

THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SOUTH AFRICAN AND CHINESE DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS OF LEADERSHIP STYLE: A MINING JOINT VENTURE CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the similarities and differences between South African and Chinese definitions and descriptions of leadership style through a case study of a Chinese-South African joint venture (hereafter referred to as ABC). The purposive sample included management and supervisory level employees from the head office and mining operation of ABC who were willing to participate in the study. In-depth semi-structured interviews were used to collect data which was analysed using content analysis. The study found similarities and differences between South African and Chinese leadership definitions and dominant leadership styles as described by Chinese and South African participants. Overall, the study recommends that transformational leadership is more effective than transactional and laissez-faire leadership. Idealised influence and contingent reward are strongly exhibited by both South African and Chinese participants. Finally, Chinese participants in this study note that they do not exhibit individualised consideration leader behaviour as strongly as South Africans do.

INTRODUCTION

Increasing globalisation has created a growing presence of multinational organisations and trade (Dodds, 2014). The resulting cross-cultural and intercultural organisational context needs to be researched in order to create a non-pejorative, empirically researched and well established body of knowledge to reduce cultural conflicts and enhance cohesiveness (Bird and Fang, 2009; Bräutigam, 2009; Brewster, Carey, Grobler, Holland and Wörnich, 2008). Intercultural research relates to interactions between cultures, seeking to understand how different cultures function together (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel and Roy, 2014: 5-6) while cross-cultural research pertains to the analysing of different cultures and comparative research across cultures (Johnson, Lenartowicz and Apud, 2006). China is South Africa's largest trading partner, and the 2015 signing of new agreements between China and Africa following the 2015 FOCAC summit speaks to increasing China-Africa engagement (BBC News, 2015). With the rapidly changing world and global business environment,

workforce expectations are changing and competition is becoming increasingly difficult to manage. As such, effective international leadership is imperative for organisational success, if not survival (Weinberger, 2009). Wang, Freeman and Zhu (2013) highlight the fact that Chinese firms have experienced several challenges in global expansion and that there are insufficient effective cross-cultural leaders to ensure organisational success. Effective leadership within an intercultural workplace is complicated given that perceptions of effective leadership behaviour vary across countries and cultures (Brewster *et al.*, 2008: 281). Nevertheless, certain universally endorsed leadership practices such as transformational leadership have been identified (Walumbwa, Orwa, Wang and Lawler, 2005: 249).

RESEARCH PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

There is a need to understand the dynamics of Chinese-African intercultural engagement, particularly at the organisational level, so as to enhance synergies (Park and Alden, 2013; Jackson, Louw and Zhao, 2013). The studies purpose is to understand what differences and similarities exist between Chinese and South African descriptions of leadership style. Given the lack of indigenous leadership definitions, the study will initially seek to define leadership indigenously.

To meet the primary research purpose above, the following research objectives have been set:

- To identify the key similarities and differences between Chinese and South African definitions of leadership.
- To explore the similarities and differences between Chinese and South African dominant leadership styles and leadership dimensions within the intercultural context.
- To make recommendations on how to effectively lead in a similar intercultural context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition and nature of leadership style

From a Western orientation, leadership is typically described as being a process (Bass, 2007: 11), an interaction between leaders and followers (Bass, 2007: 11; Yukl, 2006) or a personality or behaviour (Amos, Ristow, Ristow and Pearse, 2008: 197; Bass, 2007: 11; Yukl, 2006) which results in leaders influencing followers (Bass, 2007: 11) so as to attain organisational goals (Amos *et al.*, 2008: 197; Bass, 2007: 11; Yukl, 2006). Leadership is distinguishable from management in that leadership speaks to a form of engagement as opposed to a hierarchical distinction which is generally indicative of management (Amos, 2012: 373). African and Chinese leadership definitions are notably excluded from the current related literature and as such western parameters exist in the search for what can be considered effective leadership (Nkomo, 2011; Javidan, Dorfman, Sully de Luque and House, 2006).

Descriptions of African leadership generally centre on social influence, voluntary participation, and on serving and stewardship which engender commitment rather than on egocentric behaviour that can at best offer compliance (Large, 2008: 59). Successful African leadership is thus not about holding a position of power in the organisational hierarchy, but concerns personal power that enables individuals to create their own future and quality of life. Looking at a Chinese perspective, Tsai, Tsai and Wang (2011: 5321) define leadership as “the general characterization of a leader’s thinking, behaviour and organisational environment. It can be viewed as a series of managerial attitudes, behaviours, characteristics and skills based on individual and organizational values, leadership interests and reliability of employees in different situations”. Effective leadership qualities include discipline, authority, benevolence and moral integrity (Wu and Wang, 2014).

