

INTRA- AND INTER-GROUP PERCEPTIONS OF CHINESE AND TANZANIAN EMPLOYEES IN INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION

Ms Claude-Hélène Mayer
Department of Management
Rhodes University
South Africa

Mr Christian Martin Boness
Department of Management
Rhodes University
South Africa

Prof. Lynette Louw*
Department of Management
Rhodes University
South Africa
E-mail: l.louw@ru.ac.za

Mr Mattheus Johannes Louw
Department of Management
Rhodes University
South Africa

Corresponding author:

Prof. Lynette Louw -
Department of Management
P.O. Box 94
Rhodes University
Grahamstown
Tel: +27(0)46 603 8738
Email: l.louw@ru.ac.za

ABSTRACT

The cooperation between Chinese and Tanzanian employees and organisations has a very long tradition in Tanzanian history. The purpose of this paper is to explore and understand how Chinese and Tanzanian employees see themselves and “the other” while cooperating. This research presents a study of a single case, conducted in a selected Chinese organisation in Tanzania. It uses a hermeneutical research paradigm. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews and observation and analysed through content analysis, following Terre Blanche’s model. Findings demonstrate and explain the perspectives which Chinese and Tanzanian employees hold mutually with regard to the group image of self and other within the organisation, as well as perceptions of self and other in terms of organisational, environmental and cultural contexts. Since this is a qualitative single organisational case study, the findings are limited to this single organisation and are not generalisable. Conclusions drawn from the new research insights are provided and recommendations are given in terms of how Chinese and Tanzanian perceptions present themselves and how organisations could work with self-image and counter images to improve intercultural cooperation.

INTRODUCTION

China's impact and role in the development of countries in Africa, primarily through foreign direct investments and grants to governments, has increased in the past decade (Bräutigam, 2009), with China's investment in Africa exceeding US\$30 billion and trade surpassing US\$220 billion in 2014 (Ni, 2015:21). Since the inception of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC) 15 years ago, constructive dialogue and cooperation between China and African countries has been enhanced (Ni, 2015:21). The constructive cooperation has become the "primary institutional vehicle for China's strategic engagement with sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Pigato and Tang, 2015:1). Furthermore, this South-South cooperation has provided an opportunity of facilitating the implementation of the African Union's structural transformation plan, Agenda 2063 (Ni, 2015:21). More specifically, China has contributed an average of five per cent per annum over the last decade to the economic growth in SSA, and China has become SSA's largest export and development partner since 2013 (Pigato and Tang, 2015:1). For instance, by 2012 Tanzania received Chinese investment totalling US\$541 million with over 300 private organisations operating in Tanzania in 2013, generating more than 150 000 jobs (Pigato and Tang, 2015: 18). Chinese and Tanzanian employees work closely together (African Economic Outlook, 2014) and according to official voices, the investment of China in Tanzania is strongly welcomed (Majani, 2013), particularly since Tanzania and China had been collaborating even before Europeans had reached Tanzania (Curtis, 2015).

The Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Tanzania, Dr Lu Youqing, emphasises how Chinese companies are carrying out president Xi Jinping's philosophy in Tanzania according to its Development Vision 2020 (Mjasiri 2015). Tanzanian labour forces need an improvement in commitment to achieve the Vision goals 2020 to double the gross domestic product (GDP) of 2010: "I would advise that both Chinese and Tanzanian workers and especially Chinese Companies promote the spirit of industriousness and use their best workers as a model of promoting exemplary workforce" (Mjasiri 2015:1). Additionally Tanzanian workers should be trained to work "diligently, innovatively and honestly" (Mjasiri 2015:1). The common vision of Tanzania and China can be approached in the wider frame of building "prosperous, democratic, culturally advanced and harmonious" nations (Mjasiri, 2015:1). Despite China's ability, through FOCAC, to contribute towards sustainable economic growth in SSA, Kim (2015) warns that one of the biggest challenges is a person-to-person understanding, referring to the challenge in "soft power". As such, there is a need to learn about each other's cultures in order to enhance understanding of each other in the workplace and decrease intercultural conflicts (Mayer, Boness and Louw, 2016).

The aim of this paper is to explore perceptions of self and others by Chinese and Tanzanian employees in intercultural cooperation within a selected Chinese organisation in Tanzania. The paper explores perceptions of members of one group towards self (intra-group perceptions) and members of "the other" group (inter-group perceptions). The main research questions are: "How do Chinese employees see Tanzanian employees?" and "How do Tanzanian employees see Chinese employees?" In the following sections, the paper provides the relevant theories and research methodology and concludes with the findings, discussion, conclusions and recommendations.

INTRA- AND INTER-GROUP PERCEPTION IN INTERCULTURAL COOPERATION

Managing people in African countries requires a multifaceted knowledge of historical, socio-economic and political complexities (Jackson, 2014). This is also valid for Tanzania (Luchien and Honorine, 2005). Even though there is previous research pertaining to China's investment and its economic impact in SSA, there is still a lack of research about the management of Chinese organisations in SSA on a micro level (Cooke, 2014; Jackson, Louw, Zhao, 2013). More specifically, China's international engagement in SSA is changing the geopolitical dynamics and the manner in which Chinese managers engage with employees in organisations (Jackson, 2014), especially in the area of employee relations and human resource management. Evidence of previous studies pertaining to human resources and industrial relations practices of 11 Chinese organisations has been done by Shen (2007), while the African Labour Research Network's study of Chinese investment in Africa (Baah and Jauch, 2009) points to challenges such as attitudes towards industrial relations, working conditions and labour

practices. Recently, in South Africa, related previous studies in selected Chinese organisations have been done on employee commitment (Patterson, 2014), the relationship between leadership styles and quality of work-life (Handley, 2016) and the influence of organisational culture on a high work commitment system and organisational commitment (Mabuza, 2015). Despite the previous recent research by Xing, Liu, Tarba and Cooper (2014) on intercultural influences on managing African employees of 21 Chinese organisations in Africa, and Men's (2014: 103) research on how Chinese cultural constructs influence manager-employee interactions in Tanzania, no other studies on the management practices in Chinese organisations in Tanzania could be found. Thus, this paper seeks to offer important perspectives of Chinese and Tanzanians' intra- and inter-group perspectives on intercultural cooperation in a selected Chinese organisation in Tanzania.

