

# chapter 3

## *Missing Relations*

### *Incorporating Relational Constructs Into Models of Culture*

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*They say you are not you except in terms of relation to other people. . . .  
What you do, which is what you are, only has meaning in relation to  
other people.*

—Robert Penn Warren, *All the King's Men*

As an increasing number of organizations reach across national boundaries, organizational research increasingly addresses the question of how national culture influences individual behavior (Erez & Earley, 1993; Hofstede, 1991). Researchers face a choice among numerous definitions of culture and methods for studying it that have been developed in different academic disciplines (Keesing, 1974). As the diversity of chapters in this volume attests, researchers in different subfields of organizational behavior have chosen different methodological paths and have arrived at different insights. The path chosen by most micro-level organizational behavior researchers is to study “subjective culture,” that is, to conceptualize culture as existing in an individual’s mental representations rather than in external structures and artifacts (Triandis, 1967, 1972, 1995). Cultural differences in values, beliefs, and attitudes are assessed through inventories such as those traditionally used to measure personality differences. Moreover, just as generalizations about personality were made in terms

of underlying dimensions such as introversion-extroversion, generalizations about cultural attitudes have been sought in terms of dimensions such as individualism-collectivism (Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990). The individualism-collectivism construct has been enormously popular, in part because it promises a way in which to capture, at the level of individual values, the cultural difference between “loosely knit” and “tightly knit” societies described by classical social theories (Durkheim, 1897/1951; Tonnies, 1887/1957). Although we review many contributions of this *subjectivist* approach to culture, we describe shortcomings that have emerged in the prevailing research program based on individualism-collectivism. Moreover, we argue that, in principle, the subjectivist approach is incapable of fully capturing the influence of culture on individual behavior.

In this chapter, we argue that a better understanding of how individuals are affected by national culture is achieved when the subjectivist analysis of internal attitudes is supplemented with the *structuralist* approach of focusing on the external social relations that constrain behavior.<sup>1</sup> More specifically, we suggest that the concepts developed for studying patterns of social relations are useful in cultural research. Some relevant relational concepts refer to the form or geometry of an individual's relations. Density, for example, refers to the degree of interconnectedness among the other people in one's networks, and density has been linked to the cultural difference between loosely knit and tightly knit societies (Fischer & Shavit, 1995). Other concepts involve both the content and form of relations. Multiplexity, for example, refers to whether or not one exchanges personal friendship and instrumental resources in the same relationship, and this relational dimension has been suggested by several theorists to explain cultural differences in workplace behavior (Dore, 1983; Gluckman, 1967). We review the sparse literature on cross-national differences in relational variables and conclude that there is a great deal of unexplored potential in capturing the differences among cultures in terms of the differing relations in which individuals are embedded. However, we also review theoretical arguments against the notion that culture can be reduced to a purely structural analysis.

The approach to culture that we advocate integrates subjectivist and structuralist analyses. We argue that international differences in interpersonal behavior in the workplace are best understood in terms of systems of norms. In the tradition of Weber (1922/1963) and Parsons (1951), we assume that a norm exists both in the internal subjective attitudes that individuals hold about interpersonal relations and in the external structure of relations. A norm is the basis of the local sociocultural system that organizes the interaction within a circle of employees. Importantly, we do *not* make the assumption that norms are shared and organized at a societywide level, an assumption for which classical theorists have been critiqued (Wrong, 1961). We merely assume that employees in a given workplace context construct and sustain a local pattern of interaction (Giddens, 1984; Swidler, 1986).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, to a large extent, these systems are based on

prior forms of sociality such as market, family, legal, and friendship relations (Fiske, 1991). Thus, the role of national culture is indirect; its role lies in shaping which norms are appropriate to organize a local system of interaction in the workplace, and this local system in turn guides individual behavior (Lonner & Adamopoulos, 1997).

By reviewing our own study of North American, Chinese, German, and Spanish employees of a multinational corporation (MNC) (Morris, Podolny, & Ariel, 1997), we illustrate the advantages of a sociocultural-systems analysis over a purely subjectivist or structuralist analysis. Not only does a systems level of analysis help to distinguish between individualist and collectivist societies, it also provides a more fine-grained understanding of qualitatively different forms of collectivism. Traditional unidimensional analyses of collectivism serve well to contrast the English-speaking nations from most of the world's other major cultural traditions, which accord more concern to social collectivities and less to individuals (Hofstede, 1980, 1991). In itself, this contrast comports well with the ethnographic and historical record. Compared to Western Anglophone societies, there seems to be a greater emphasis on social relations and collectivities in the Chinese societies in East Asia, in social democratic nations in Northern Europe, in Southern European nations on the Mediterranean, and in most other large cultural groups. Yet, the ethnographic record also makes it clear that not all of these differing cultural groups emphasize the same types of social relations and collectivities. Simply put, not all collectivist societies are collectivistic in the same way. In this chapter, we make the case that conceptualizing culture in terms of sociocultural systems helps to clarify the qualitatively different forms of collectivist orientation.

## TRADITIONAL APPROACHES TO CULTURE

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### Subjectivist Approach

*Historical roots.* The approach of accounting for societal differences in terms of subjective psychological characteristics has a long tradition in anthropology. An influential movement in this tradition was the research program linking culture and personality. Ethnographers such as Benedict (1934) and Mead (1935) were impressed by the variation across societies in patterns of social behavior and the stability of those patterns within societies. In keeping with psychoanalytic theories of their day, they explained patterns of behavior in terms of a modal personality type, transmitted across generations through primary societal institutions such as child-rearing practices (Kardiner, 1939; Mead, 1935). The limitations of this approach are most evident in the World War II-era studies of the "national

character” of the United States’ military adversaries. For example, based on observations of and interviews with Japanese prisoners of war, Gorer (1943) posited that patterns of Japanese behavior reflect an anal-compulsive personality type inculcated through early toilet training. The most obvious empirical shortcoming of this work is that no attempt was made to measure the underlying personality type (Inkeles & Levinson, 1954). Closely related to this empirical shortcoming is the theoretical shortcoming inherent in the simplistic assumption that each society is characterized by a predominant personality type. In the words of Wrong (1961), such an approach implies an “oversocialized” view of individuals and an “overintegrated” view of society.

Later subjectivist approaches were shaped by the critiques of the culture and personality movement. Researchers shifted from the method of unstructured ethnographic observation to surveys of representative samples of different societies. These surveys revealed the considerable heterogeneity of personality within societies (Cantril, 1965). Moreover, the use of quantitative survey measures led researchers away from hypotheses framed in terms of unified broad personality types toward hypotheses articulated in terms of more distinct specific value and attitude variables. The complexity inherent in describing subjective culture led researchers to seek more general, parsimonious constructs through statistical abstraction (Osgood, 1964), in favor of “thick description.” (Yet, anthropology soon turned toward rejection of abstract subjectivist models in Geertz, 1976). Two statistical approaches are noteworthy. First, cluster analysis has been used to form cultural groupings of societies with historical, linguistic, and geographic similarities such as the Southern European Latin societies and the East Asian Chinese societies (Ronen, 1986; Ronen & Shenkar, 1985). Second, factor analysis has been used to uncover the underlying dimensions, such as individualism versus collectivism, that account for variance among cultural groups (Triandis, 1967, 1972). The second approach, which promises a more parsimonious account, has been more influential.

*Recent contributions.* Recent subjectivist research on culture has been largely focused on the cultural dimension of individualism-collectivism. This construct gained prominence in the wake of Hofstede’s (1980) worldwide study of IBM employees. Hofstede found that individualism-collectivism captured a substantial fraction of the variance across countries in mean levels of endorsement of basic values about life and work. In addition, Hofstede’s findings revealed that the United States and the few other Western Anglophone countries scored extremely high on individualism relative to the other countries in the sample. This finding raised the concern that organizational and social psychological research based almost exclusively on these few hyper-individualist Western societies might not generalize to the more collectivist societies in which most of the world’s population resides. As a result, a wave of studies comparing social

psychological variables in highly individualist and highly collectivist countries has addressed this question (for a review, see Triandis, 1995).

In attempting to investigate differences between individualist and collectivist cultures, Triandis and colleagues developed inventories to compare several types of social attitudes between the United States and more collectivist Asian or Latin countries (Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clark, 1985, Triandis et al., 1990). Others have investigated the consequences of individualism-collectivism in behavior rather than merely in attitudes. Leung and Bond (1984) tested hypotheses about how the collectivism dimension affects how people handle conflict with in-group or out-group members. In a task that required each participant to divide resources with a friend or a stranger, Leung and Bond observed a greater degree of in-group favoritism, or generosity toward friends, among Chinese students than among American students. Likewise, in conflict resolution tasks, researchers have found a greater preference for nonadversarial procedures with in-group members among Chinese and Spanish students than among American students (Leung, 1987; for a review, see Leung, 1997). Earley (1989, 1994) found that Chinese managers, relative to Americans, were less inclined to exhibit social loafing in a group task, apparently because of a concern for group success that rivals their concern for individual success.

*Critiques and current directions.* Although the construct of individualism-collectivism has been the most fruitful research program within the subjectivist approach, there has been an increasing number of critiques of the construct. First, compelling theoretical and empirical objections have been raised in research on attitudes and values against the notion that individualist and collectivist items can be arrayed on a single bipolar dimension (Kashima et al., 1995). Many different components of collectivism have been distinguished (Ho & Chiu, 1994). Second, studies of social behavior have indicated that not all forms of collectivism are alike. For example, studies of Latin societies have emphasized that social interactions are characterized by outward displays of warm emotion. Even in workplace interactions, a person creates a harmonious feeling through warm and expressive behavior, a tendency referred to as *simpatia* in Latin America (Diaz-Guerrero, 1967; Lindsley & Braithwaite, 1996; Sanchez-Burks, Nisbett, & Ybarra, 1998; Triandis, Marin, Lisansky, & Betancourt, 1984). This obligation of emotional expressivity contrasts sharply with observations about expressive displays in many other highly collectivist societies. For example, in the Chinese virtue of *jen* (Hsu, 1985) and the Japanese tradition of *amae* (Doi, 1962), harmony is created through passivity rather than expressivity. Hence, although the Confucian and Latin traditions both emphasize harmonious relations, they seem to create different types of harmonious relations. Third, scholars of business and diplomatic practices have found a need for more nuanced characterizations. For example, observations of intensely competitive behavior by Chinese negotiators

have led researchers to seek constructs other than a generally collectivist value orientation (Pye, 1982). In sum, the promise of a parsimonious reduction of myriad cultural differences to a unitary individualism-collectivism dimension increasingly seems to be false.