This paper asserts that both universally endorsed and culturally distinct leadership styles and characteristics exist (Browaeyns and Price, 2011; Van Zyl, 2009). Moreover, universally endorsed

leadership styles, for example charismatic or value-based, humane-orientated, and self-protective leadership, are likely to manifest differently across cultures. Consequently it is important to develop culturally aware leaders (Selvarajah and Meyer, 2007; Pittinsky and Zhu, 2005).

Cultural relativity of leadership

There are few available empirical studies that look at leadership behaviour and perceptions of leadership within Asia and Africa. Most studies have a Western orientation or are dismissive of culture (Selvarajah and Meyer, 2007; Pittinsky and Zhu, 2005). Despite the enduring presence of non-Western leadership, the prevailing body of knowledge is dominated by a Western perspective (Bräutigam, 2009; Hofstede, 1993). National culture scales are often reductive in nature and do not accurately describe the nuances and specific cultural values of a country, serving more as a comparative tool than seeking to describe cultural values (Jackson, 2012). Understanding how culture affects intercultural work environments is important given distinct differences between Western and indigenous organisational practices, notwithstanding leadership (Jackson, 2011; Thomas and Bendixen, 2000: 509). China and South Africa can both be described as highly diverse nations; however, China is seen to possess a stronger common cultural value system than South Africa does (Hafsi and Yan, 2007). Great variation in cultural values and consequent behaviour is seen across the ethnic groups of South Africa, rendering the analysis of a national culture relatively less beneficial (Blunt and Jones, 1997).

An in-depth examination of culture is beyond the scope and length of the current study. However, a brief interrogation of cultural similarities and differences expected to affect leadership behaviour will be presented. The importance of positive interpersonal relationships and collectivistic values which lead to social harmony are indicative of both Chinese and South African culture (Zhou and Martocchio, 2001; Blunt and Jones, 1997). Without being reductive, familial collectivism can be argued to manifest in contemporary Chinese and South African business practices (Jackson, 2012: 195; Hafsi and Yan, 2007). Chinese and South African cultures are also often described as paternalistic (Zhu, Zhang and Shen, 2012: 3967). Paternalism affects leadership, given a disposition towards control and hierarchy, which result in an exchange of benevolence for loyalty and respect (Fang, 2006; Zhou and Martocchio, 2001: 117). A notable difference however between Chinese and South African leaders is the Chinese predilection to equity versus the South African tendency to promote equality (Horwitz, Kamoche and Chew, 2002: 1030). Jackson (2012: 195) argues that Chinese values of benevolence, moral righteousness and a respect for etiquette and norms may enable cohesion and satisfactory outcomes. The Chinese leaders of organisations operating in Africa can thus create “power structures, relationships, decision making and management processes” that engender these values, resulting in “fair wages and safe working environments, fair-dealing with customers, providing benefits to the community, being a good corporate citizen, promoting social good generally and protecting the environment” (Jackson, 2012: 195).

African leadership styles

African leadership is generally portrayed negatively as authoritarian, bureaucratic, conservative, and ineffective. Seldom is it presented as contemporarily appropriate and effective but is rather portrayed as a predecessor to acceptable leadership theory (Nkomo, 2011). Post-colonial leadership in South Africa was largely authoritarian, modelled closely on autocratic military leadership derived from the West (Broodryk, 2005: 46). Shifts can be seen, however, towards more inclusive democratic leadership which is in line with global trends towards more humanistic leadership but which also embodies traditional African values (van der Colff, 2003: 257). African leaders are frequently categorised as paternalistic in nature whereby leaders are directive and status-orientated on one hand, and supportive and engaged on the other. Such a leader, while being directive, enhances the “greater good”, engendering the achievement of collective as opposed to individual goals (Bolden and Kirk, 2009: 79; Broodryk, 2005: 46). In doing so, the African paternal leader is not perceived as ineffective

(as is predicted in Western literature) but is rather associated with African values of benevolence, consensus, stewardship and moral or value-based behaviour (Nkomo, 2011). Different ethnic groups can be seen to have differing perceptions of effective leadership (Ashkanasy, 2002: 150).