In this paper, intercultural cooperation is conceptualised as the way in which cultural groups in a society interact, providing an opportunity for cultures to "discover other cultures" (Jurénienė, 2015: 6) and it has been pointed out that more research in Chinese-Tanzanian interaction is needed (Mayer, Boness and Louw, 2016). Thus, not only individual perspectives on intra- and inter-group relations are relevant, but also group perceptions that define and classify members of cultural ingroups and outgroups should be considered (Spencer-Rodgers, Williams and Peng, 2012) to "establish and maintain harmonious and effective relationships" (Berry, 2004: 52). As such, it is assumed that all human behaviour is shaped by social and cultural contexts while being rooted in species-shared psychological processes, such as perception (Berry, 2004). Intercultural cooperation is, however, dependent on intercultural communication because communication "is a form of psychological human interaction" necessary to achieve goals in a cooperative manner (Jurénienė, 2015: 6).

Both intra- and inter-group perceptions can be explained by means of the *Social Identity Theory* (Tajfel and Turner, 1986) where individuals identify themselves as members of a social or cultural group, assimilating the attitudes and behaviour as determined by the group norms and expectations (Fitzsimmons and Stamper, 2013; Yildiz 2015: 53). Central to assimilating attitudes and behaviours is the concept of *self*, which refers to the "content with which individuals construe themselves" (Fitzsimmons and Stamper, 2013: 83). Accordingly, a higher degree of assimilation with an organisation implies that an individual would act in the best interest of the organisation and be more supportive (Yildiz, 2015). Once the *self-concept* has been developed, it allows for the inclusion (ingroup) or exclusion (outgroup) of others based on the "extent to which they perceive other's identity frames, cultural values and norms to be similar to their own." (Yildiz, 2015:53). Since the 1970s, inter-group attitudes and perceptions have been studied at large (Bond, 1986; Spencer-Rodgers *et al.*, 2012) focusing on cognitive causal factors such as ingroup and outgroup stereotypes (Bond, 1986; Spencer-Rodgers, Williams and Peng, 2012). Moreland, Levine and Wingert (2013) also point out that the more the cultural differences in the outgroup are emphasised rather than the similarities, the higher the probability of increased inter-group conflicts. Increased conflict is also enhanced when teams and organisations focus on one characteristic of group members, such as national belonging and religion (Moreland, 2013).

In culturally diverse inter-group relations, intercultural communication is a critical factor to establishing and maintaining cooperative and effective inter-group relations (Gudykunst, 1986; Hall, 1976; Kim, 1986; Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern, 2002). It has been pointed out that experienced group "differences in cognition (such as values, norms, fundamental epistemologies, beliefs influencing negative stereotypes), affect (e.g. emotional expressiveness, feeling, inter-group anxiety) and behaviour (language, customs, styles in communication)" impact negatively on intercultural communication (Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern, 2002:610) and work effectiveness (Moreland *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, the differences experienced in inter-group relations might create negative feelings such as anxiety or irritation (Stephan and Stephan, 1985, 2000), and might finally lead to negative evaluations towards members of the culturally different group (Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern, 2002).

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study is located within the interpretivistic research paradigm (Collis and Hussey, 2014) which is grounded in the epistemological tradition of constructivism (Berger and Luckmann 2000) and hermeneutics (Dilthey 2002). In the hermeneutical research approach, human subjectivity is part of research and the research processes (Dilthey, 2002). As such, the researcher has to apply a self-reflexive attitude to achieve qualitative, in-depth interpretations of the text of lived experiences and their expressions (Ratner, 2002). This single explanatory case study is based on the post-modernist premise that different socio-culturally constructed realities and interpretations exist (Becvar and Becvar, 2006).

The case study is comprised of a private Chinese-owned multinational organisation (MNO) specialising in information and communication technology, with a branch in Tanzania which employs approximately 160 people. In the context of research ethical clearance, written consent was received from the MNO, and convenience and snowball sampling was used to identify interviewees. Altogether, 16 interviewees were willing to participate voluntarily. They were also assured of anonymity, confidentiality and the freedom to withdraw from participating at any time. Of these interviewees, six were female and ten male; six were Chinese and nine Tanzanian, and one was Zambian. Two interviewees had worked less than one year in the organisation, while the remainder had worked there for more than one year.

Data collection

Data was collected by an international research team of four researchers, three of whom were male and one female. The team consisted of one Tanzanian, one Chinese-Tanzanian and two German researchers. All of the researchers were fluent in English, three of them in Kiswahili and one in Chinese.

Data was collected by means of face-to-face semi-structured interviews (conducted mainly in English, if necessary translated into Chinese and Kiswahili). The interviews ranged between 40 to 90 minutes. Interview questions focused on the cooperation experiences of the employees, the organisational culture, the intercultural communication, the cooperation across cultural and language groups. Examples of the interview questions are: "Please talk about your experiences of collaboration with regard to intercultural work interactions between Chinese and Tanzanian employees", "What do you enjoy about working for the organisation?", and "What do you experience as challenging in the cooperation with employees and within the organisation?" Data collected through interviews was transcribed verbatim and were stored according to the ethical guidelines. Data was also re-transferred to the interviewees and the participating organisation.

Data analysis

The analysis of the data was based on the five-step process of content analysis described by Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Kelly (2006:322–326), namely familiarisation and immersion, inducing themes, coding, elaboration, and finally interpretation and checking. Data gained from the observations was used to interpret the interview data. An inter-validation process was used to validate data and information from observations by the research team (Yin, 2009: 45).

