance would result in higher levels of leadership trust; however, this hypothesis was only partially supported by the data. Specifically, perceptions of social distance were negatively correlated with trust in both immediate leadership and organizational leadership. This indicates that the less socially distant an individual is from his or her leader, the more trust they will have in him or her. The remaining dimensions of leadership distance (physical distance and interaction frequency) were not significantly correlated with leadership trust. These findings are largely in accord with outcomes from Shamir's (1995) study of "close" and "distant" charismatic leaders, suggesting that leaders who are psychologically close to their followers are able to build trust by sharing the impact of decisions. Shamir (1995) states, "In close leadership situations, in contrast, followers' trust in the leader is more likely to depend on the history and outcomes of direct interactions and transactions with the leader. It is through such interactions and

transactions that the leader's honesty, reliability, and trustworthiness can be directly manifested by the leader and assessed by close followers" (p. 26).

In addition, this study makes some headway toward establishing a reliable measure of leader-follower distance. Factor analysis results indicate the three-factor structure is well suited for this measure. Values of internal consistency were strong and further support the integrity of the leadership distance measure. Overall, the leadership distance measure demonstrated robust psychometric properties; therefore, further analysis operationalizing leadership distance according to these three dimensions is an important direction for future research.

The data did not support our prediction that employees with higher levels of collectivism would exhibit less trust for leaders. This finding may suggest that collectivism is too broad of a term to be assessed as a single measure. As more recently proposed by House (2004), collectivism can be distinguished into multiple forms, including in-group collectivism and institutional collectivism. Further research is warranted to better understand the effects of collectivism on trust in leadership, and multiple dimensions of collectivism should be included.

Finally, several limitations should be addressed in the current study. The sample included MBA students with three to five years of work experience, and is subject to limitations of cross-sectional survey research, including concerns with self-report, social desirability, and common source bias. Additional investigations could include broader and more diverse samples to further develop this line of research.

Despite these limitations, the current study is unique as prior research has not simultaneously examined both immediate and organizational leadership trust (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), and represents an important dimension for leaders to consider. In addition, while the detrimental impact of physical distance on leader-follower trust can be mitigated, perceptions of high levels of social distance represent an important factor that leaders must address in order to develop and maintain trusting relationships with their followers. As leaders increasingly work with followers across multiple geographic regions around the world, our results provide some preliminary evidence that the frequency and types of interactions and greater physical distances may be less important than the quality of the interactions, at least when it comes to developing interpersonal trust in the workplace.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY ITEMS

Complete the following section by thinking of your current, or most recent, immediate supervisor and top organizational leader (CEO or President). After reading the statement, circle the number from the scale that is closest to your opinion. For each question, please provide your response in relation to your immediate leader in the left columns and your organizational leader in the right columns.

Leadership Trust (1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree)
I am confident that he/she is technically competent at the critical elements of his/her job.
I am confident that he/she will make well thought out decisions about his/her job.
I am confident that he/she will follow through on assignments.
I am confident that he/she has an acceptable level of understanding of his/her job.
I am confident that he/she will be able to do his/her job in an acceptable manner.
When he/she tells me something, I am confident that I can rely on what he/she tells me.
I am confident that he/she can do the job without causing other problems.
I am confident that he/she will think through what he/she is doing on the job.

Leadership Distance (1 = Strongly Disagree; 7 = Strongly Agree)
I feel like I can talk about non-work related subjects with him/her.
I feel like I can use humor in my interactions with him/her.

I feel uncomfortable when he/she approaches me.
I feel that I can fully express myself when interacting with him/her.
I feel that I can fully understand him/her when we interact.
I can communicate effectively when interacting with him/her.
I usually avoid interacting with him/her.
The nature of my job is such that he/she is seldom around me when I am working.
In my job, my most important tasks take place away from where he/she is located.
My boss/employer and I are seldom in direct sight of one another.
How frequently do you interact with your boss/employer? (Include emails, conversations, phone calls, instant messages, or any other form of direct interaction)

      Daily
      Multiple times a week
      Once a week
      Multiple times a month
      Once a month
      A few times a year
      Once a year or less

On average how long does a typical interaction with your boss/employer take?

      Less than 5 minutes
      5-10 minutes
      10-20 minutes
      20-40 minutes
      40 minutes to an hour
      1-2 hours
      More than 2 hours

Please circle a number below to indicate your physical proximity to your leader.

      Same building and same floor
      Same building but different floor
      Different building but on the same city block
      Different city
      Same country but different region
      Different country

On average, rate the degree of your physical proximity to your leader (1 = Very close; 7 = Very distant).