African leadership is centred on culturally embedded values of communalism, togetherness, relationalism, consensus and unity which are encapsulated within the ethos of *ubuntu* (Bolden and Kirk, 2009: 79; van der Colff, 2003: 257). *Ubuntu* is a traditional South African value which prompts the establishment of dyadic trust relationships as the essence of successful leadership. What is more, African leaders and subordinates often have strong familial bonds where leaders engage in the work and non-work lives of employees (Bolden and Kirk, 2009: 79; Broodryk, 2005: 46; van der Colff, 2003: 257). South African leadership has also been described as participatory leadership whereby power embedded in hierarchy is replaced with an organisational structure geared towards employee empowerment and development (Van der Colff, 2003: 257). Participatory leadership, similarly to paternalism, is based on an interconnectedness and solidarity. It is contested, however, whether participatory leadership is a traditional style (Jackson, 2011; van der Colff, 2003: 260).

Chinese leadership styles

Leadership in China is based on seemingly paradoxical styles. Chinese leadership can be described as bureaucratic in nature whereby hierarchy status and centralised power is an enduring tradition (Pittinsky and Zhu, 2005). While strategic level decisions are retained for higher levels of management, this bureaucratic leadership is accompanied by autonomy in completing work goals. Moreover leaders are expected to ensure the wellbeing of subordinates. Accordingly respect, trust, filial piety and compliance from subordinates are exchanged for benevolence, morality and protection from leaders (Zhu *et al.*, 2012). In light of this leader-member exchange, Chinese leadership is similarly characterised as paternalistic (Bird and Fang, 2009: 139).

As was the case with South African leadership, Chinese leadership can be described as relational in nature. Building harmonious relationships within the organisation and externally (*guanxi*), and exhibiting high moral behaviour, are seen to be key to effective leadership (Bird and Fang, 2009). The importance of harmonious reciprocal relationships is embedded in the Confucian belief system whereby the appropriate behaviour of both leader and subordinate is guided by the nature of one's relationships with others.

Western leadership theory

Three traditional theory approaches emerge, namely traits, behavioural and contingency approaches. Moving into the 21st century, it became apparent that these traditional leadership styles (transactional) were insufficient in that there was no regard for how leadership behaviour affected employee outcomes beyond organisational performance (Weinberger, 2009: 749). Contemporarily several alternative leadership theories have emerged such as servant leadership, relational leadership, and transformational leadership, which seek to overcome these aforementioned shortcomings of traditional leadership (Ogbonna and Harris, 2000).

This study adopted the Bass and Avolio's (1997) Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) based on the Full Range Leadership Development Theory (FRLDT) to guide data collection and analysis to enable the researcher to assess the dominant leadership styles and dimensions of Chinese and South African participants. The FRLM distinguishes three leadership styles – transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire (Fukushige and Spicer, 2007: 509; Bass and Avolio, 1997). The three leadership style dimensions are not mutually exclusive but complement each other, and should be exhibited by all leaders to some degree. Transformational leadership comprises five leadership dimensions: idealised influence (attributes), idealised influence (behaviour), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Transactional leadership behaviour has three

dimensions, namely contingent reward, management-by-exception (MBE) active and MBE passive. Laissez-faire leadership has no dimensions and represents absence of leadership (Kirkbride, 2006). FRLM research and testing within the Chinese and African context is limited relative to the West, and appropriateness of the model in non-Western cultures is contested (Fukushige and Spicer, 2007: 509; Bass, 1997). Nevertheless there exists empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of transformational leadership behaviour in comparison to transactional behaviours in various countries (Den Hartog House, Hanges and Ruiz-Quintanilla, 1999).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research falls within the phenomenological paradigm and makes use of a qualitative mode of enquiry. More specifically, a case study design lends itself to the exploratory and subjective nature of the research. Case study research design is well suited to this research, given the need for context-specific and rich descriptions (Remenyi, 2012; Collis and Hussey, 2003). It is important however that the sample is representative of similar case organisations (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010: 30). The findings and conclusions of this study are generalisable only in terms of the context in which the findings are generated but may serve as guiding principles for the consideration of similar case organisations as well as for the generation of generally applicable theories (Yin, 2009: 14; Kumar, 2005: 113; Zikmund, 2003: 116).

The unit of analysis was the case organisation ABC, and was determined using purposive sampling (Hair, Money, Samouel and Page, 2003). ABC is a Chinese-South African joint venture specialising in the production of chrome and ferrochrome. The head office is based in the Gauteng Province and the mining operation is in the Mpumalanga Province. The sample included willing management and supervisory level employees of ABC, also determined through purposive sampling (Collis and Hussey, 2009). This sample was then randomly separated into eight leaders (self-raters) and eight leader-raters. All participants fell within a range of employment codes (as determined by the case organisation) of E (senior management), D (managerial employee) or C (skilled employee). Participants were assigned code numbers indicating the ascending order in which the interviews were conducted (1-16), their nationality as South African (S) or Chinese (C), and their assigned role as leader (L) or leader-rater (R). All quotations used were accompanied with biographical indicators to provide meaning in context, which is of particular importance given the intercultural and qualitative nature of this paper. Hereunder is a key to interpret the biographical data tables under quotations.