Qualitative research criteria, limitations and ethical considerations

The data analysis is evaluated against qualitative research criteria (Collis and Hussey, 2014), such as credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. A transparent description of the analysis which is supported by a sound research design, informed interviewees, researcher and context inter-validation process, leads to credibility, dependability and confirmability of the research findings (Collis and Hussey, 2014). With regard to transferability of the findings, this study is limited to a single organisational case study. Even though the findings provide valuable in-depth insights, these findings are not generalisable. The findings might, however be useful to a similar Chinese MNO in Tanzania.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

The biographical information shown in Table 1 includes interviewees' positions in the organisation, their nationality and mother tongue, their age, gender and duration of employment in the organisation. As a result of limited space, the data will not be explained further and is easily understood.

TABLE 1
BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

Code no.	Position	Nationality mother tongue*	Age in years	Gender **	Duration of work in organisation /months
1 h-m	Deputy managing director	Rc/Ch	35	M	36
2 h-m	Product manager	Rc/Ch	40	M	12
3 h-m	HR manager	Z/Su	35	F	7
4 h-m	Channel executive	Tz/Su	40	M	96
5 h-e	CSO department	Tz/Su	30	F	60
6 h-e	Pre-sales engineer	Rc/Ch	35	M	4
7 h-e	Project manager	Tz/Su	40	M	24
8 h-e	Officer	Tz/Su	30	F	12
9 h-e	Administration	Tz/Su	30	F	48
10 h-m	Product manager	Rc/Ch	35	M	24
11 h-m	Public relations manager	Rc/Ch	40	M	36
12 h-m	Director of finance	Rc/Ch	40	M	16
13 h-e	Health and safety agency manager	Tz/Su	30	F	60
14 h-m	Network solution designer	Tz/Su	35	M	24
15h-m	Spare parts manager	Tz/Su	35	M	60
16 h-e	Administrative assistant	Tz/Su	30	F	11

*Rc (Republic of China), Ch (Chinese language), Tz (United Republic of Tanzania), Su (Swahili language), Z (Zambia); ** M= male, F= female

A Chinese employee reflects on his view of Tanzanian employees:

I think that when they [Tanzanians] do things, they don't do it on time. For examples, I don't want to mention names, we have arrangement with customers [inaudible] and they don't come in time. They come one and a half hour later or maybe two and a half hour later. It is hard for

us to understand that. Precisely our time is important, Chinese people are always hardworking you know. (6h-e)

This Chinese employee is concerned about the concepts of time and time management of Tanzanian customers, not understanding the perspective of the Tanzanian employee. He describes the Chinese as hardworking and precisely on time, thereby creating a counter-image with regard to the Tanzanian employees. Other Chinese employees also emphasise the concept of “hardworking” and high levels of discipline and a strong work ethic as opposed to the perception of the “less hardworking” attitude of the Tanzanians (1h-m, 2h-m, 6h-e, 12h-m).

With regard to the organisation, the Chinese highlight that they adopt separate management systems for both their local workforce and Chinese employees to accommodate Chinese and local cultures at work, while keeping up an “international, Western-influenced management style” (12h-m). Chinese employees recognise experience in Tanzanians. However, they still lack skills with regard to the company's area of expertise. Chinese employees see the organisation as good in terms of motivational structures (bonuses, needs-based incentives, monetary and promotional rewards, 28 days of annual leave) (12h-m) and knowledge sharing, training opportunities, and working conditions. However, one Chinese manager mentioned that “local corruption and bankruptcy” was a factor that affected the motivational systems within the organisation.

Chinese views on self and Tanzanians in the environmental context

Chinese views on Tanzanians in society emphasise the parallelism in historical and contemporary development. Their main concern for a successful development in Tanzania is education. The Chinese feel that the education of Tanzanians needs to be improved and several interviewees stress that they feel unsafe in Tanzania. The Chinese feel that Tanzania lacks infrastructure, and that corruption is high and diseases are dangerous (11h-m, 12h-m). Despite this however, the Chinese interviewees recognised the beauty of the landscape.

A Chinese presales engineer takes a broader view on Chinese history to compare it to African countries:

So the environment is good but the people first need to make peace. This is the most important. Firstly, Africans be peaceful to all the foreigners. Secondly, you should open to the foreigners, open to each other. So when we do business, Chinese have many experiences just like Africa. So they can learn how we move from one step to another step. For example, if they need application systems. We already have it in China and we have funded 1.5 billion people. So we have it, we can just bring it here and do some change. And it has been proved in China, so it is useful for you to use it, just so simple. (6h-e)

The Chinese engineer emphasises the similarities of Chinese and Tanzanian developments. He sees peacefulness, openness to others, as well as the ability to recognise chances of business and the market as a basis for a successful development.

A Chinese deputy director highlights that Tanzanians need to invest in education and address the lack of general work skills and education:

You know we take the ICT from back home. And I think that will help Tanzania in the future. It is because we give them network. What we need is education. And modernising Africa is almost done. Our aim is to bring more education to Africa (1h-m).

This Chinese deputy director believes in strengthening Africans through the import of both information techniques and education. This statement shows that Tanzanians are viewed as inexperienced, less educated than Chinese employees or even uneducated and lacking skills. This employee sees the Chinese as the “bringer of networks” which Tanzanians do not seem to have. This, together with the statement that Tanzanians need consultancy, education, technical knowhow and training in professional decision-making, provides a picture of felt superiority of Chinese employees towards Tanzanians.

Other Chinese interviewees comment that Tanzania provides many opportunities and that their foreign policy is very open (6h-e, 11h-m) and facilitates business opportunities for foreigners. Furthermore,

one manager (11h-m) emphasises that Tanzanians need to manage the infrastructural problems and facilitate structural and network development. Chinese managers recognise that they seem to be unaware of political systems, wars and diseases in African countries and struggle to network with Tanzanians who seem to have a strong social networking competence in the view of Chinese employees. However, Chinese employees perceive it as difficult to make friends with Tanzanians. Furthermore, Chinese employees feel that Tanzanians do not care about the safety of Chinese employees in their country, that Tanzanians are strict, silent and lack creativity at work. One Chinese employee observes that his negative image of Tanzanians fuels his fear, hostile feelings and feelings of being a foreigner. Other Chinese employees find Tanzanians family-orientated, friendly and happy, “even though they are poor” (1h-m, 2h-m).