Subjectivist researchers have attempted to redress the limitations of the individualism-collectivism construct by proposing more multifaceted models of cultural values. Schwartz (1994) and others have empirically distinguished different strands of individualist and collectivist values along lines much like those drawn by sociologists and intellectual historians who analyzed these values with different methods (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Lukes, 1973). Triandis and colleagues (Triandis, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) have developed a measure of social values and attitudes that distinguishes the *economic* aspect of collectivism (sharing resources with the group) from the *expressive* aspect of collectivism (affective involvement with the group) and distinguishes the economic aspect of individualism (belief in achievement through competition) from the self-expressive aspect of individualism (desire to be unique).<sup>3</sup> Although the distinctive consequences of these specific attitude dimensions have not yet been delineated, the first three of these, on face value, seem to capture norms relevant to workplace obligations. With regard to country differences, there is as yet little data. Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, and Gelfand (1995) found that American students of an East Asian background are higher on economic collectivism (sharing resources) than are those of a West European background, and they conjectured that this type of collectivism should be highest in a society such as China, where the primary social value has been neither equality nor freedom but rather stability of the social order. In addition, Singelis et al. conjectured that expressive collectivism (affective involvement) should be highest in communal groups such as the Israeli kibbutz, where equality is more highly valued than freedom. By contrast, economic individualism (achievement through competition) should be highest in Western market democratic societies such as the United States, where freedom is valued over equality. We find these more fine-grained constructs promising and will return to them later.

However, in addition to the limits of particular subjectivist constructs, there are objections to the subjectivist approach itself, which by definition reduces culture to a set of factors that exist "inside the individual's head." Although certainly an actor's behavior is greatly determined by internal factors such as values and attitudes, behavior also is greatly determined by the external social situations that the actor faces. Decades of debate by psychologists over dispositional versus situational interpretation has largely concluded that the proximal causes of action are not personality dispositions but rather situational factors and interactions of situational factors and dispositions (Ross & Nisbett, 1991). Because the subjectivist approach to cross-national differences restricts itself to dispositions as causes of behavior, it is limited in much the same way as was traditional person-

ality research. Interestingly, this bias of dwelling on dispositional causes of social behavior might itself reflect the Western cultural orientation of most researchers (Morris & Peng, 1994). In any case, the subjectivist account, by focusing on internal causes of behavior, is limited in principle to capturing only half of the picture.

### Structuralist Approach

*Historical roots.* There is a long scholarly tradition of analyzing behavioral differences across countries in terms of aspects of the social structure. Marx's (1844/1972) arguments concerning alienation suggest that reduced subjective quality of life results from the patterns of relations fostered by capitalist institutions (Lukes, 1967). Durkheim (1893/1933) attributed country and ethnic differences in suicide rates to the tightness of the social fabric. Even Weber (1922/1963), although more known for his contention that subjective values and beliefs can cause changes to the social structure, also maintained that once social structures and positions are established, they shape values, attitudes, and beliefs.

A major research program testing a structuralist analysis of international differences in attitudes and values was Inkeles' (1960) work on what has come to be called the "convergence" thesis. The convergence thesis holds that the spread of industrialization and the resulting exposure to similar social structures in the form of institutions, such as factories and schools, have led people in different countries to hold similar values. In support of this structuralist argument, Inkeles found that country differences in values are substantially reduced when level of industrialization is controlled. Yet, country differences were by no means eliminated in Inkeles' findings. Moreover, increasingly salient counterexamples such as Japan, highly industrialized yet highly distinctive in its cultural values (Pascale & Athos, 1981), led scholars to become disenchanted with the idea that industrialization inevitably is linked with one set of values.

After decades of further work, Inkeles (1978) proposed several valuable recommendations for research on international differences. One was that the impact of macro-level structural variables, such as a country's level of industrialization, should be understood in terms of how these variables shape *micro-level social structures*, which provide the proximal causal influences on the motivations and behavior of individuals. A second recommendation was that the effects of micro-level structures should be understood in conjunction with the *subjective understandings* that guide people's responses to the situations. As we shall see, the first recommendation to focus on micro-level structures is a direction that structuralist researchers have taken. Our approach also takes the second step of incorporating people's subjective constructs as a mechanism in their responses to social structures.

*Recent contributions.* During recent decades, structuralism has reemerged in sociology. To a greater extent than classical theorists such as Marx (1844/1972) and Durkheim (1893/1933), the new structuralists have tried to reduce the causes of social phenomena to the pure geometry of social relations, removing any reference to subjective factors (Mayhew, 1980; Mayhew & Levinger, 1976). This movement has been aided by advances in the methods of conceptualizing social structure made by the field of *network analysis* (White, Boorman, & Breiger, 1976). Whereas many network analytic studies focus on the structure of macro-level ties among organizations (for a review, see Lincoln, 1982), other studies have focused on the structure of micro-level ties among individual employees within an organization (Burt, 1992). The networks of employees have been linked to several types of organizationally relevant attitudes and behavior (Ibarra, 1997). The most influential accounts of employee networks have focused strictly on the form of relations, that is, on network size and density (Burt, 1992). However, others have argued that the effects of relational form depend on content; for example, the forms that work best in relation to peers might not work in relation to those in power (Emerson, 1962; Podolny & Baron, 1997).

There has been some theoretical and empirical use of relational constructs in accounting for cultural differences. In particular, investigating country differences in the form of individuals' relational networks has been seen as a way in which to capture differences in the micro-level social situations that constrain behavior. The most prominent hypothesis in this work is the highly intuitive argument that collectivist societies with tightly woven social fabrics should be characterized by networks of high density (Gross & Raynor, 1985). This argument is interesting in that density might offer a way in which to measure the basic assumption that collectivist societies are characterized by tight in-groups. Also, it would serve as a basis to question subjectivist explanations for country differences. For example, the greater tendency of Chinese (as compared to American) participants to show generosity toward friends has been ascribed to Chinese collectivist attitudes (Leung & Bond, 1984). It might be that we all are particularly generous toward friends who are interconnected with other friends (many relations are at stake) and that Chinese friendships tend to be embedded in dense cliques.

Although a structuralist approach to collectivism appeals intuitively, empirical findings are mixed on the question of whether individuals in collectivist societies have denser networks. A review of findings from similar network surveys conducted in different countries concluded that density levels are higher in Chinese and Israeli cities than in American and British cities (Fischer & Shavit, 1995). Furthermore, a study of interaction patterns among university students found that Hong Kong students have group interactions more frequently than do North American students (Wheeler, Reis, and Bond, 1989). Although this study did not measure relationships and structural properties such as density, the find-



ing that students in a collectivist society tend toward group interactions is consistent with a picture of a clique-like social structure in which a person's friends are friends with one another. Yet, the only previous study (to our knowledge) that made a controlled cross-cultural comparison of network density did not observe the predicted pattern of lower density in the friendship networks of North Americans compared to those of East Asians (Kashima et al., 1995). In sum, the most promising operationalization of a purely structuralist analysis of cultural collectivism has not received consistent support.<sup>4</sup>

*Critiques and current directions.* Despite the face validity of the idea that individuals in collectivist societies have denser networks, comparisons of the average density of relations have not uncovered a clear pattern. More important, there also have been theoretical objections to accounts that explain action in terms of the pure form or geometry of social relations without reference to their content or meaning. One objection is that this account fails to provide a role for individual agency in creating and perpetuating these structures of social relations (Giddens, 1984). Another objection is that the effects of structural positions on behavior are mediated by subjective beliefs and normative commitments, and that might well differ across cultures and yet the crucial role of subjective elements is unspecified in structuralist accounts (Brint, 1992; Emirbayer & Goodwin, 1994). These critiques do not dispute that relational measures and network analysis, in particular, offer powerful tools for conceptualizing social situations; they merely reject the notion that a nuanced account of culture and action can be framed purely in terms of the structure, rather than the content or meaning, of social relations.

Although we have seen that purely structural approaches to capturing cultural differences can be critiqued on empirical and theoretical grounds, there are other relational analyses that incorporate both the form and content of relations.<sup>5</sup> For example, many ethnographic scholars have characterized collectivist societies in terms of the *multiplexity* of relations, that is, the tendency to have two types of relationships with the same person such as a coworker who also is a relative. Studies of organizations in collectivist societies have pointed to the importance of relations that combine sentimental socioemotional content with pragmatic exchange of resources. For example, multiplexity has been noted in studies of relations among Japanese buyers and suppliers (Dore, 1983), in relations of Japanese employees with their supervisors (Rohlen, 1974), and in peer relations of African workers (Gluckman, 1967; Kapferer, 1969). Although these scholars have asserted that the multiplexity they observed is greater than that which would be found in comparable Western settings, we know of no previous studies that have rigorously tested whether multiplexity is higher in collectivist societies.

Another content-oriented area of relationship research focuses on the *affective* closeness or socio-emotional intensity of social relations. As noted earlier, studies of Latin cultural settings have stressed the high level of affectivity in relations

(Triandis et al., 1984). However, there are theoretical reasons to believe that affectivity is not always associated with collectivism. The classic comparison of the United States and Germany by Lewin (1948) argued that the more individualist North American cultural context allows closeness in friendships to be achieved more rapidly than in the German cultural context.

Yet another approach focuses on the duration of relations, linking collectivism to relations of high longevity. Comparative studies have found that North American respondents tend to have briefer friendships than those reported by Chinese respondents (Gudykunst, 1983). Although for a given individual the duration of relations might be associated with their affective closeness, model levels of duration and affectivity may not be associated across countries. Indeed, North American relations may become affectively close in part because norms permit one to exit quickly. Consistent with this picture of superficial or non-binding friendship in the North American setting, studies have found that American students engage in briefer and more frequent social interactions (Wheeler et al., 1989).

In sum, although cultural differences cannot be reduced purely to the structure of social relations, analyses incorporating the form and content of relations may offer new insights into how individual behavior differs across cultures. Most likely, different relational constructs will be useful for distinguishing different cultures. What is needed is a level of analysis for conceptualizing culture that integrates the causal roles played by the external press of social relations and their subjective meanings.