Code number	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Education	Employment code	Years of tenure	Stay in RSA (years)
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The primary data collection method was interviews, while supporting data collection techniques included researcher observations and reflections (made throughout the data collection process) and document analysis (of publically available documents and private organisation-related documents). An interview guide was created and reviewed by an expert qualitative researcher. Sixteen in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted at both headquarters (with three Chinese) and the mining operation (with 13 South Africans) to collect data (Hair *et al.*, 2007).

The data analysis process consisted of data preparation, data reduction, familiarisation and comprehension, data segmentation and coding, reflection and refinement of codes and themes, elaboration, interpretation and checking. Three approaches to content analysis were used to analyse data, namely; conventional, directed (as per a predetermined coding frame), and summative (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005: 1277). The choice between conventional and directed content analysis approach was determined by the nature of the research question being answered (Elo and Kyngäs, 2008: 109). Quantification was used to determine code dominance not to infer any meaning (Wojnar and Swanson, 2007: 174). Frequency of occurrence was calculated by counting. Weighted scores (X_w) were calculated as $X_w = X/w$, where X is the un-weighted score and W is the factor weighting. Frequency

distributions were calculated using the relative frequency (f_i) calculation of $f_i = \frac{f}{n}$ where f is the absolute frequency and n is the total number of observations. Two levels of content analysis were conducted. First, inductive analysis using a coding sheet was carried out to form a frame of analysis. For objective 1, the second level of analysis pertained to refinement and reduction of definition codes and theme creation to identify dominant codes. For research objective 2, the second level of data analysis pertained to the assigning of deductive codes – the nine leadership style dimensions of the Bass and Avolio (1997) model. Descriptive statistics (frequencies, distributions and arithmetic means) were used where relevant (Collis and Hussey, 2009). The data was thereafter organised into two clusters, determined by culture (South African and Chinese) in order to answer the research questions.

Factual accuracy together with theoretical support was applied when reporting and interpreting findings to establish credibility. Two levels of data analysis were carried out to ensure honest findings. Transferability was accomplished by providing details of the research design. Given the exploratory nature of this study, further studies would be required in other contexts. Dependability or confirmability refers largely to whether repeated studies would corroborate the research findings. A detailed audit trail and methodology accompanied with researcher objectivity and rigour can assist in establishing confirmability. Observations and multi-level data analysis (as discussed above) enhanced the quality of findings (Collis and Hussey, 2009: 279).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Chinese and South African leadership definitions

The first objective of the study was to identify the similarities and differences between South African and Chinese definitions of leadership. The relevance of interrogating indigenous definitions of leadership was reinforced given that localised leadership was mentioned by all three Chinese participants (1 C-L; 2 C-R; 3 C-R) (see Table 1). Wang *et al.* (2013) similarly found that localisation was one of the keys to success of Chinese organisations in Africa. The dominant leadership definition codes for the selected clusters are represented in Table 1.

TABLE 1
DOMINANT THEMES AND CODES FOR CHINESE AND SOUTH AFRICAN
DEFINITIONS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

South African cluster codes	Chinese cluster codes
BEHAVIOURAL THEME	
Motivate	Behaviour
Responsibility and accountability	Localised leadership
Effective communication	Manage organisation
Leading by example	Make everyone happy
Planning	Planning
Guidance	Unite with partners
Open to employee's ideas	Localised leadership
Cooperate	Cooperate
TRAITS THEME	
Emotional intelligence	Personality
Being knowledgeable	Being knowledgeable
Not authoritative	Considerate
Capable	Capable
	Professionalism
	Solidarity
LEADERSHIP OUTCOME THEME	
Trust and respect	Trust and respect
Do not fear leaders	Employees should follow the leader
Influence people to attain common organisational goals	Create shareholder value

Similarities

Five common codes - namely “cooperate”, “planning”, “being knowledgeable”, “capable”, and “trust and respect” - emerged from the data analysis; these are illustrated with blue shading in Table 1.