Several Chinese managers share the view on improved corporate social responsibility and that communication with and support of local organisations, the increased employment of local communities and the development of Tanzania through education will lead to an improving society (11h-m, 12h-m). Lifelong learning of employees should be increased for Tanzanians. One Chinese manager believes, however, that Tanzanian employees would not learn accordingly because, in this manager’s view, when supervision of employees is decreased, corruption increases and the work morals decrease (12h-m).

Chinese views on self and Tanzanians in the cultural context

Chinese views on Tanzanians in terms of culture are characterised by family orientation and valuing social interaction as well as teamwork. Tanzanians appear peaceful (8h-e) and supportive. Dancing, joy and entertainment are seen as parts of Tanzanian culture (11h-m). Tanzanians are seen as open to and welcoming of foreign visitors. They seem to have a deep-rooted respect for other cultures. However, Chinese employees advise that Tanzanians need to develop a stronger sense of responsibility regarding work. Additionally, Tanzanians should practise better time management and improve effectiveness.

A Chinese product manager shows his openness towards Tanzanian culture:

I think there are some things I can learn from local people, like the family concept, because Chinese people spend most of their time around their work. But the local people here like to stay with their families. Maybe I can spend some time with my family and my parents. You see, Chinese people, they are always very upset. They work quickly. I don't think the Chinese people are happy. But for the local people, they are always happy, they are always laughing even though they are not very rich [laughter]. And I think this is the attitude I would learn from local people. I think that is the most important thing for me. (2h-m)

This Chinese manager has a very positive view of Tanzanians and their culture and reflects on what he could learn from the intercultural cooperation. He recognises the preference for family and social contacts in Tanzanian culture which he associates with happiness. The Chinese manager is astonished that Tanzanians are poor and still happy, and he realises the connection of happiness and non-materialistic values in Tanzanians.

Other Chinese employees experience Tanzanians as family-orientated and good team players at work (1h-m). Tanzanians seem to have a good work–life balance and are very relaxed about work (2h-m). Tanzanians do not take work seriously and entertain a “weak” work ethic, in the eyes of the Chinese employees (10h-m).

Some Chinese managers emphasise that Tanzanians are supportive, helpful and welcoming (10h-m, 11h-m). A few Chinese managers believe that Chinese and Tanzanian cultures are similar in nature (1h-m, 6h-e) while others believe that there are strong cultural differences. The majority of Chinese employees, however, highlight that both Chinese and Tanzanians work together well, based on the concept of respect (1h-m, 2h-m, 10h-m, 11h-m). The Chinese employees’ views on self and others within the organisation, environment and culture are summarised in Table 2 and interpreted in terms of intercultural communication cognition, affect and behavioural influences.

TABLE 2
CHINESE VIEWS ON SELF AND ON TANZANIANS IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

The context	How Chinese see themselves	How Chinese employees see Tanzanians	Cognition (values, norms, epistemologies)	Affect (emotional expressiveness, feeling)	Behaviour (language, customs, styles in communication)
Organisational context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hardworking and disciplined • Trained, Sharing knowledge • Organisation is like a family • Knowledgeable of management systems • High work ethics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are not committed to time frames • Unskilled and not eager to learn/work • No experts, corrupt • Bankrupt • Low motivation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicting values (time, work hard, discipline) 		
Environmental context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling unsafe • Importers of education and information technology • Unaware of political system in Tanzania 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tanzanians lack education • Should learn from Chinese • Are open to foreigners • Need to facilitate infrastructural development • Do not care about safety • Do not make friends easily with Chinese • Tanzanians are strict, silent, lack creativity • Are family-orientated, friendly, happy, poor 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese feel unsafe • Fear • Hostile feelings • Feeling foreign 	
Cultural context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese are upset, • Work comes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family-orientated, socially competent, team workers, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values in cultures are 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese are always upset 	

The context	How Chinese see themselves	How Chinese employees see Tanzanians	Cognition (values, norms, epistemologies)	Affect (emotional expressiveness, feeling)	Behaviour (language, customs, styles in communication)
	before family <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese are always upset, work quickly, are unhappy 	peaceful, supportive, joyful, like entertainment, are supportive, helpful and welcoming <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to develop work responsibility, effectiveness 	similar, e.g. respect, enjoying good working relationships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultures differ strongly 		

“How do Tanzanian employees see Chinese employees?”

Tanzanian views on self and Chinese in the organisational context

The findings show that Tanzanians experience Chinese employees within the organisation as superior (9h-e, 16h-e) and arrogant. Tanzanians feel that there is a language barrier between themselves and Chinese employees (15h-m, 16h-e) and their values seem to collide with Chinese organisational practice. Tanzanians see Chinese as very hierarchical (9h-e), rigid in procedures, with a low level of employee participation in decision-making (7h –e, 14h-m) and lacking transparency. Tanzanian employees feel overly supervised by Chinese employees and overly controlled (13h-e, 16h-e). The majority of Tanzanian employees feel that Chinese employees value the organisation more than personal relationships (e.g. 3h-m, 4h-m, 5h-e, 12h-m) and believe that Chinese are paid according to performance (KPI, 11h-m) instead of earning a fixed and predefined salary. Tanzanian employees state that they are forced to sign contracts which are written in Chinese (16h-e), and see Chinese employees and superiors as insensitive regarding employee rights.