### AN INTEGRATED APPROACH: SOCIOCULTURAL SYSTEMS

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Organizational scholars traditionally have approached the topic of culture carrying the biases of their academic disciplines, with psychologists tending to reduce culture to the subjective contents of individual thinking and sociologists tending to reduce culture to the properties of social structures and institutions. Increasingly, however, social scientists concerned with culture have called for a level of analysis that encompasses the imprint of a culture in the individual's thoughts as well as in the social structures surrounding the individual. On topics as diverse as social behavior, mental health, and education, researchers have looked for ways in which to frame hypotheses that integrate the roles of subjective and structural factors (for reviews, see Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Wertsh, del Rio, & Alvarez, 1995). Our own research attempts to integrate subjective and structural elements in an analysis of cultural influences on workplace interaction (Morris, Podolny, & Ariel, 1997, 1998a, 1998b). Our point of departure in devel-

oping this analysis was the work of Parsons (1951) on how social action is structured by systems of shared values and norms, although our assumptions, constructs, and methods are influenced by recent work in both the subjectivist and network structuralist traditions.

Before recounting the points made by Parsons (1951) on which we will draw, it is worth addressing the question of "Why Parsons?" Critiques of Parsons' project are well known, and by invoking selected Parsonsian constructs as a point of departure, we do not wish to imply an endorsement of all the features of Parsons' stance. Much like the culture and personality theorists, Parsons conceptualized values as internalized in childhood and as shared on a societywide basis. Not an empiricist, Parsons presented only illustrative anecdotes rather than systematic evidence for his claims. For decades, Parsons' work has been criticized for its highly consensual and functionalist view of values and for its lack of empirical underpinnings.<sup>6</sup> In our view, however, such objectionable aspects of the Parsons project do not undermine its singular contributions. To a greater extent than prior or subsequent theorists Parsons delineated the role of norms in interpersonal conduct. For Parsons, norms are standards that an individual, or "ego," relies on in judging how to act toward a given other person, or "alter." Proposals at this level of analysis can generate hypotheses about both specific subjective social values and specific features of social relations (although Parsons himself did not draw or test such predictions). Second, some of Parsons' descriptive claims about particular cultures strike us as promising ways in which to integrate observations by ethnographers and cross-cultural researchers.

Parsons' proposals about particular norms were framed within a pattern typology that results from answers to two dilemmas. The first dilemma, termed *universalism versus particularism*, centers on whether an ego should make decisions on the basis of general principles (i.e., criteria all actors would be expected to use in the situation) or on the basis of idiosyncratic aspects of the situation including aspects with meaning or relevance specific to an ego, an alter, and the web of surrounding relations. The second dilemma, termed *ascription versus achievement*, concerns whether to judge alters on the basis of who they are (i.e., the groups and categories to which they belong) or on the basis of what they do (i.e., their performances). Importantly, Parsons argued that answers to one dilemma are reached only in combination with answers to the other dilemma.<sup>7</sup> Four qualitatively different resolutions of these dilemmas were illustrated by Parsons in terms of four major cultural traditions, as follows:

1. The universalist-achievement orientation is exemplified by the prevailing normative standards for interpersonal conduct and pattern of behavior in the United States. Relative to other systems, an ego is expected to conduct behavior toward an alter in the way that serves the ego's interests without being greatly constrained by

the presence or absence of prior relations to the alter or by the social categories to which the alter belongs. In Parsons' (1951) idiom, treatment of another person is based on "performances independent of relational foci" (p. 183).

2. The particularistic-achievement orientation is exemplified by Chinese society. In contrast to scholars who have portrayed American and Chinese societies as cultural antipodes, Parsons (1951) regarded the two societies as similar in their orientation toward achievement. In both systems, an ego is strongly motivated to achieve success. However, unlike the American tradition of getting ahead by leaving or overturning the social order, the Confucian tradition requires achievement within a stable ordering of power relations: "achievement should . . . be focused on certain points of reference within the relational system of superiority-inferiority" (p. 195). A key determinant of an ego's action toward an alter, then, is whether the ego has an established hierarchical relation to the alter.
3. For Parsons (1951), German society served to illustrate a universalist-ascriptive system. In this system, an ego's treatment of an alter depends not so much on a direct relation to the alter as on the alter's formal position within an impersonal system of classification, that is, "on classificatory qualities, . . . on status rather than on specific achievements" (p. 192). Parsons argued that this type of system also involves a type of collectivist orientation, but the concern is for broader collectives that are defined universalistically (e.g., categories of occupation or nationality) rather than particularistically (e.g., the handful of alters with whom the ego has a relationship).
4. Finally, for Parsons (1951), Spanish culture exemplified the particularist-ascriptive social system. In this system, an actor's treatment of another is not structured by instrumental purposes or by bureaucratic categories; sociality is pursued as an end in itself. That is, "emphasis is thrown in the expressive direction" (p. 199). In short, this final cultural system centers on concern for a particularistically defined collective (e.g., one's circle of friends) that carries with it a social system of affectively close relationships.

The forgoing review of Parsons' (1951) descriptions of interpersonal interaction in North American, Chinese, German, and Spanish settings illustrates the level of analysis at which we wish to work. Although Parsonsian ideas have been out of favor during the past several decades, there are a few scholars who have worked to refine this level of analysis. Contrary to Parsons' emphasis on abstract values, Garfinkel (1967) argued that, although abstract cultural values might exist, they are not the proximal causes of social behavior; more specific, concrete subjective rules are at work. Indeed, what we find most valuable in Parsons are the more concrete norms or standards for behavior. Contrary to Parsons' notion that normative systems are internalized in childhood and exist in a societywide equilibrium, Swidler (1986) argued that consensus of values and patterns of rela-

tions arise and exist within delimited contexts of adult life. This argument is in keeping with the Parsonsian assumption that systematicity arises not through the pressure for cognitive consistency in an individual's beliefs but rather through the pressure for complementarity of interaction within a social circle.

How are norms developed within a specific social context? Fiske (1991) argued that, across cultures, the norms governing particular social contexts can be seen as constructed from the elements of basic models of social relations such as those characterizing markets, hierarchies, and friendships. For a given social context such as the workplace, cultural traditions dictate how these more basic norms are enacted. This is not to say that all of the workplaces in a given society will develop an identical normative system. On the contrary, these systems will vary depending on particular aspects of the social context such as the organizational structure and the nature of the work. In addition, it is likely that certain norms will prevail in certain types of workplaces regardless of the country; for example, authority norms are more likely to prevail in a military regiment than in an artist's cooperative. Nevertheless, it still is possible that country differences exist when other factors are held constant. In the next section, we state predictions about *ceteris paribus* country differences. We report tests of these predictions in an international organization that deliberately holds formal structure and work tasks constant across different countries of operation.

### A FOURFOLD PROPOSAL

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Our level of analysis reflects revised conceptions of the relations among culture, norms, and behavior. We suggest that coordinated workplace interaction requires a system of norms governing interpersonal behavior and that national culture determines which norms are carried into the workplace. Depending on the normative system that is established, workplace relations resemble those in a market, a family, or another basic arena of social interaction. Importantly, these normative systems should be manifest both in subjective *social values* about self and others at work and in the properties of *social relations* in the workplace. We follow Parsons in offering a comparative description of North American, Chinese, German, and Spanish systems. Unlike Parsons, we do not regard these cultural settings as exemplifying four basic types of social systems. They are merely four of many cultural traditions that differ in the norms enacted in the workplace. Accordingly, we label each proposed system in terms of its historical grounding.

In developing the four proposals, we start with ethnographic findings to substantiate our description of the norms emphasized in each system. Then, we state predictions in terms of specific social values identified in recent work on subjec-

tive culture (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) and in terms of the properties of social relations. These are *ceteris paribus* predictions about the norms that characterize work relations within particular cultural traditions. As we shall see, these predictions depart from those of the traditional subjectivist argument that countries can be arrayed on a unidimensional individualism-collectivism dimension. These predictions also depart from those of the structuralist argument that countries vary chiefly in terms of the pure form of social networks.

### North American Work Relationships: Market Orientation

A feature of North American culture noted by many social observers and critics is the tendency for people to enter or exit social ties according to the market standard of whether it profits their individual achievement goals. The popular conception of “networking” captures how this norm plays out in the context of work organizations; one manages one’s portfolio of relations toward the goal of upward mobility, seeking instrumental relations and necessarily making room for them by discarding old ones that have outlived their instrumental value (Baker, 1993). This view of networks as serving achievement goals is made explicit in a leading network theory of performance in organizations (Burt, 1992). From de Toqueville (1848/1945) onward, observers of American individualism have described the relative ease with which instrumental work relations can be established without the prior basis of friendship or family connection. Yet, individuals also are relatively willing to break ties to achieve success. From the time of the expanding frontier onward, the paragon of the successful American has been the person who leaves the group or disrupts the social order, and Americans remain relatively willing to reshape their social networks to pursue their professional goals (Bellah et al., 1985). The values that support these actions have been linked to the individualist Anglo-American economic, legal, and philosophical traditions (Lukes, 1973).

Now, let us consider what predictions follow from the proposal that North American employees tend to conduct their interpersonal relations according to a market norm. Which dimensions of social values and relations will be the ones on which North American employees stand out relative to those in other countries? With regard to social values, we can predict that economic individualism (i.e., the belief in achievement through social competition) should be highly endorsed by adherents of a market orientation. With regard to social relations, we can predict that the distinguishing features of a market system would be relations low in multiplexity (because instrumental exchange does not require a base of socioemotional connection) and low in duration (because people are free to exit relations).

### **Chinese Work Relationships: Familial Orientation**

The norms of social interaction in Chinese organizations have been described as familial collectivism (Bond & Hwang, 1986). As in a family, employees make sacrifices for the group. Interestingly, however, this Confucian concern for harmony within the group does not preclude placing a strong value on achievement in competitive arenas (Hsu, 1953). Rather, it allows for achievement in part through relationships, such as filial relations to powerful members of the organization (Ho, 1976, 1998), and through the connections (or *guanxi*) that result from these ties (King, 1991). The structural manifestation of filial values in the workplace is suggested by research on Japanese organizations that have developed under similar Confucian influence. Compared to American employees who prefer same-status friends, Japanese managers seek higher status friends (Nakane, 1970; Nakao 1987). Studies of Chinese organizations have noted the care with which employees cultivate relations to those in power (Redding & Wong, 1986).

The predictions that follow from this Chinese familial orientation can be stated in contrast to those of the American market orientation. With regard to social values, Chinese employees may endorse achievement through competition in general; however, Chinese employees should not condone competition within the in-group. Rather, Chinese should endorse the sharing of resources within the in-group (i.e., economic collectivism). Finally, attitudes toward superordinates should be characterized by a filial loyalty and deference. With regard to properties of social relations, there should be a higher level of multiplexity and duration of relations because achievement is sought through a stable social structure. Also, filial patterns of interaction should be evident in close socioemotional ties to more highly ranked coworkers. These differences notwithstanding, it is important to note that the American and Chinese orientations have as much in common as they have in contrast. Both systems involve a concern with achievement and condone instrumental use of relations.