Cooperate

Cooperation can be seen to be embedded in the Confucian ethos (Jackson, 2014) and so too within South African participative leadership (Nkomo, 2011). The emergence of cooperation in both culture clusters may speak to both an etic and emic importance of cooperation. Universally, the importance of cooperation between leaders and subordinates is well documented (Schwab, 2014; van der Colff, 2003: 257). Cooperation is of particular importance in ABC in light of intercultural cooperation requirements. Even if cooperation is not universal, the context-specific relevance of cooperation is supported by The Global Competitiveness Report (Schwab, 2014) ranking South Africa last of all 144 participating countries in the world in terms of “cooperation in labour-employee relations”.

Planning

Planning emerged as a core leadership task in the 1930s (Kriel, 2008), generally seen to have emanated from “scientific leadership” (Browaeyns and Price, 2011). Planning pertains to strategy formulation and implementation thereof (Williams, 2013: 9; Louw and Venter, 2010). The Hofstede Centre (2016) points out that a long-term orientation (as is the case with China) is associated with a greater emphasis on strategic planning. South Africans typically have a more short-term orientation whereby there is a greater disposition to think normatively as opposed to pragmatically (The Hofstede Centre, 2016). Consequently it is predicted that while planning emerged as a common leadership definition code, the essence of planning may vary between the two culture clusters.

Being knowledgeable

Bass (1990) identifies knowledge as a key common leadership trait that determines leadership capability. Knowledge can be described as an etic leadership facet in that knowledge engenders organisational growth and is a competitive advantage in the current “knowledge economy” (Connerley and Pedersen, 2005). Knowledge as portrayed by participants pertains both to tacit and explicit knowledge which is occupationally specialised, propositional or personal. Of particular significance is the dissemination and accessibility of knowledge, given South Africa’s skills and education shortage.

Capable

Capabilities enable leaders and leader-raters alike to attain goals and desired outcomes (Duignan, 2003). The determinants of a capable leader are generally context-specific (Robinson, 2010). As a result, leaders need to enhance and acquire capabilities to remain competitive in their roles (Stiles, 2012). Leaders should assess their capabilities in light of personal, organisational, and external challenges (Robinson, 2010). This line of thought corresponds to a situational view of leadership whereby the appropriate behaviour or attitude ought to be context-dependent. It is vital that leaders also build the capabilities of employees to ensure a capable and productive workforce (Stiles, 2012).

Trust and respect

Trust can be described as universal in its existence, but it is also emic in that the importance and establishment of trust varies across cultures (Saunders, Skinner, Dietz, Gillespie and Lewicki, 2010). Trust and respect are important to the establishment of strong relationships in and out of the workplace (Saunders *et al.*, 2010; Masango, 2002). Trust has been proposed by Zaheer and Zaheer (2006) as being key for successful international or intercultural business. Not only is trust argued to be a transformational leadership value (Washington, 2007) but it is also advocated as an expected social norm within both Chinese and South African cultures (Ashkanasy, 2002: 155, Bolden and Kirk, 2009: 72).

Differences

The notable differences found when comparing the dominant Chinese and South African leadership definition themes and codes in Table 1 will now be explored.

Strategic intent

The first difference identified is that of the strategic intent – organisational vision, mission and goals. The strategic intent described by the Chinese participants (1 C-L; 2 C-R; 3 C-R) was “to create shareholder value”. For example, participant 3 C-R confirms that the vision, mission and goal of the organisation is to create value for shareholders:

“To manage company... to add value for the shareholders. Ja, I think that’s the main purpose... leadership is working for” (1 C-L)

3 C-R	32	M	Ch	Ba (PGH)	E	2	2
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The organisational mission described by South African participants portrays a need for leaders to influence subordinates to attain commonly-agreed-upon goals (see Table 1). South African participants, unlike the Chinese participants perceive profit as an implicit goal (Park and Alden, 2013). Employee performance, achieving goals aligned to the strategy, and enjoying work are examples of

the strategic intent provided by South African participants (4 S-L). For example, participant 8 S-R said:

“I would define leadership as influencing everything, because you try influencing others to get... goals and if you don’t get their buy-in... you will get temporary love [from subordinates]... so you gotta [sic] influence them in the right direction to make sure they want the goal you want to achieve” (8 S-R)

8 S-R	43	M	B	Ba	DL	4
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Deference to authority

The Chinese participants were disposed to describe an unyielding deference to authority whereby leaders are followed without question. This stands in contrast to the South African participants’ description of their personal choice to willingly follow leaders and work towards organisational goals. South Africa can be described as more communal, in that leadership legitimacy is seen to be earned through behaviour and not through authority; consequently, non-authoritative leadership behaviours which do not elicit fear are needed to warrant subordinate support (Ventegodt, Merrick and Andersen, 2003: 1055). The Chinese value of equity can accordingly be contrasted with South Africa’s preference for equality (Zhou and Martocchio, 2001: 117).