A female administrator reports:

Today, I came late, I had some family issue ... somebody called me, like ‘why are you not here till now?’ Just because he need my help at that time, I wasn’t ... I have this issue, but I am coming to the office, if, because, uh, if I don’t want to come, I, I would say I am not coming, but I, I’m telling you I am coming, like a few minutes I’ll be there because of the traffic jam ... so I, I, I told him, I imagine like 20 minutes, but it came to 30 minutes ... then he was like, because my supervisor is not here, and he was like ‘just because your supervisor is not here, that’s why you can come any time you want’, like, and I was like ‘what?’ He’s not even my supervisor and he need my help, how can he just say that to me? So I feel like, he, that, this is because he feel more superior than me. This kind of feeling, yeah, we, we, all, I can tell, we are all facing this ... local people, they are, we are facing this ... they are feeling more superior to us ... Like they can boss everyone. (9h-e)

As evident from the excerpt, the interviewee feels inferior and concludes that the Chinese believe they are superior to Tanzanians. She also does not enjoy the Chinese communication style which is described as “bossy”, hierarchical and disrespectful.

Another Tanzanian employee struggles with a language issue in the organisational context:

It’s great ‘cause we all understand each other. But sometimes [sigh] sometimes you might be given a document to sign, which is written in Chinese. So you don’t know what is there but you’re just told, ‘Sign!’ It’s your boss saying what you have to do and you sign. So you don’t know what is written there, you don’t know if you are going to be sold [sourced] out, you just sign. Yah! It happens (16h-e).

As in the previous interview excerpt, this Tanzanian employee feels that she is not treated respectfully. Since she does not have language competency (likewise 13h-e) to understand the content of the document she must sign, this employee believes she is not being treated as an equal (as with 9h-e) which creates mistrust of her colleagues and superiors. Consequently, she obeys, for fear of losing her job.

Another Tanzanian employee complains about the structure of the organisation as having vague job descriptions which correlate with high expectations of the employees, rigid hierarchies, centralised structures and limited personal communication and participation of employees (7h-e, 13h-e). The majority of Tanzanian employees report on a strong hierarchy in Chinese employees, bureaucratic processes and rigid top-down approaches. According to Tanzanians, these observations clash with their own organisational values such as desire for mutual understanding (9h-e), a more flexible hierarchy, transparent structures and human-orientated and participative decision-making (5h-e,7h-e). Tanzanians expect contracts in English with clear job descriptions and less autocratic management styles (14h-m). For Tanzanians, Chinese employees are results-driven, devoted to the company and less people-orientated than are Tanzanians (7h-e, 9h-e).

One Tanzanian employee comments that Tanzanians believe that Chinese enjoy hard work, dedication and commitment which encourages teamwork and integration in the organisation (9h-e). Another Tanzanian notes that Tanzanians get less support, promotion and learning opportunities (see 14h-m, 15h-m) than Chinese employees and he does not feel he is treated equally (14h-m). Furthermore, he describes Chinese employees as exclusive, keeping to themselves and as limited with regard to interacting with others. For him, Chinese cause information barriers, lack of transparency (3h-m) and limited knowledge sharing (15h-m). Another Tanzanian employee (16h-e) points out that Tanzanians are less educated than Chinese employees, less experienced, semi-skilled and unable to speak Chinese. However, he mentions that Chinese superiors would aim to train Tanzanian employees.

Tanzanian views on self and Chinese in the environmental context

Tanzanians perceive Chinese engagement in the society as “aggressive”, “competing” but also “benefitting social responsibility activities”. A Tanzanian manager emphasises that Chinese employees display a lack of knowledge of local cultures, values and knowledge which should be appreciated and learned by Chinese visitors (9h-e).

One Tanzanian human resource manager describes Chinese managers as follows:

But then again the aggressive nature of the Chinese makes it possible for them to just get in and just get the work done ... they are so aggressive they are going to fight and do whatever it takes until they get to be heard or to get their brand to be seen ... But the fact that we are aggressive as well and I am saying we because I work for ... we are competing, we are able to compete and yeah we are driving the numbers. (3h-m)

The Tanzanian manager highlights the aggressive and competitive nature of Chinese employees and how it contributes positively to their success. Interestingly, this Tanzanian describes herself as part of the ingroup of the Chinese, because she is fascinated by the aggressive strategy and by being successful and working for a successful organisation. She is impressed by the perseverance she experiences in Chinese employees, by their will to be at the top, and she seems to be proud to be part of the organisation and their success in the society.

A Tanzanian executive who has studied and worked in China for more than seven years comments as follows:

That means most of the Chinese organisations come to Africa and they do not know what the local values are and local culture. They do not know and that is why they end up alienating the society; they stay in one team, they eat together, there is no interaction with the locals. So at the end of the day the business is conducted but really integration is a quality that needs lot of effort. You have to learn a lot about local culture, local values and to see which one they can accommodate. And also introduce their own values to see which ones are acceptable. I believe that first of all they have to look at themselves and then look at Africa and find the middle point. (4h-m, male channel executive)

This Tanzanian executive is very sceptical of Chinese knowledge regarding local cultures (likewise 15h-m). He feels that the Chinese should reflect on their own culture rather than on the local culture, and get into negotiations to negotiate Chinese and Tanzanian values to create societal integration. As a result of the disintegration, the Tanzanian manager observes Chinese “alienating” the culture, “no interaction”, “business done”, but at the cost of integration into the broader society.

Although most of the Tanzanians feel that Chinese and Tanzanian values clash (7h-e, 8h-e, 9h-e, 13h-e, 16h-e), one interviewee appreciates the Chinese impact on social responsibility community projects (15h-m). The interviewee observes that through their projects, the Chinese work with local businesses and their presence is seen as beneficial to the society, particularly by increasing employment opportunities and supporting young entrepreneurs. However, the interviewee points out the lack of trade unions in Chinese organisations to enforce labour rights which are not well advanced in Chinese work contexts, and which impact on the life quality in the Tanzanian society.

Tanzanian views on self and Chinese in the cultural context

Several Tanzanian employees (3h-m, 4h-m, 8h-e, 13h-e, 15h-m) perceive Chinese employees as being disrespectful towards Tanzanians. Chinese do not believe in God, do not practise a religion or belief, but are motivated by work only. This image contrasts strongly with the Tanzanian self-image which sees Tanzanians as believers in God (4h-m). However, Tanzanian employees regard the hardworking attitude, the time concept and the Chinese dedication to work positively, while other perceived characteristics, such as male domination, aggressive behavior and disrespect are not seen to be compatible with Tanzanian culture.