### **German Work Relationships: Legal-Bureaucratic Orientation**

Many observers of the German cultural setting have observed that workplace relationships appear to be bounded by formal categories and rules (Borneman, 1992; Hall, 1990). A second observation is that affective expression in workplace relations is somewhat muted, or at least slow to develop, compared to that in other countries (Lewin, 1948). Both of these features might reflect that interactions are guided by an impersonal bureaucratic standard. In a system based on such a norm, an ego decides how to act toward a given alter according to the alter's formal status, not according to what the alter, as a specific individual,

offers the ego (as in the market system) or according to the filial relation established between the ego and the alter (as in the familial system).

Given this characterization of German workplace relations as guided by a legal-bureaucratic norm, on what dimensions of social values or relations should German employees stand out? First, compared to the previous two systems, there is less reason to expect endorsement of the value of economic individualism or achievement through competition. Second, a central prediction of this system is a low level of expressive collectivism or empathetic involvement with the work group. Related to this second value prediction, there are straightforward predictions about properties of workplace relations. More specifically, informal relations should follow the lines of formally required interaction, as opposed to interaction that spans formal categories and ranks and that might result in other systems for reasons of opportunism, filial loyalty, or loyalty to old friends. Informal relations also should be characterized by lower affective intensity than in other systems.

### **Spanish Work Relationships: Affiliative Orientation**

Anthropologists who have described work relations in the context of Spanish culture have pointed to strong norms of warm sociability toward the peer friendship group (Murphy, 1983). Similarly, as we have reviewed, psychological studies of social behavior have observed an expectation of warm and friendly behavior among coworkers (Triandis et al., 1984). It is instructive to consider how the implications of an affiliative norm differ from those of the legal-bureaucratic norm. In both systems, actions toward others depends on *who the other is* rather than *what the other does*, that is, on characteristics rather than performances. Yet, it is a different type of characteristic that matters. The German norm turns on characteristics of the alter that are defined by the formal organization (e.g., rank), whereas the Spanish norm turns on characteristics that are defined in relation to the ego (e.g., centrality in one's group of friends). The consequence is that whereas for German employees it is appropriate to adjust their friendship networks as their job titles change, for Spanish employees it is not normative to change their patterns of interaction after transfers or promotions.

Now, let us review the distinctive features of workplace social values and relations in the Spanish system of interaction based on an affiliative norm. With regard to subjective values, Spanish employees should stand out as high in expressive collectivism (affective involvement with coworkers) as well as high in economic collectivism (sharing resources with coworkers). With regard to features of social relations, the Spanish workplace should be characterized by relations high in affective intensity and in longevity. The duration of relations should be longer than in other systems because the relations are not delimited by instru-



mental purposes (as in the North American and Chinese systems) or by formal job categories (as in the German system).

### A CONTROLLED CROSS-NATIONAL COMPARISON

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The predictions that we have derived about North American, Chinese, German, and Spanish relations were tested in a survey of employees in an MNC, the Citibank consumer bank. Two policies of this firm make it particularly appropriate as a site to test our hypotheses. First, employees are hired from the locality in which the bank is situated. This policy of "embeddedness" allows for local norms of interaction to arise within the workplace even though the bank is a North American corporation. Second, there is a "global" strategy of standardizing organizational structure and products across countries. The formal organization chart and job categories, the physical layout of the bank branches, and the financial services provided and sold are similar across the retail operations in the different countries that we sampled. This policy of maximizing cross-country variation in the human composition of the organization while minimizing cross-country variation in the formal structure and practical content of work virtually creates a natural experiment for investigating the effects of cultural norms on workplace interaction.<sup>8</sup>

To test our hypotheses about the four countries, we gathered data from retail bank employees in North America, Hong Kong, Germany, and Spain. Within each country, we selected several areas for greatest equivalence on ecological variables such as city size and density. Within a selected region, all employees above the level of part-time tellers and below the level of area directors were sampled. Employees answered a survey that presented questions tapping social values and social relations. The survey was presented in the official language(s) of each country. Very high response rates were obtained. For full details about sampling, procedures, and materials, see Morris et al. (1997). In what follows, we review the measures of values and relations used to test our descriptive proposals about differences in the normative systems that arise in work settings in different countries.

Measures of social values drew primarily on the items developed with university student samples by Triandis and Gelfand (1998) to capture economic and expressive aspects of individualism and collectivism, although scale items were winnowed and altered to fit our research setting. Other items were adapted from other previous instruments or were generated based on suggestions by cultural informants to capture other dimensions of social values relevant to our hypotheses such as filial loyalty and deference to superordinates. For each dimension of

interest, a scale could be formed from several items that clustered together in each of the four countries.

Measures of relational features were based on those in previous studies of employee relations (Podolny & Baron, 1997); however, the measures were refined and extended based on input from Chinese, Spanish, and German researchers to avoid disproportionate emphasis on issues salient in the United States. The survey asked employees to list (using code names) individuals with whom they interact during the work day. Specifically, respondents named the others with whom they share personal friendships, the others with whom they exchange task advice, and the others on whose "buy in" or power they depend. Our focus is on the first type of relation given that it is most open to volition and least determined by the structure of the organization. Respondents were asked questions about their relations to the alters, about attributes of the alters, and about the relations perceived among the alters. For each respondent, we calculated purely formal relational features such as the size and density of the friendship network. We also calculated the extent to which friendship ties overlapped the advice exchange network, the extent to which they overlapped the power-dependence network, and the extent to which they followed the vertical and horizontal lines of the formal organization. Finally, we calculated the average affectivity and longevity of each respondent's workplace friendships.

## EVIDENCE FOR DISTINCT SOCIOCULTURAL SYSTEMS

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In this chapter, our goal is not to comprehensively review the results of our study but rather to highlight selected results relevant to our current argument that incorporating relational concepts enriches research on culture and organizational behavior. A first point is simply that the goal of incorporating relational constructs brings us to a fruitful level of analysis—normative systems that are constituted by a combination of subjective values and relation patterns. As we have argued, this level of analysis is particularly helpful in that it distinguishes different types of cultural collectivism that have been conflated in simpler frameworks. We illustrate this by stepping through the subjective and relational variables in our study and describing how the data fit predictions of our account and of previous accounts of cultural collectivism.

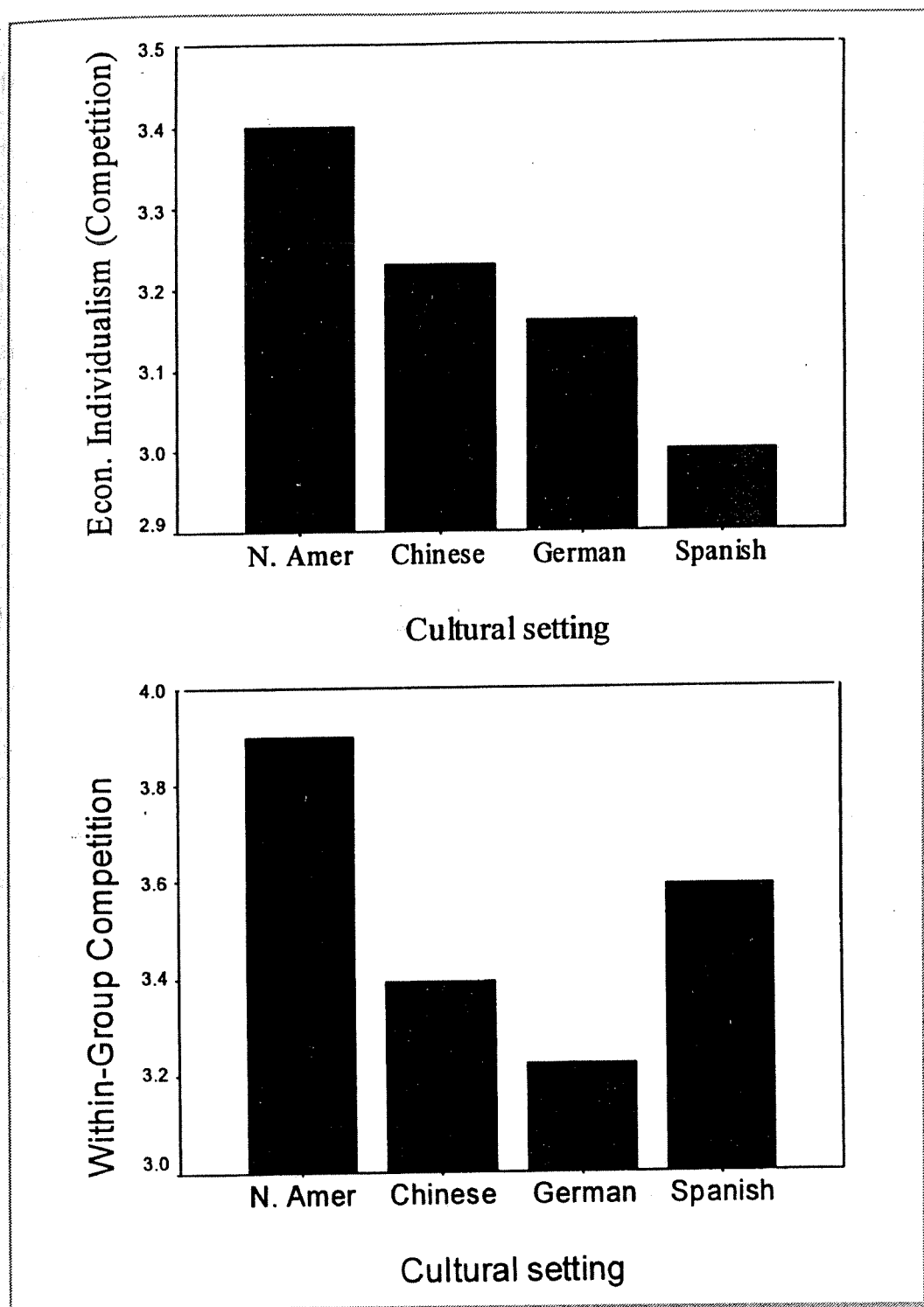
### Subjective Value Measures

Let us begin by looking for evidence for our distinctions in employees' subjective values. Figure 3.1 shows the extent to which employees in the four coun-