Dominant leadership styles

The second objective was to explore the similarities and differences between Chinese and South African dominant leadership styles within the intercultural context. Table 2 below shows frequency of occurrence scores for each of the leadership dimensions and the weighted frequency scores for each of the styles so as to compare the findings of the selected clusters.

TABLE 2
FREQUENCY SCORES FOR THE LEADERSHIP DIMENSIONS AND STYLES FOR
CHINESE AND SOUTH AFRICAN CLUSTERS

	Dimensions									Styles		
	IA	IB	IM	IS	IC	CR	MBE (a)	MBE (p)	LF	LF _w	TF _w	TA _w
<i>f</i> =	5	0	1	1	6	2	0	0	1	3	11	2
SA <i>f</i> =	3	0	1	1	6	1	0	0	1	3	9	1
CH <i>f</i> =	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	1

Notes. *f*= Frequency; SA= South African; CH= Chinese; IA= Idealised influence (a); IB= Idealised behaviour; IM= Inspirational motivation; IS= Intellectual stimulation; IC= Individualised consideration; CR= Contingent reward; MBE= Management-by-exception; LF= Laissez-faire; TF= Transformational leadership; TA= Transactional leadership.

The leadership scores in Table 2 highlight that the dominant leadership style described across the sample was transformational (n=11), followed by laissez-faire (n=3), and transactional (n=2). This is not to suggest that laissez-faire and transactional leadership styles were not exhibited – however, they are not dominant. Looking at these findings across the clusters, this study found that nine South African and two Chinese participants described a dominant leadership style of transformational leadership. While a plethora of similarities and differences in the leadership styles and dimensions

described by participants in each culture cluster can be identified, the notable similarities and differences will be explored.

Similarities

The most evident similarity is that a dominant transformational leadership style was described by both the South African and Chinese culture clusters. On examining the leadership style dimensions, it can be seen that only two dimensions were described as dominant leadership dimensions within both clusters, namely the transformational leadership dimension of idealised influence (attributes) and the transactional dimension of contingent reward. The absence of dominance by both clusters will not be considered a similarity for the purpose of this study.

Transformational leadership

The finding that the dominant leadership style within the case organisation is transformational is supported by the findings of Page (2011). Nevertheless differences exist in the determinants of a transformational leader between the culture clusters. The transformational leadership style is necessary within the case organisation in light of tough industry conditions and a need for cultural sensitivity (Nkomo, 2011). The transformational South African leader is found to encompass traditional African values such as consensus, “personalism”, moral example and humanism, and to use charisma (Nkomo, 2011; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2005). Accordingly the transformational leadership style described by South African participants is similar to paternalistic leadership (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2005: 237). The Chinese transformational leadership in the case organisation was market-orientated at a strategic level and localised so as to align to the South African environment. The nature of the relationship between leader and subordinate extended into the personal arena in line with data from the Chinese participants and centred strongly on an exchange of respect for benevolence, and vice versa (Jackson, 2014; Ashkanasy, 2002: 155). The adapting of leadership style given the context, highlights a situational leadership whereby leadership style differs between intracultural and intercultural engagement (Wang, 2008).

The pertinence of localised leadership is not to suggest that traditional Chinese leadership behaviour is abandoned, but rather is strategically adapted to enhance intercultural harmony with the South African stakeholders (Jackson, 2014). This localised leadership style is accompanied by intercultural engagement and the hiring of local managers and employees; in the literature this style is aligned to a “glocal” internationalisation strategy (Martins and Coetzee, 2007). On the contrary however, participant 8 S-R indicates a distrust emanating from minimal intercultural engagement, feeling that the Chinese are not strategically aligned to the organisation. Similarly participant 4 S-L advised that Chinese leadership is formal and hierarchical and contrasts this with participatory, relational, and non-hierarchical styles that are effective in South African leadership.

