Culture and intrinsic motivation: Cultural dimensions and their impact on individual goal orientation and performance.

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(Extended abstract)

Much research in organizational behavior has often ignored the impact of national culture on the individual (Boyacingler and Adler, 1991). This is not surprising since national culture's influence in organizational behavior occurs at such a deep level that people are not usually aware of its influences (Triandis, 1983). For example, even though it is clear that values and goals of societies differ, most theories on work motivation have been made in the US with a US perspective (Boyacingler and Adler, 1991). This may encumber the generalizability of some of these motivation theories to a global environment because, as Hofstede (1980) affirms, even when some principles in motivation may be almost universal, the way managers implement them depend on individual differences in values and goals. These differences are determined by local conditions (Hofstede, 1980), and can be analyzed through the predominance of specific cultural dimensions. This paper contributes to fill the void of culture in many motivation theories, and considers the influence of cultural dimensions on intrinsic motivation, specifically, how cultural dimensions may influence an individual's goal orientation.

Culture and mid-range theories

Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley, and Janssens (1995) suggest some guidelines for the study of how culture can affect mid-range theories like goal orientation: The first step includes the development of a functional definition of culture and its dimensions, then the identification of a mid-range theory, in this case goal orientation within intrinsic motivation, and finally, the generation of specific hypotheses about why and how those cultural dimensions will influence goal orientation. This paper will follow these steps and will then conclude with some implications for individual performance.

Figure 1 proposes a framework which explains how cultural factors influence an individual's goal orientation, which in turn affects individual performance. The model suggests that culture may influence goal orientation through its impact on the individual's personality. Copranzano, James, and Citera (1993), suggest that variance in personality is accounted for by both biological and cultural factors. Biological factors influence the class of stimuli that individuals approach, and how they approach them, whereas cultural characteristics can influence in two ways: They can change an individual's disposition, and they can determine a way in expressing those dispositions (Triandis, 1989). At the same time, personality and intrinsic motivation are integrated through a hierarchy of goals where personality is associated with the higher order goals (values) (Cropanzano et al. 1993) which affect intrinsic motivation.

Insert figure 1 about here

A functional definition of culture

Culture is a fuzzy concept. It has been examined at several levels of analysis, and described as many, sometimes conflicting constructs. Thus one may speak of group (family, team) , organizational (IBM), ethnic (African-American) , national (Japanese), or supra national (Western) culture.

As a variable, culture can be either an internal variable (corporate culture), or an independent variable (external and contextual to the organization) (Smirich, 1983). When seen as an independent variable, culture is part of the external environment in which individuals and organizations act and interact. This is the focus of much of the comparative and multi-cultural management which deals with either how practices and attitudes vary across national cultures (Havre et al. 1966), or how individuals from different national cultures may interact given their

distinctive cultural background. In this context, culture can be defined as the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes one group from another (Hofstede, 1993).

National culture and the effects on the individual. Slocum, 1971, suggests that culture is an independent variable brought into the organizations through individuals. That is, individuals come to the organization influenced by an external environment defined by the dominant national cultural forms. Differentiating dimensions associated with distinct national cultures can influence individuals in some of their basic assumptions about the world. These basic assumptions, or cultural dimensions, may influence individuals through their perceptions, motivation, and their interactions with other individuals and with the organization (Adler, 1997). Thus, culture can affect managerial theories through its effect on the individuals that form the organization. These manifestations of culture are given by different cultural dimensions which can affect mid-range theories as either mediators or moderators (Lytle et al. 1995).

Dimensions of national culture. Many studies have attempted to identify dimensions that distinguish cultures. Among these, some of the best known are Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) six value orientations, and the Hofstede-Bond stream of research with five cultural dimensions (Hoefstede, 1989b; Hofstede & Bond,1988). Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) looked at six variations in value orientations. These values filter into one's assumptions and perceptions, and influence individual behavior in managerial life (Lane et al. 1997). They are: relation to nature, orientation to time, belief about the basic human nature, the mode of human activity, relationships among people, and the use of space.

The Hofstede-Bond stream of research looked at five cultural dimensions. The first four were developed with data from sixty-four national subsidiaries of the IBM corporation. Since this data had a strong Western bias. Bond decided to create a fifth dimension with a purposely eastern bias: the Confucian orientation. The five dimensions are power distance, individualism,

masculinity-femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and Confucian dynamism, or what (Hofstede, 1993) calls long-term versus short-term orientation.