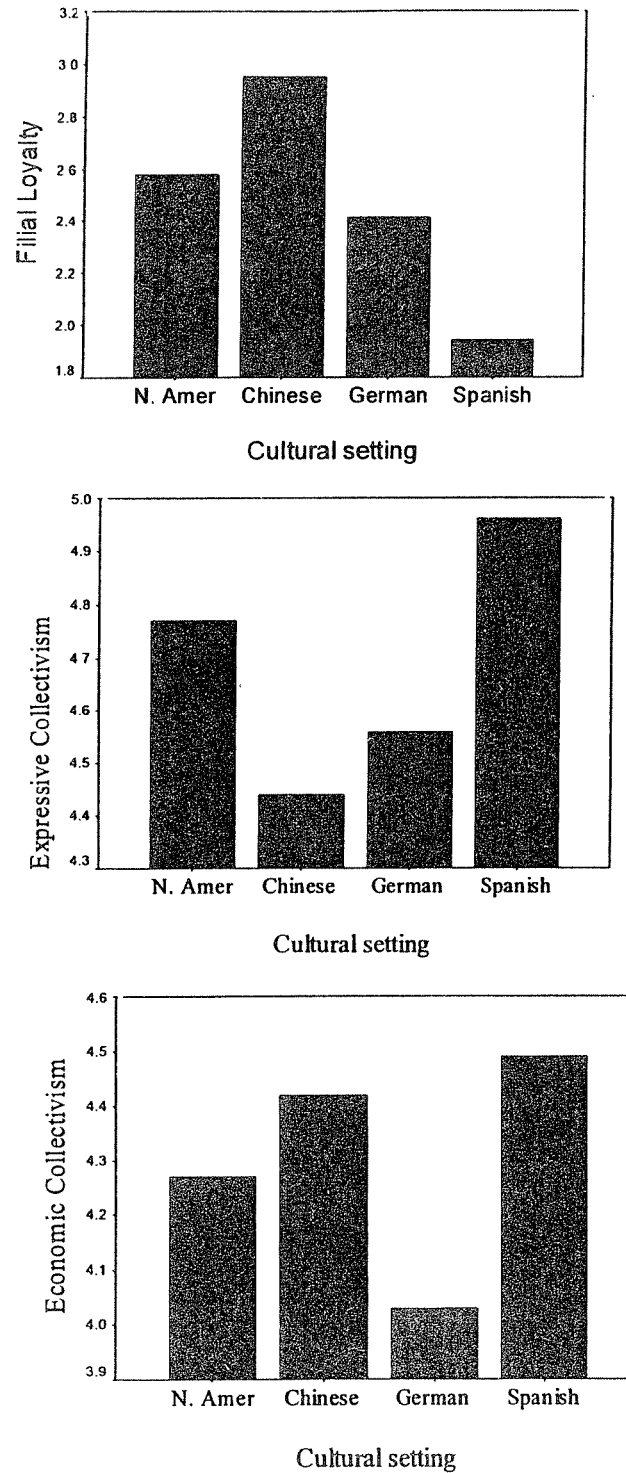
tries endorsed *economic individualism* or a belief in achievement through social competition (e.g., measured by level of agreement with statements such as "Competition is the law of nature" and "Winning is everything"). As expected, employees in the North American setting adhered to this value more than did employees in the other three settings. The difference was not reliable in relation to Chinese employees; this is not unexpected given that Chinese norms favor competition in general but not within the in-group. Figure 3.1 also shows a specific *within-group competition* scale constructed from items referring specifically to competition within the circle of one's coworkers (e.g., "Without competition between colleagues, it is not possible to have a good company"). Here, as expected, employees in the North American setting were significantly higher than those in the Chinese setting as well as those in the German and Spanish settings. Overall, the results in Figure 3.1 establish the familiar point that Americans are extreme in endorsing competition, and the results also clarify that some types of competition are highly endorsed in Chinese culture as well.

Figure 3.2 reports several scales tapping different forms of collectivism or social solidarity. The first scale tapped solidarity and sentiment toward one's supervisor in the form of *filial loyalty* (e.g., "A good manager is more like a parent than a friend," "If my supervisor had a rivalry with another manager, it would be inappropriate for me to become friends with that manager"). As expected, Chinese employees endorsed this value dimension far more than did employees in the other three settings. Here, our analysis draws attention to a subjective value in Chinese collectivism that differs markedly from German and Spanish collectivism.

Also shown in Figure 3.2 are two dimensions that concern solidarity with the peer group of coworkers. These are two scales based on dimensions distinguished by Triandis and Gelfand (1998), which we label *expressive collectivism* (e.g., "The well-being of my coworkers is very important to me," "I feel good when I cooperate with others") and *economic collectivism* (e.g., "I like to share things and share advice with my 'neighbors' at work," "A group of coworkers should stick together, even if sacrifices are required"). Expressive collectivism was predicted to be relatively high in Spain, and our findings support this prediction. High levels of economic collectivism were expected in all three collectivist settings for different reasons. Economic collectivism was predicted in the Chinese setting as part of the syndrome of group-level achievement striving, in the German setting as part of the obligation felt to the fellow members of one's formal unit, and in the Spanish setting as a byproduct of one's intense affective connections to coworkers. These predictions received mixed support. As can be seen in Figure 3.2, Chinese and Spanish employees were significantly higher than Americans on economic collectivism; however, Germans were lowest of all, an unexpected result.



**FIGURE 3.1.** Country Means on Scales for Economic Individualism (achievement through competition) and Within-Group Competition



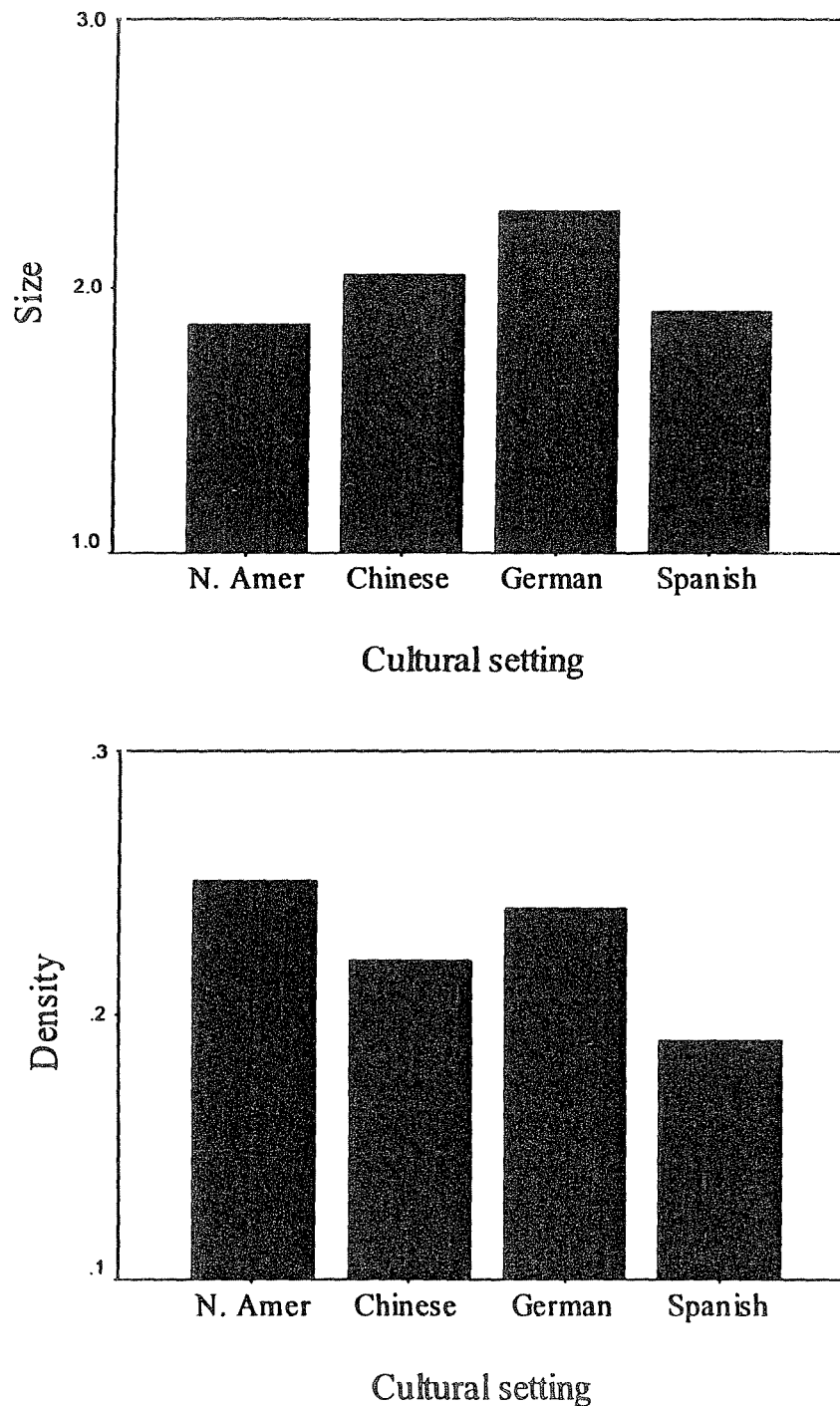
**FIGURE 3.2.** Country Means on Scales for Filial Loyalty to Superordinates, Expressive Collectivism (affective involvement with the in-group), and Economic Collectivism (belief in sharing with/sacrificing for the in-group)

Let us summarize how well our proposal stands after reviewing the evidence from subjective value scales. Although not fitting the data perfectly, our predictions fit better than those from the unidimensional individualism-collectivism framework (i.e., North American culture on the individualist pole, Germany and Spain near the center, and Chinese culture on the collectivist pole; Hofstede's [1980] construct). The clearest indication is that, looking across the different value measures, American and Chinese employees in our data are fairly similar to each other. This comports with the Parsonsian notion that American and Chinese cultures are similar in important ways; they are not the antipodean opposites that sometimes have been depicted in research within the individualism-collectivism rubric. Where the evidence from subjective value variables falls short is in supporting our predictions about the German cultural setting. We predicted that German employees would be characterized by economic collectivism (sharing resources with the in-group) but not expressive collectivism (affective involvement). Counter to our predictions, German employees were very low in endorsing sacrifice for the in-group. It might be that their formal rule orientation means that they share resources with the in-group only to the extent that their jobs require and, hence, do not subjectively construe this as sharing but merely as proper rule following. On the other hand, it might be that our characterization of interpersonal norms in the German setting is out of date or inapplicable to the banking industry. If we had only subjective value measures, then we would not know. Fortunately, our characterization also can be tested with relational measures.