Idealised influence (attributes)

Idealised influence (attributes) was largely described by participants in terms of trust and respect between leaders and subordinates. The pertinence of this code is iterated by Masango (2002) who finds trust to result in popular consent and leader legitimacy. The relational nature of both African and Chinese leadership style is in support of the high frequency with which participants in both of the selected culture clusters described idealised influence (attributes) (Page, 2011; Broodryk, 2005). The weight of this leadership dimension is iterated by leadership definition codes such as “leading by example” and “trust and respect”. Following this, idealised influence (attributes) is an effective leadership behaviour in that the establishment of dyadic trust relationships results in admiration and respect (Tsai *et al.*, 2011). The data does indicate however that the Chinese participants focused more on respect and the South African participants more on trust, which is aligned to the descriptions of the transformational leader in the discussion on “trust and respect” as a defining variable of leadership. Idealised influence (attributes) is seen to be interlinked with the ability to inspire motivation, instil

change and other workplace outcomes requiring popular consent and employee support. Participant 11 S-L insisted that subordinates' task ownership is enhanced through trust relationships following the belief that credit for completed work would be deferred to the appropriate subordinate. The idealised influence (attributes) leadership dimension is however not described as being strongly exhibited by all leaders within the organisation.

Contingent reward

A contingency leadership style supports the clarifying of expectations by setting goals and targets for subordinates and consequently rewarding and compensating performance (Weinberger, 2009: 754). The job rewards that emerged from the findings of this study are both extrinsic (for example pay and remuneration) as well as intrinsic (for example appreciation and praise). Both extrinsic and intrinsic benefits have been argued to be important to employees (Dousti, Abbasi and Khalili, 2012). At the executive level, strategy and goals are largely determined by the holding companies, while at lower organisational levels goals and targets are determined by managers. Expectations and goal setting differed across departments, while key performance indicators, targets, and budgets emerged as types of goals. For example participant 1 C-L says:

“First they put the budget, for different levels [in place]... because the general manager have superintendent and supervisor throughout our management system. So [each organisational level has] different [work expectations].” (1 C-L)

1 C-L	37	M	Ch	Phd	E	8	8
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Employee performance is then measured against work expectations and goals and employees are then rewarded or performance gaps are rectified. Recognition, rewards, and appreciation are useful in promoting satisfaction and motivation in the workplace. While rewards are important to both clusters, leaders should determine rewards at the individual level as variation in desired rewards can be seen. Both cultural clusters strongly emphasised the importance of a leader providing growth and learning opportunities in the workplace. Compliance with strict rules and procedures resulted in a stronger reliance on contingent reward.

Differences

Three South African participants described a dominant leadership style of laissez-faire leadership, however no Chinese participants described a dominant style of laissez-faire. The starkest difference between the South African and Chinese clusters pertains to individualised consideration.

Laissez-faire

Laissez-faire leadership is described as a non-leadership style whereby leading is avoided (Louw and Venter, 2011: 451). On one hand, laissez-faire leaders do not interfere with employees' work and seldom restricts subordinates. On the other hand, laissez-faire leaders seldom offer support, guidance or coaching (Weinberger, 2009: 754). The collectivistic and relational values of African and Chinese culture are in conflict with the inherent nature of laissez-faire leadership (Fukushige and Spicer, 2007), necessitating greater interaction from Chinese leadership. The three participants (6 S-R, 13 S-R, 14 S-R) who described laissez-faire leadership were all white South Africans, suggesting a potential ethnic influence. Furthermore there were inconsistent findings on the levels of satisfaction with the leaders' laissez faire leadership across the three participants making the evaluation of the effectiveness of laissez faire leadership within the case organisation difficult. The laissez-faire leadership style was largely attributed to low levels of transformational behaviour from leaders resulting in little job enrichment and poor relationships.. Furthermore all three participants described their leader as

opposed to describing their own leadership, suggesting potential leadership self-enhancement bias (Pinder, 2008).

Individualised consideration

The individualised consideration leadership described speaks to a leader who focuses on subordinates at a personal level (Bass and Avolio, 1997). Leadership definition codes such as guidance, responsibility, and accountability are aligned with the individualised consideration leader (Bass and Avolio, 1997). The descriptions provided of individualised consideration largely pertain to a genuine concern for employee wellbeing in and out of the workplace, growth potential through learning opportunities, and recognition and appreciation for performance. Data reveals that individualised leadership behaviour is received positively by South African participants. Individualised consideration compliments the African values of humanism, communalism and *ubuntu* (Nkomo, 2011; Masango, 2002). While individualised consideration did not emerge as a dominant leadership dimension within the Chinese cluster, this is not to say that individualised leadership behaviour was not discussed.

Both participants 2 C-R and 3 C-R described their leader offering learning and growth opportunities. Participant 2 C-R described how he was encouraged to learn by his leader, and was assisted when help was needed. Chinese values such as benevolence in exchange for obedience, uncertainty avoidance, and a regard for continuous learning encourage individualised consideration behaviour (Cheng, Chou, Wu, Huang and Farh, 2004). Participant 1 C-L emphasised knowledge sharing, however this is largely in terms of infrastructure and technology as opposed to skills and capabilities (Jackson, 2014). Chinese leaders could benefit from greater interaction with South African employees given South Africa's participative leadership ethos. Conversely, there were some employees who felt that the Chinese leadership of the organisation had not in any way influenced their satisfaction (10 S-R; 14 S-R; 16 S-L).

CONCLUSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Variation in management practices, approaches, and conceptualisations occurs across countries notwithstanding China and South Africa (Bird and Fang, 2009; Bräutigam, 2009). The complexity of adopting appropriate leadership styles that build leader legitimacy across a diverse set of subordinates is increased in the intercultural or cross-cultural context (Bird and Fang, 2009: 139). Leaders need to be able to build positive relationships between other leaders and subordinates, and to create a workplace that satisfies the diverse needs of the organisation and organisational members across organisational levels, work characteristics, cultures and ethnic groups. Therefore, an understanding of and respect for culture, ethnicity, and demographics needs to be fostered and incorporated into a positive effort towards hybridisation and cohesiveness (Jackson, 2011).

Transformational leadership was found to be prevalent within the participating organisation across the sample as well as in the clusters. This study confirms that transformational leadership behaviours are more effective than transactional and laissez-faire leadership behaviours. Nevertheless, transactional and laissez-faire leadership behaviours can be seen to be relevant, albeit to a lesser degree. Leaders ought therefore to reflect on the context of a situation and adopt the most suitable leadership behaviour. The findings suggest that being knowledgeable, capable and building strong trust and respect relationships are universally important between leaders and subordinates. Furthermore, both intracultural and intercultural cooperation are important, which speaks to the importance of localised leadership. What can be noted is that both Chinese and South African clusters described a strong reliance on idealised influence (attributes), and on a transformational leadership style. However, the Chinese leaders in the case study ought to increase individualised consideration behaviour considering the described dominance of this code within the South African cluster.

While leadership exists globally, this study confirms that perceptions of effective leadership vary across cultures. A distinguishable work-related difference between China and South Africa, for example, is that the Chinese predisposition to equity stands in contrast to South Africans who tend to favour equality (Zhou and Martocchio, 2001: 117). What should also be noted is that Chinese

participants described clearly the centralisation of power and hierarchy structures which entrench deference to authority and perpetuate foci on power, control and obedience. The South African leader–member exchange however centres on participative leadership behaviours encouraging communalism, team work and willing compliance as opposed to expected obedience. Trust and respect thus have different meanings and mechanisms within each of the culture clusters (Kriel, 2008: 17).

Effective leadership is paramount to the setting and attaining of organisational goals, requiring an array of capabilities and skills to complete various tasks and functions such as acting as change agents, planning and strategy pioneers and responsibility for creating a productive workplace where employees are satisfied (Stiles, 2012). Within the global business environment however, leaders require additional skills in order to manage an organisation through global business challenges (Gelfand, Erez and Aycan, 2007). Skills such as cross-cultural and intercultural conflict resolution, fostering cultural sensitivity and understanding, respect for local business practices, norms, and laws are necessary to ensure successful internationalisation strategies from both a customer and an employee-centric perspective (Harris and Moran, 2000). Wang *et al.* (2013) emphasise that Chinese firms have experienced several challenges in global expansion. With the complexity of international business practice, this study finds that transformational leadership behaviours ought to be predominantly exhibited. However, concurrently leaders need to be amorphous and adapt leadership style to the given context of a situation (Lockwood, Marshall and Sadler, 2005: 381; Weber and Hsee, 1998). Following this line of thought, there is a dire need to unpack the similarities and differences between dyad cultures at all levels of analysis – such as the national, organisational, team and individual (Gelfand *et al.*, 2007).

This study asserts that enhancing and manipulating cultural similarities between Chinese and South African employees while being aware of and sensitive to cultural differences and potential cultural clashes, will enhance the dynamics of the intercultural workspace. The findings pertaining to the similarities and differences between South African and Chinese definitions of leadership and leadership styles described provide insight into potential points of conflict and opportunities to enhance leader–member exchange. It is not farfetched to suggest, then, that Chinese organisations operating in South Africa need to manage these different preferences so as to ensure successful business ventures in the African context (Bird and Fang, 2009: 139). In order to ensure the success of joint ventures between different cultures leaders should engender cultural awareness and understanding within all levels of the organisation both through education on present cultures as well as through localisation of management practices and organisational values (Wang *et al.*, 2013; Horwitz, Ferguson, Rivett and Lee, 2005).

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