A Tanzanian employee discusses her experiences with the Chinese:

Some of them don't respect locals ... Uhm, that's one. And they can just come shout at you for no reason because you're just local. Or if ... if a Chinese comes to you, and ask for something and you tell that person then I'm not supposed to give you this ... because you have to get an approval from my supervisor if you can get this thing or this item that you want. There are some stuff that you just don't give away. You have to get an approval first and then he or she shouts at you or like, 'who do you think you are?' 'who do you think you are in this company?' Something like that ... Yah! It happens.

(16H-E)

This Tanzanian employee experiences Chinese employees shouting and behaving disrespectfully towards Tanzanians. Additionally, Chinese are seen to belittle locals and show their feeling of superiority. She is angry about the maltreatment of Chinese towards Tanzanians and feels that they do not adhere to procedure all the time.

Another Tanzanian spare parts manager is surprised about the belief of Chinese employees:

Church! As you know Chinese maybe they don't believe in God or they are not using him or they don't believe ... if you tell them that maybe I've gone to church, they cannot understand you. They say their motive is work. Well? (15h-m)

The Tanzanian manager feels that the belief in God is fundamental to all human relations, including relations in the workplace. His belief in God and attending church services is not understood by the Chinese who only believe in work. This general perspective of the Tanzanian reflects a cultural prejudice towards the Chinese as being atheists. Other Tanzanian employees view the Chinese culture as being geared towards getting the work done as they are hardworking (3h-m, 4h-m, 8h-e, 13h-e, 14h-m, 15h-m). The dedication and timeliness of the Chinese are desirable characteristics that Tanzanians are more than willing to adopt in order to improve their performance to improve the country (7h-e). However, the Chinese culture tends to be foreign, aggressive (3h-m, 9h-e) and male-dominated and is experienced as disrespectful and unfriendly towards Tanzanians (9h-e, 13h-e). Tanzanians see Chinese as holding strict cultural barriers and thus not being compatible with Tanzanian culture, with their unwillingness to learn Kiswahili as being a major hindrance (13h-e, 15h-m).

Tanzanian employees' views on self and others within the organisation, environment and culture are summarised in Table 3 and interpreted in terms of intercultural cooperation cognition, affect and behavioural influences.

TABLE 3
TANZANIAN VIEWS ON SELF AND ON CHINESE IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

The context	How Tanzanians see themselves	How Tanzanians employees see Chinese	Cognition (values, norms, fundamental epistemologies)	Affect (emotional expressiveness, feeling)	Behaviour (language, customs, styles in communication)
Organisational context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Want to have a fixed income • Are less educated, semi-skilled • Less performance-driven • Unable to speak Chinese 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel superior and are arrogant • Forceful • Lacking in employees' rights • Have a language barrier • Hierarchical, rigid, low participation of employees • Lack of transparency • Controlling and supervising • Value work/organisation more than people • Disrespectful • Bossy and results-driven, hard-working, dedicated, committed encouraging teamwork, however are also exclusive, keeping to themselves, limited in personal interaction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflicts due to colliding values (rigid, hierarchical and top-down) • Chinese versus people-orientated, • Participative, transparent values in Tanzanians • Suspect Chinese reward system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feel overly controlled and supervised • Feel inferior • Feel distrustful 	
Environmental context		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggressive and competitive • Contribute towards social responsibility activities • Persevere • Lack knowledge about Tanzanian society • Do not integrate into the broader society 			

The context	How Tanzanians see themselves	How Tanzanians employees see Chinese	Cognition (values, norms, fundamental epistemologies)	Affect (emotional expressiveness, feeling)	Behaviour (language, customs, styles in communication)
Cultural context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe in God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Display a lack of knowledge of local cultures and values • Should learn about local cultures • Are disrespectful • Do not believe in God • Do not practise religion or belief • Motivated by work only • Hardworking, punctual, dedicated to work • Unwilling to learn Kiswahili and have strong cultural barriers 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese showing feelings of superiority vs. Tanzanians feeling inferior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese are belittling Tanzanians, speak disrespectfully and shout

DISCUSSION

As emphasised in the literature review, Chinese and Tanzanian employees work closely together (African Economic Outlook, 2014) and findings show that Chinese investment in Tanzania is strongly welcomed (see Majani, 2013). However, the findings also show that the intercultural cooperation between Chinese and Tanzanian managers and employees is a challenge for members of both cultural groups (as described by Kim, 2015). As noted by Mayer, Boness and Louw (2016), Tanzanian and Chinese employees/managers also highlight the importance of understanding the other's culture within the workplace. Chinese managers see themselves as role models and trainers for Tanzanians to bring improvement, knowledge and skills to Tanzania, as discussed by Mjasiri (2015).

Tanzanian employees emphasise that Chinese employees should increase their cultural knowledge of Tanzanian society and culture (see Jackson, 2014). As Baah and Jauch (2009) have found, this study also highlights the challenging and conflictual perceptions of attitudes towards industrial relations, working conditions and labour practices in Chinese organisations which Tanzanian employees refer to. The conscious recognition of the intra- and inter-group perceptions should be considered (Spencer-Rodgers *et al.*, 2012) to improve Chinese-Tanzanian employee relationships and cooperation, as mentioned by Berry (2004).

Findings show that members of the cultural groups define themselves with regard to their own group expectations (Fitzsimmons and Stamper, 2013; Yildiz 2015:53). Only one Tanzanian (a manager who was born in Zambia, but lived in Tanzania) described herself as part of the Chinese ingroup in terms of competitiveness and selected cultural values. This may indicate that the manager – who is not part of the Tanzanian ingroup of employees because she acquired her citizenship at a later point in life – sees herself as part of the ingroup of the Chinese employees based on the sharing of selected values and not based on a national citizenship. Since her national group sense of belonging to the Tanzanian ingroup seems to be rather weak (she experiences herself rather as Zambian), she construes herself (Fitzsimmons and Stamper, 2013:83) in terms of the organisational culture and belonging, which is Chinese. This human resource manager can therefore be expected to act more in the interests of the organisation through her personal tendency to assimilate the organisational Chinese culture, than can be expected of the other Tanzanian employees (as explained by Yildiz, 2015). She has therefore developed a cultural identity frame (Yildiz, 2015:53) that is closer to the Chinese than to the Tanzanian group. This might be based on personal value preferences, on experiences of not being part of the Tanzanian ingroup or on self-definition in terms of power relations (the Chinese are seen as superior to the Tanzanians and therefore are chosen as the ingroup).