## Relational Measures

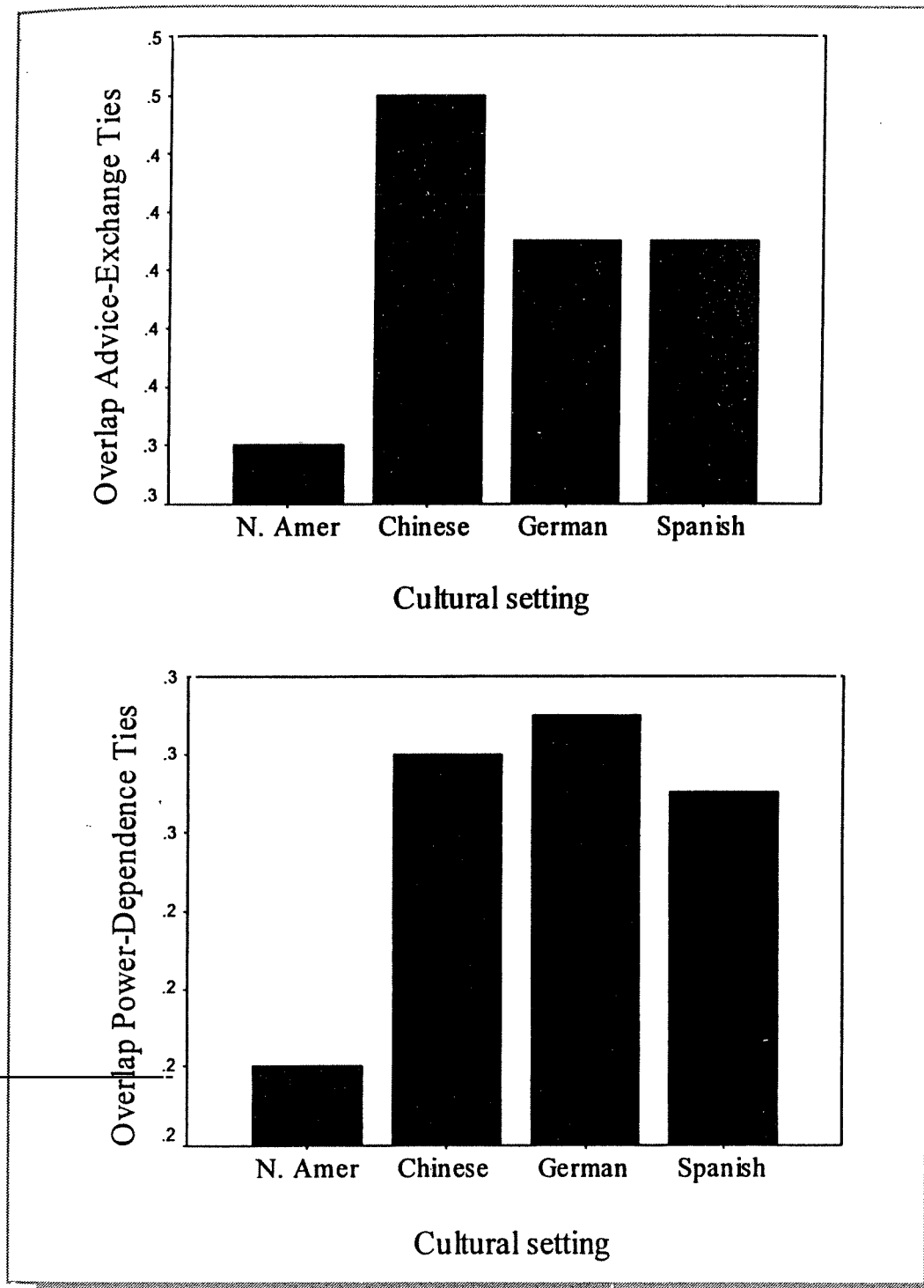
In reviewing the profiles for each country on relational measures, we begin with the pure formal relational features and then move to features that involve form and content. As Figure 3.3 illustrates, there were no reliable differences across the four settings in the average *size* and *density* of friendship networks. In other words, there is no support for the notion that the differences between cultural settings can be reduced to pure social structure, that is, to the geometry of relations that surround individuals in different cultural settings.

Moving on to the relational features that involve form and content, we first assessed measures of the multiplexity or the overlap of differing relational contents. In particular, we assessed the proportion of the *advice-exchange* network with whom each respondent also shared friendships. Second, we assessed the proportion of the *power-dependence* network with whom the respondent shared friendships. As can be seen in Figure 3.4, these two measures show the same basic profile across the four settings. As expected, North American employees had less multiplex networks than did employees in the other three countries.



**FIGURE 3.3.** Country Means on Purely Formal Relational Measures

NOTE: Size of network is the number of people listed as personal friends at work. Density is the mean proportion of other friends to whom friends are connected. These were the only variables on which no country differences were reliable.



**FIGURE 3.4.** Country Means on Measures of Multiplexity

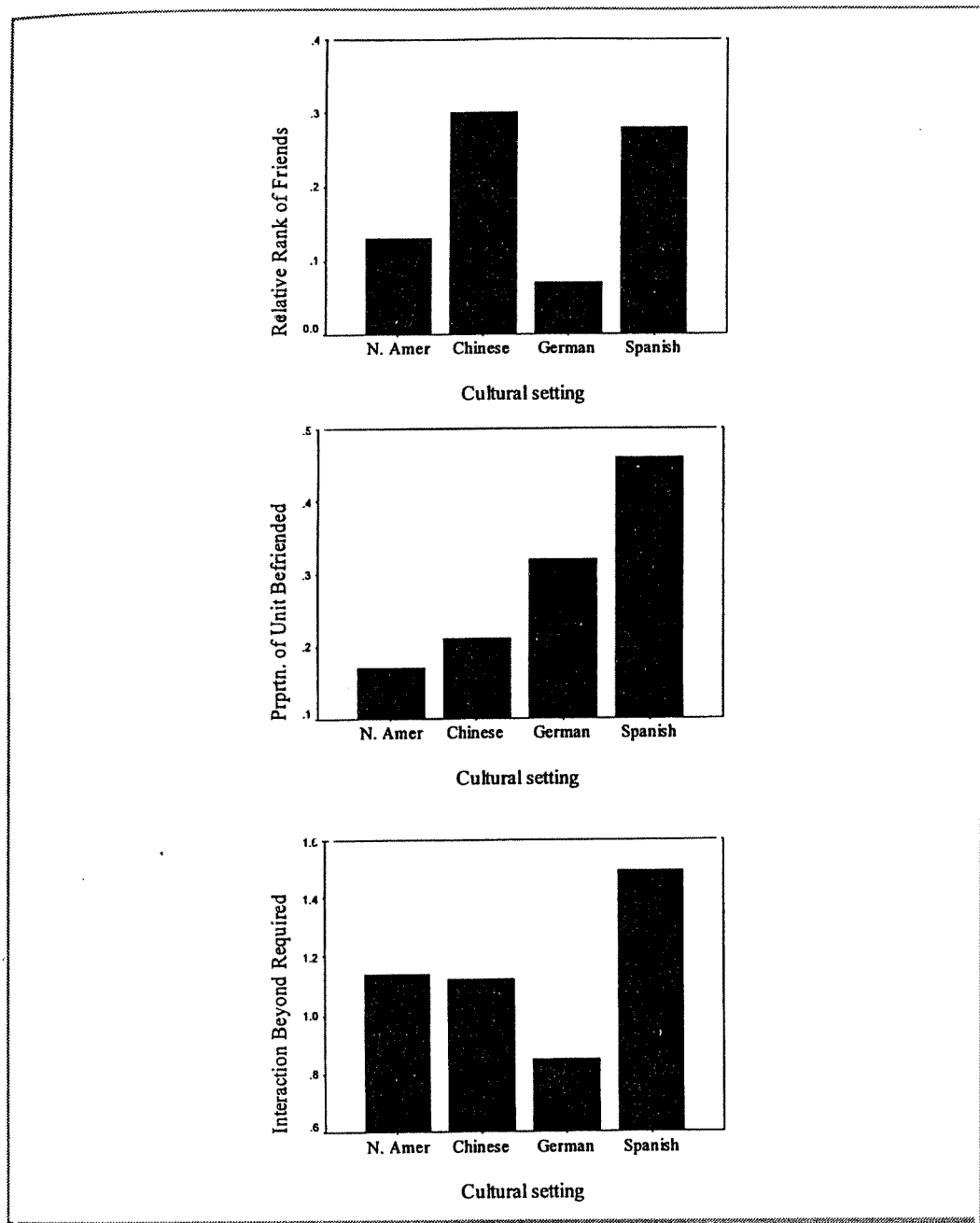
NOTE: These scores are the proportions of others in a respondent's advice-exchange ties and power-dependence ties for which the others also were listed as friends.



Whereas the aforementioned multiplexity measures capture the alignment of friendships with other types or contents of informal relations, we also derived predictions about the extent to which friendships follow the lines of the formal structure of the organization. A first measure, the average rank of friends relative to the respondent ( $-1 = \text{lower}$ ,  $0 = \text{same}$ ,  $1 = \text{higher}$ ) was expected to reveal a more upward orientation among Chinese employees (because they seek filial ties with powerful coworkers). As can be seen in Figure 3.5, Chinese respondents did in fact have the most upward orientation, although they were not significantly higher than Spanish employees. The next measure was the proportion of *same-unit coworkers befriended*, which was predicted to be highest among German employees (because their friendships are bounded by formal categories). German employees did tend to count as friends a higher proportion of their work units than did North American and Chinese employees but not Spanish employees (middle panel of Figure 3.5). A final measure of the extent to which informal friendship followed the lines of formally prescribed interaction was a measure of how closely a respondent's interaction frequency corresponded with the officially required level. As predicted from the notion that German friendship relations follow the lines of the formal organization, we observed that German employees showed the least *interaction beyond that officially required* (bottom panel of Figure 3.5). On this last measure, the sharp contrast between German and Spanish employees is noteworthy; the affiliative norm in the Spanish setting results in nearly twice the level of nonrequired interactions with friends than does the legal-bureaucratic norm in the Chinese setting. Overall, the proposal that interpersonal relations follow the lines of formal categories and rules finds consistent support in the three measures. Compared to employees in other countries, German employees are oriented toward same-rank coworkers, had befriended a high proportion of the others within their units, and interacted with those others about as much as was officially required by their jobs.

Finally, we measured the average *affective closeness* and *duration* of the workplace friendships in the four settings. For these features, we had predicted that Spanish employees would stand out because of an affiliative norm that makes friendship an end in itself. As expected, we observed that Spanish employees had friendships that were significantly higher in affective closeness and in duration than were friendships of employees in the other three cultural settings (Figure 3.6). Importantly, these two variables did not have identical profiles. Consistent with Lewin's (1948) arguments, relative to German employees, North Americans had friendships that were affectively closer but not more enduring.