The Chinese and Tanzanian employees mention similarities between the groups; however, it is the differences that are emphasised from both sides in terms of organisational behaviour, the environment and particularly the culture and religion. According to Moreland *et al.*, (2013), the latent conflict within the organisation therefore seems to be relatively high.

As shown in Table 2 and communicated by Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern (2002: 610), Chinese views are mainly influenced by perceived differences in cognition, and to a lesser extent by perceived differences in affect, and hardly at all with regard to behaviour. Table 3 shows that Tanzanian views and perceptions of the Chinese both fall into the categories of perceived differences in cognition and affect. Tanzanians also perceive differences in behaviour, but to a lesser extent. These differences in intercultural inter-group perceptions show that Chinese employees/managers seem to focus more on the differences at a cognitive level, while Tanzanians perceive both cognitive and affective differences, as well as behaviour differences (to a lesser extent) which Chinese do not mention at all.

As noted by Stephan and Stephan (1985, 2000), differences in inter-group relations might create negative feelings such as anxiety or irritation and might finally lead to negative evaluations of members of the culturally different group (Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern, 2002). This study shows that negative feelings and irritations are experienced by both Chinese and Tanzanian employees.

However, it must also be emphasised that group members from both sides mention positive aspects of the other, though to a lesser degree.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THEORY AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Findings from this study demonstrate that Chinese and Tanzanian images of self and other refer to the context of three major themes, namely the organisation, the environment and the culture.

Findings show that Chinese and Tanzanian employees perceive their ingroups as more positive than members of the other group. However, the perceptions regarding the other are not necessarily only perceived as negative. Tanzanians are fascinated by the “aggressive” and “competitive” attitudes and ways of behaviour and the knowledge that Chinese managers and employees possess. The Chinese on the other hand, are intrigued by the positive work–life balance they see in Tanzanians and by the fact that although Tanzanians are perceived as poor, they are also perceived as happy.

Generally, findings show that the inter-group perceptions hold conflict potential and that members of both groups perceive power issues, seeing the Chinese managers/employees as superior to Tanzanians.

Future research should focus on the potential which Chinese and Tanzanian managers see to improve intercultural cooperation. Research questions which could not be responded to in this research include the following: How can members of both groups contribute to an improved intercultural cooperation? How could relationships of employees be increased on the micro levels within the organisation? And how could, for example, intercultural trainings improve the intercultural cooperation and understanding?

Chinese organisations could learn from this research to increase their understanding of the perceptions of self and others within Chinese organisations investing in African countries. They could also foster intercultural cooperation and understanding on the micro level of the organisation by supplying managers and employees with intercultural trainings and workshops to increase intercultural competences (based on reflections, exercises, discussions, exchange of perceptions, ideas and role-plays) and compulsory language trainings for members of both groups (in Kiswahili and in Chinese).

***Acknowledgements:** This work is based on the research supported in part by a Research Grant Rhodes University, Grahamstown, South Africa*

REFERENCES

African Economic Outlook .2014. *Trade policies and regional integration in Africa*. [Online.] Available at: http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/fileadmin/uploads/aeo/2014/PDF/Chapter_PDF/03_Chapter3_AEO2014_EN.light.pdf. [Accessed 12 June 2016].

Baah, A.Y. and Jauch, H. (Eds.). 2009. *Chinese investments in Africa: A labour perspective*. Johannesburg, South Africa: African Labour Research Network. [Online.] Available at: <http://www.pairault.fr/sinaf/index.php/statistiques/15-references/142-chinese-investments-in-africa-a-labour-perspective> [Accessed 3 June 2016].

Becvar, D.S. and Becvar, R.J. 2006. *Family therapy: A systemic integration*. 6th ed. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Berger, P. L. and Luckmann, T. 2000. *Die gesellschaftliche Konstruktion der Wirklichkeit. Eine*

Theorie der Wissenssoziologie. Frankfurt: Fischer.

Berry, J.W. 2004. Psychology of group relations: cultural and social dimensions. *Aviation, Space, and Environment Medicine*, 75(7), Section II: C52-C57.

Bräutigam, D. 2009. *The Dragon's Gift: The Real Story of China in Africa*. London: Oxford University Press.

Bond, M. H. 1986. Mutual stereotypes and the facilitation of interaction across cultural lines. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(3): 259–276.

Collis, J. and Hussey, R. 2014. *Business research: A practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students*. 4th ed. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Cooke, F.L. 2014. Chinese multinational firms in Asia and Africa: Relationships with institutional actors and patterns of HRM practices. *Human Resource Management*, 53(6): 877-896. Doi: 10.1002/hrm.21612.

Creswell, J.W. 2003. *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.

Curtis, A. 2015. *China's long history in Africa*. In: NewAfrican. [Online.] Available at: <http://newafricanmagazine.com/chinas-long-history-africa/> [Accessed: 11. March 2016].

Dilthey, W. 2002 [1910]. The formation of the historical world in the human sciences. In *Wilhelm Dilthey selected works. Volume III*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fitzsimmons, S.R. and Stamper, C.L. 2013. How societal culture influences friction in the employee-organization relationship. *Human Resource Management Review*, 24 (2014):80-94.

Gudykunst, W. B. (Ed.). 1986. *Intergroup communication*. Baltimore: E. Arnold.

Hall, E. T. 1976. *Beyond culture*. Garden City, NJ: Anchor.