Overall, results from our measures of relational constructs greatly help in understanding the differences among the norms of workplace interaction in these four cultural settings. Interestingly, the purely formal features—size and density—did not vary. It might be that the intuitively appealing thesis that collec-



**FIGURE 3.5.** Country Means on Measures of the Alignment of Friendship Ties With the Formal Structure

NOTE: The measure depicted in the top panel averages a rating of the relative rank of alters (this is zero if the average friend is at the respondent's own rank and is positive if the average friend is at a higher rank). The measure depicted in the middle panel is the proportion of same-unit coworkers who are listed as friends. The measure depicted in the bottom panel is derived from the difference between a rating of level of interaction with an alter and a rating of the level officially required with that alter.

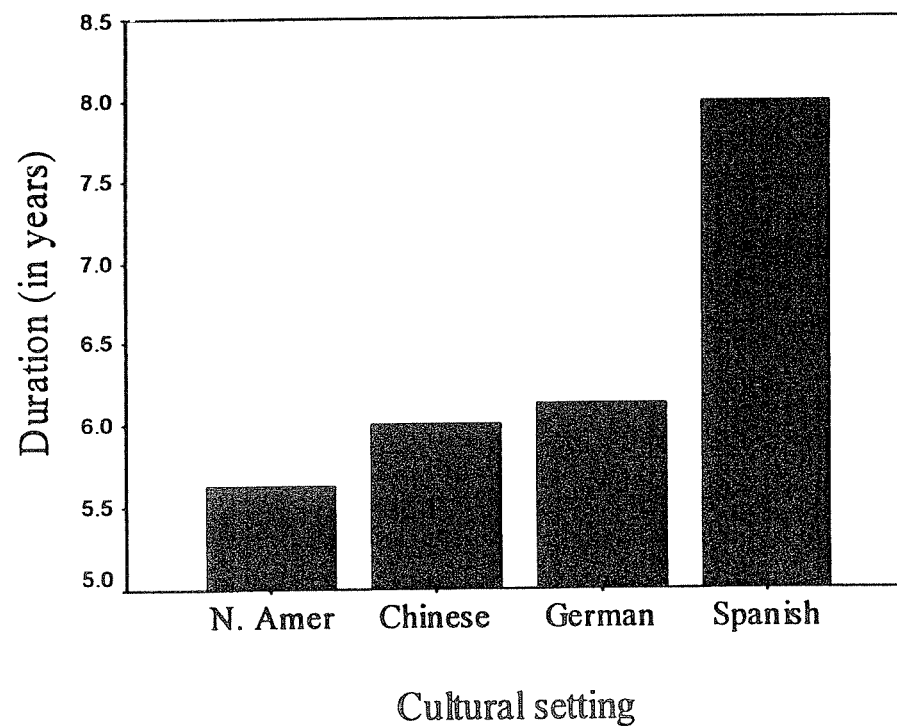
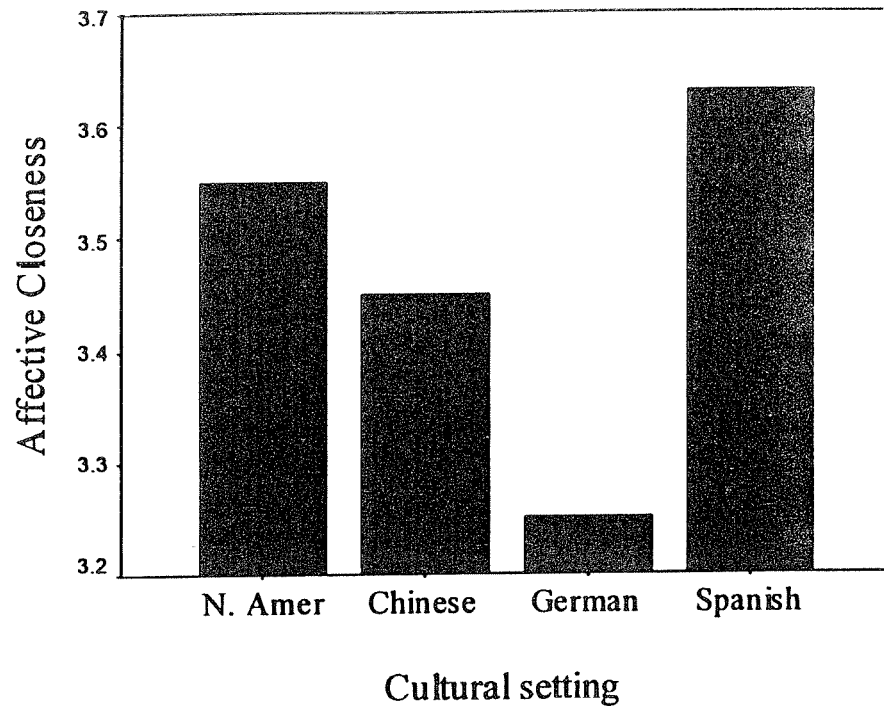


FIGURE 3.6. Country Means on Measures of Affective Closeness (1 = only as close as needed to work together, 5 = one of my closest personal friends) and Duration (in years)

tivism is associated with density (Fischer & Shavit, 1995) is true of friendships outside of the workplace, but the basic quantity and shape of informal interaction in this work setting is fairly constrained by the structure of the bank branches. Where cultural norms did shape interaction was in how friendships were oriented in relation to other types of informal ties (i.e., multiplexity), how friendships were oriented in relation to the formal structure, and the affective intensity of work friendships. What makes the relational evidence for distinct cultural norms impressive is that these different relation patterns had to be established against a common set of constraints—the physical layout of branches, the formal structure of command and control, and the job design. In a sense, these relational measures demonstrate what Giddens (1984) labeled as “structuration”—the creation and eventual crystallization of a structured system of interaction by individuals carrying norms and associated habits of interaction.

### HOW VALUES AND RELATIONS INFLUENCE BEHAVIOR

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Thus far, we have provided evidence for our descriptive proposals of four socio-cultural systems. However, we also want to briefly illustrate how these proposals generate predictions about outcomes that follow, that is, about individual behaviors that are important to the functioning of organizations. We limit our discussion to one outcome variable, but we use this to illustrate our view of the distinct roles that subjective values and relationship structures play in influencing individual behavior.

The outcome that we focus on in this discussion is the obligation that an employee feels to help others at work. The organizational literature on obligation contains a basic divide between theorists who maintain that employees are primarily obligated in *vertical* relations to those in power and those who emphasize an obligation in *horizontal* relations to peers. The emphasis on vertical relations is evident in Weber's (1947) description of bureaucratic organizations in post-World War I Germany, where obligation to the leader was based on the perceived legitimacy of the hierarchical system. This view concerning the direction of obligation persists in leading American theories of administration, although more emphasis is placed both on the instrumental rationality of obligation to those in power (Simon, 1945; Thompson, 1967) and on a social exchange process (Blau, 1955). A contrary tradition has argued that in many organizational contexts, the primary obligations lie in horizontal relations to peers rather than in vertical relations to authorities. Roethlisberger and Dickson (1939) observed that workers in a bank wiring room felt strong bonds of obligation to cohesive peer groups. The insight that the social rewards of horizontal relations provide an important source

of work motivation and job satisfaction sparked the human relations school of management theory (e.g., Dalton, 1959).

Despite the large volume of research concerning obligation in vertical and horizontal relations, surprisingly little work has sought to establish the boundary conditions determining whether an employee's primary obligation will occur in vertical relations to those who provide power and opportunity or in horizontal relations to coworkers who provide friendship and socioemotional support. The major theoretical position on this question is Merton's (1969) argument that a focus on horizontal relations develops when an employee's original focus on vertical relations has been discouraged by frustrated mobility aspirations (Kanter, 1977). We have argued (Morris et al., 1997, 1998b) that such a description might be accurate for a dynamic that occurs within the North American normative context but not in all cultural contexts. In other words, whereas previous theorists have taken it as given that the default direction of employee obligation is toward those in power rather than toward peers, we suggest that this depends on the culturally bound system of norms.

The vertical orientation is consistent with the market norm in the North American setting, as well as with the familial norm in the Chinese setting, because social energies are directed toward the end of achievement. Moreover, the German legal-bureaucratic system, with its emphasis on formal status, also should lead to a vertical orientation of obligation. A different prediction, however, follows from the Spanish affiliative norm. Ethnographies of Spanish workplaces stress that honor obliges fulfilling obligations to the friendship clique but not necessarily requests from those in power (Gilmore, 1982, 1987). To illustrate, a recent ethnography of a blue-collar work group in Spain described a system in which it was normative to treat managerial requests with suspicion yet deplorable either to withhold a favor requested from within the peer group or to comply cheerlessly (Murphy, 1983). The significance of honor, loyalty, and friendship in determining obligation is echoed in descriptions of white-collar corporate settings (Alvarez & Cantos, 1994).<sup>9</sup>

In the four-country study that we have described, a measure of obligation to each alter was taken in a vignette tailored to the retail banking context that assessed the likelihood that the respondent would volunteer to help that alter. This variable allowed us to calculate the average level of obligation to the power network and the average level to the friendship network. Because our concern is comparative, we focused on the differential obligation to friends. Consistent with expectations, Spanish employees had a much greater differential obligation to friends than did employees in the other three settings (Morris et al., 1997). To check our understanding of this pattern of outcomes, we tested for evidence of mediating and moderating variables.

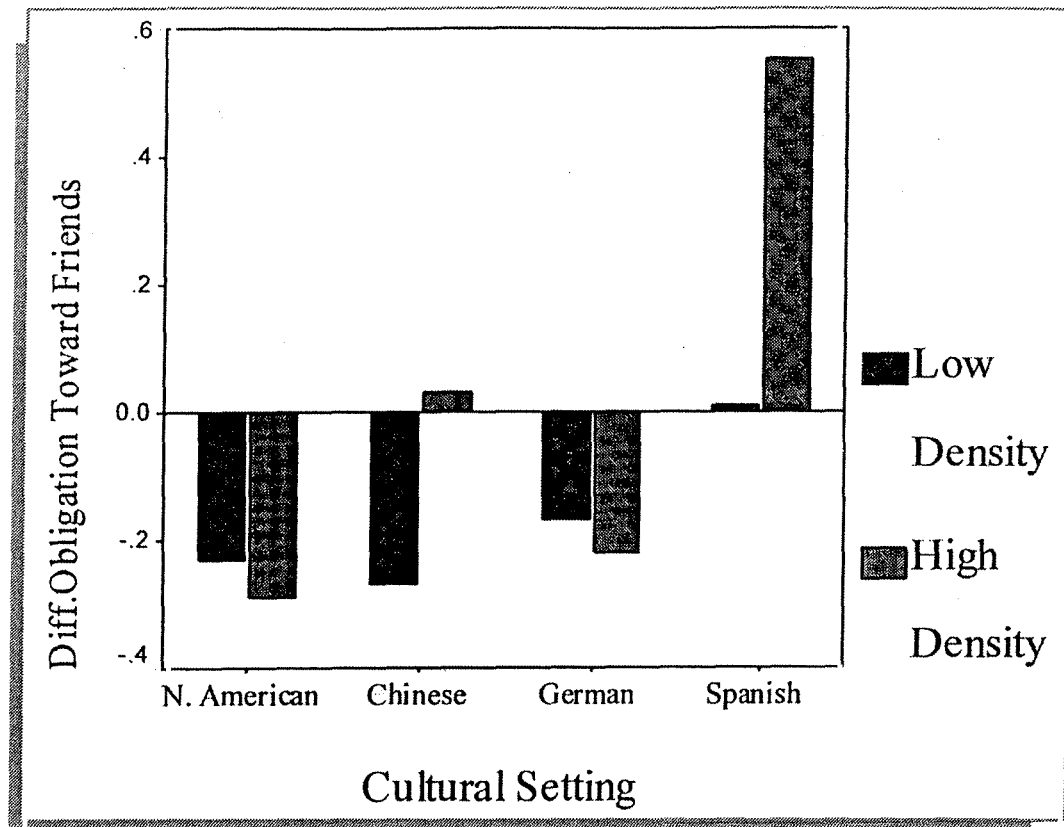
An influential strategy of analysis in the subjectivist tradition of cultural research is to test whether measures of cultural values mediate (or come

between) nationality, on the one hand, and an outcome behavior, on the other. In the work of Leung and Bond (1984) on in-group favoritism or the work of Earley (1989) on social loafing, an important feature of the results were correlations between collectivism scores and the respective outcome variables.<sup>10</sup> Although dispositionally held general values and attitudes may not be the proximal causes of behavior, they should have a tighter association than more distal variables (e.g., country) that have a remote causal connection to most outcome behaviors of interest. We conducted a mediation analysis in our data and found that the country effect on obligation orientation is mediated by subjective values. That is, when our measures of individualism and collectivism are entered into a regression model simultaneously with the country dummy variables, they remain significant predictors, whereas the dummy variable for Spain no longer predicts differential obligation to the friendship network. A similar finding has emerged from another recent study of country differences in obligation (Cialdini, Wosinska, Barrett, Butner, & Gornik-Durose, 1998); hence, the dependent variable of obligation can be added to the list of behavioral tendencies that are influenced by individualist versus collectivist orientations.

Although the subjectivist tradition has succeeded in identifying values as mediators of country differences, the subjectivist approach has not been strong in identifying moderating variables. Even the most widely known studies of social and organizational behavior across cultures that take into account moderating factors (e.g., Earley, 1989; Leung & Bond, 1984) typically have been conducted in laboratory paradigms that bear only an abstract resemblance to the actual contexts of organizations. Within these laboratory paradigms, slight variations in procedures often have meant a failure to replicate patterns of cultural difference (Leung, 1997). One way in which to analyze this problem is to assert that the subjectivist tradition has not had very good tools for analyzing the moderating variables that really matter—the social contexts that condition the activation of subjective rules, ultimately resulting in culturally varying patterns of action in organizations.

The potential for fine-grained measurement of the social contexts that moderate individual action might be where relational variables make their largest contribution. Relational variables offer a way in which to measure the relevant social contexts that surround a particular action decision. Differences between normative systems should be sharper when the relevant moderating conditions are identified. Consider Employee A who is asked for a favor by a friend and whose friends are interlinked in a dense clique. Now, consider Employee B who is also asked for a favor by a friend but whose friends do not know each other. How will this difference in density of their networks affect the intensity obligation felt? Does this, in turn, vary as a function of the surrounding normative system?

Following from our analysis of why Spanish employees are differentially obligated to the friendship network, we reasoned that in the Spanish context,



**FIGURE 3.7.** Differential Obligation to Friendship Network as a Function of Cultural Setting and the Density Level of the Respondent's Network

NOTE: This figure illustrates an interaction effect in which high density of the friendship network created a greater differential obligation to the friendship network in the Spanish setting but not in the other cultural settings.

where doing a favor for a friend is a matter of honor, dense networks should increase the pressure of obligation to friends. By contrast, if American employees are obligated to friends primarily as a function of how the friends help their own advancement, then Americans conversely may feel less obligated in a dense network than in a network that is less dense (in Burt's [1992] terms, a non-redundant network). As can be seen in Figure 3.7, this predicted interaction pattern was observed. High friendship density makes Spanish employees more oriented to the friendship network, whereas Americans move nonsignificantly in the opposite direction. When this interaction effect is entered into a regression model with the main effect of country, the interaction remains significant but the main effect does not. Hence, the interaction underlies the main effect. This example illustrates that measures of relational structure pick up situational variables that make a great deal of difference in behavioral responses. Understanding these situations allows a way in which to better contextualize findings about cultural differences.

## CONCLUSION

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This chapter has presented selected findings from a research program investigating the proposal that cultural differences in organizational behavior can be understood in terms of normative systems of interpersonal interaction, that is, systems constituted by subjective values and by relational structures. Although this level of analysis is less parsimonious than a purely subjectivist or purely structuralist approach, it offers a more comprehensive understanding of how culture influences individual behavior. Whereas the subjectivist and structuralist approaches have been regarded as rivals, we argue that neither suffices alone. Moreover, the two approaches complement each other. Subjective measures pick up the individual traits and cognitive structures that serve as mechanisms in the influences of macro-level variables such as country. Relational measures identify micro-level social contexts that condition these influences (for a similar use of subjective and relational variables in predicting financial risk taking, see Hsee & Weber, 1999; in predicting justice perceptions, see Morris & Leung, 2000).

A final benefit of this sort of cross-cultural study is that it reveals cultural assumptions that are implicit in formal academic theories of organizational behavior. We have argued that the assumption of Merton and others about the default direction of obligation should be understood as culturally bound. More generally, there might be many assumptions in organizational theory (OT) that are valid in the cultures where these theories were developed but not elsewhere. Consider Weber's observations of the "modern" bureaucratic form in post-World War I German hospitals, where "all purely personal . . . emotional elements" are eliminated in the interactions among employees (quoted in Gerth & Mills, 1958, pp. 215-216). Given our findings concerning affectivity, one must wonder whether this description, so pivotal in the intellectual history of OT, would have arisen if Weber had made his observations in a Spanish hospital rather than in a German hospital.

## NOTES

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1. We use the term *structuralism* the way in which it is used by sociologists (e.g., Mayhew), not the way in which it is used by cognitive anthropologists (e.g., Levi-Strauss). That is, we refer to the view that action is caused by social structures, not the view that thinking is shaped by cognitive structures.

2. This is not to deny that these same individuals adhere to differentiated subcultures and have other cultural alliances and identities that are fragmented and context dependent rather than unified and context general (Martin, 1992).

3. Triandis and colleagues referred to these dimensions as *vertical* and *horizontal* aspects. This terminology would be confusing in the current context, so we substitute the more concrete descriptors *economic* and *expressive*, respectively.



4. Our discussion focuses on analyses of egocentric networks in which the unique network surrounding each individual is the unit of analysis because this method is mostly amenable to cross-cultural comparisons. Another approach to network analysis is to study all relations that exist within a group of people. One issue with this method is the boundary problem of choosing which group to study. Given that the in-group/out-group boundary might differ across cultures, this seems to particularly complicate analyses of collectivism. Another issue with this method is that a near perfect response rate is required. Some of the methods that researchers use when there are missing data probably are differentially valid across cultures. For example, one technique is to symmetrize relations, that is, to infer that A has a particular relation to B and that B has the same relation to A (Scott, 1991). Although the assumption underlying this technique might approach accuracy in egalitarian societies, it is highly problematic in hierarchical societies that foster asymmetric relations such as the exchange of filial loyalty for paternal protection (Ho, 1976, 1998).

5. Much of this research is rooted less in network analysis than in the more processual approach to relationships taken by researchers in communications and psychology (for a review, see Duck, West, & Acitelli, 1997).

6. Descriptive shortcoming might be excused by the fact that Parsons was primarily attempting a contribution to meta-theory; his writings consist chiefly of a priori arguments concerning dilemmas between particular social values that limit the possible combinations of values that could function in homeostasis as a social system. Yet, even scholars who have appreciated his descriptive proposals about particular value systems have balked at his insistence on the grander system of systems that encompasses these proposals, which posits inexorable dilemmas and trade-offs by the dozen that would seem to arbitrarily limit the possible forms of social systems and, hence, the possible directions of social and cultural diversity.

7. Although Parsons' model often is portrayed as a dimensional analysis, he argued very clearly that these dilemmas are not to be interpreted as independent dimensions. Certain patterns of answers to these dilemmas arise as cultural forms, but not all combinations are possible, and a culture's answer to one dilemma cannot be understood in isolation from its answer to the other dilemma. For example, interwoven with patterns of answers to these first two dilemmas are answers to the dilemma of affectivity—whether to express and act on affective reactions to others or to control one's affective reactions. Parsons discussed three other axes, or what he called "pattern variables," but he integrated these other axes into his discussion of the four-category typology that arises from the intersection of these two dominant axes.

8. The "experiment" provides a conservative test of the hypotheses, of course, because cultural differences are diluted by the Citibank organizational culture. If a pattern of predicted cultural differences can be observed in the contrast between employees of Citibank Hong Kong and Citibank Spain, then we would expect the same differences to be much sharper in the contrast between two completely local firms.

9. Although we know of no previous comparative studies of networks and obligations in the workplace, results from studies of networks and social support also are somewhat consistent with our argument concerning the primacy of obligation to the friendship network in Latin contexts. Hollinger and Haller (1990) found that in the Latin country in their data (Italy), expectations with regard to friends' obligations were not conditional on

the kins' proximity. This differed from the pattern in other countries, where the obligation of friends was inversely related to the proximity of kin.

10. These correlations tend to be weak, but this is reasonable to expect given that the social attitudes are measured at such a high level of generality. The specific action rules that determine a given decision about, for example, allocation of resources or effort are much narrower than cultural value dimensions.

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