Handley, R. 2016. *Impact of Organisational Culture and Leadership Styles on the Quality of Work Life: An Exploratory Study of Chinese Organisations in South Africa*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation, Grahamstown: Rhodes University.

Jackson, T. 2014. Employment in Chinese MNEs: Appraising the Dragon's gift to Sub-Saharan Africa. *Human Resource Management*, 53(6): 897-919. Doi:10.1002/hrm.21565.

Jackson, T., Louw, L. and Zhao, S. 2013. China in Sub-Saharan Africa: Implications for HRM policy and practice at organizational level. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 24(13): 2512-2533. Doi:10.1080/09585192.2012.725067.

Juréniené, V. 2015. Possibilities for intercultural cooperation development in cultural centres. *Cross-Cultural Communication*, 11(2): 5 -16. Doi: 10.3968/6377.

Kim, Y. Y. (Ed.). 1986. *Interethnic communication: Current research*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Kim, Y. 2015. China's soft power expansion in Africa through industrialization: Opportunities and challenges. *Africa Insight*, 44(4): 1-13.

Luchien, K., and Honorine, I. 2005. Ubuntu as a key African management concept: Contextual background and practical insights for knowledge application. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 20(7): 607-620.

- Mabuza, L. 2015. *A study of organisational culture and high commitment human resource systems in selected Chinese organisations in Southern Africa*. Unpublished Masters Dissertation, Grahamstown: Rhodes University
- Majani, F. (2013) *China drops anchor in Tanzania*. Mail and Guardian, 4 October. [Online.] Available at: <http://mg.co.za/article/2013-10-04-00-china-drops-anchor-in-tanzania>. [Accessed 10 June 2016].
- Men, T. 2014. Place-based and place-bound realities: A Chinese firm's embeddedness in Tanzania. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 1/2014: 103-138.
- Mjasiri, J. 2015. *Tanzania: Chinese companies carrying out president xi jinping's philosophy in Tanzania*. Daily news online edition 01.05.2015. [Online.] Available at: <http://allafrica.com/stories/201605020520.html> [Accessed 10 June 2016].
- Mayer, C.-H., Boness, C.-M. and Louw, L. 2016. *Perspectives of Chinese and Tanzanian employees on intercultural cooperation in a private Chinese organisation in Tanzania*. 10th China Goes Global Conference, University of Macerata, Italy, 26-28, July 2016.
- Men, T. 2014. Place-based and place-bound realities: a Chinese firm's embeddedness in Tanzania. *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs*, 1:103-138.
- Moreland, R.L., Levine, J.M. and Wingert, M.L. 2013. Creating the ideal group: composition effects at work. In: Witte, E. and Davis, J.H. (Eds.). *Understanding group behaviour. Small group processes and interpersonal relations*, 2: 11-36. New York: Psychology Press, Taylor and Francis Group.
- Ni, N. 2015. *Gaining momentum: Johannesburg summit to consolidate China-Africa partnership*. FOCAC Johannesburg Summit special issue: 20-23.
- Patterson, S. 2014. *The factors influencing local employee commitment in selected Chinese organisations in South Africa* Unpublished Masters Dissertation, Grahamstown: Rhodes University.
- Pigato, M. and Tang, W. 2015. *China in Africa: Expanding economic ties in an evolving global context*. Investing in Africa Forum: Partnering to accelerate investment, industrialization and results in Africa. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, March 2015. [Online.]
- Available at:
<http://www.worldbank.org/content/dam/Worldbank/Event/Africa/Investing%20in%20Africa%20Forum/2015/investing-in-africa-forum-china-and-africa-expanding-economic-ties-in-an-evolving-global-context.pdf> [Accessed 3 June 2016].
- Ratner, C. 2002. Subjectivity and objectivity in qualitative methodology. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 3(3). [Online.] Available at: <http://www.qualitative-research.net/index.php/fqs/article/view/829/1800> [Accessed 10 June 2016].
- Shen, J. 2007. Approaches to international industrial relations in Chinese multinational corporations. *Management Revue*, 18: 410-426. [Online.] Available at: http://www.jstor.org/stable/41791362?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents [Accessed 12 June 2016].
- Spencer-Rodgers, J. and McGovern, T. 2002. Attitudes toward the culturally different: the role of intercultural communication barriers, affective responses, consensual stereotypes, and perceived threat. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26: 609-631.
- Spencer-Rodgers, J., Williams, M.J. and Peng, K. 2012. Culturally based lay beliefs as a tool for understanding intergroup and intercultural relations. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 36: 169-178.

Stephan, W. G., and Stephan, C. W. 1985. Intergroup anxiety. *Journal of Social Issues*, 41: 157–175.

Stephan, W. G., and Stephan, C. W. 2000. *An Integrated Threat Theory of prejudice*. In S. Oskamp (Ed.), *Reducing prejudice and discrimination: Claremont symposium on Applied Social Psychology*, pp. 23-45. Mahwah, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Tajfel, H. and Turner, J. 1986. *The social identity theory of intergroup behaviour*. In Worchel, S. and Austin, W. (Eds.). *Psychology of intergroup relations*. Chicago, IL: Nelson-Hall.

Terre Blanche, M., Durrheim, K., and Kelly, K. 2006. First steps in qualitative data analysis. In Terre Blanche, M., Durrheim, K. and Painter, D. (Eds.). *Research in practice. Applied methods for the social sciences*. pp. 321-344. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Xing, Y., Liu, Y., Tarba, S.Y. and Cooper, C.L. 2014. Intercultural influences on managing African employees of Chinese firms in Africa: Chinese managers' HRM practices. *International Business Review*, 1097: 1-14. Doi: 10.1016/j.ibusrev.2014.05.003.

Yildiz, H.E. 2015. "Us vs. them" or "us over them"? On the roles of similarity and status in M&Ss. *International Business Review*, 25(2016): 51-65. Doi/10.1016.j.ibusrev.2015.05.002.

Yin, R.K. 2009. *Case study research: design and methods*. 2nd ed. London: Sage.