A mid-range theory: Goal orientation

The second step involves identifying a mid-range theory that may be affected by cultural dimensions and their effect on the individual. A mid range theory identifies a set of phenomena and the interrelationships among them are established through a set of hypotheses (James, Mulaik, and Brett, 1982), for example, goal orientation within intrinsic motivation. According to Lytle et al. (1995), cultural dimensions impact mid-range theories like goal orientation in two ways: first they provide a frame of reference to which actions are interpreted, and second they set norms of what is appropriate behavior.

Intrinsic motivation and goal orientation. Motivation in general can be defined as intra-inter individual variability of behavior not only due to individual differences in ability (Vroom, 1964). The main dependent variables are direction of behavior (i.e. absenteeism, task choice, etc.), intensity of action (i. e. task effort or task performance, in other words, how much of the cognitive resources -effort- will be directed toward the target, and the use of performance levels-Kanfer,1987-), and persistence over time (which is less popular and more used in intrinsic, achievement, and self regulatory research) (Kanfer, 1990).

Kanfer, 1990, classified motivation theories in three groups: 1) cognitive choice theories focus on the formulations and the process of behavior (expectancy-value) 2) need-motive-value theories which focus of the person-based determinants of behavior, and 3) self-regulation (metacognition) theories which look at cognition-behavior processes. Need-motive-value theories emphasize personality, values and personal dispositions (Maslow's and Deci's 1975 self-determination models are examples). These theories look at some type of internal arousal.

Thus, intrinsic motivation theories look at internal elements of arousal like challenge or curiosity.

Intrinsic motives may be represented by the cognitive processing of an individual's goals. Kanfer (1990) affirms that different goals are cued by individual differences in the salience of different motives and these goals or motives influence an individual's interpretation of events through their goal orientation. Thus, goal orientation is a form or intrinsic motivation which depicts the underlying goals that individuals seek in achievement situations (Butler, 1993, VandeWalle and Cummings, 1997). These goals form a schema for future interpretation of events and outcomes (Button, Mathieu, and Zajac, 1996).

Two types of goal orientation have been identified: learning and performance orientation (Nicholls, 1984; Dweck, 1986; Dweck and Legett, 1988). In a learning goal orientation, individuals focus on the task rather than on the self and see a positive relationship between the amount of effort they exercise in the task, and task mastery. More effort is expected to increase success in the task (Ames, 1992). Intrinsic motivation is high when persons with learning goals are engaged in moderately difficult activities because individuals see the task as a way understand something new and to develop and improve their competence (Nichols, 1983). Here, feedback is considered as a learning opportunity because individuals adopt an incremental view of their ability. That is, ability is controllable and it can be improved through effort and experience (VandeWalle & Cummings, 1997). On the other hand, under a performance orientation individuals hold a stable view of their ability, that is, ability is a fairly stable, uncontrollable personal trait (VandeWalle and Cummings, 1997). Thus, effort and ability are inversely related because individuals do not see effort as an instrument to increase ability but as a way to compensate for the lack of ability. Individuals under a performance goal orientation are less interested in the task than they are in the outcomes of the task, because their purpose is to

demonstrate their ability. The focus under a performance orientation is to avoid negative judgments and to obtain favorable judgments about one's ability.

Goal orientation is also a bi-dimensional construct that can manifest both as an individual difference variable and a situational characteristic. Goal orientation is not a single dimension with performance and learning orientation at the ends of the continuum, rather, performance and learning goals are two separate dimensions which are not mutually exclusive (Button et al. 1996). It should also be noted that even though there is strong evidence that goal orientation exists as a trait influenced by an individual's personality, goal orientation may also be induced by situational characteristics (VandeWalle & Cummings, 1997). This paper focuses on the adoption of learning and performance goals as a fairly stable dispositional variable.

Cultural dimensions and goal orientation

Cultural dimensions may influence goal orientation because these dimensions affect basic assumptions about human nature which define an individual's personality (Lane et al. 1997). These assumptions can gear towards a certain mind set that will encourage either performance or learning goal dispositions. Some of these assumptions are: (Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck, 1961; Adler, 1997, Lane et al. 1997, Hofstede, 1993)

1. Beliefs about basic human nature. This assumes that humans good, evil, or both (good and evil). Lane et al (1997) suggest that an evil assumption about human nature implies a tight-suspicion based control system, a close, top-down supervisory managerial style, and a contractual, adversarial climate. A good assumption about human nature brings a loose, information based control system, a participative managerial style, and a collaborative organizational climate. A neutral or mixed assumption brings a moderate control system, and a consultative managerial style. This last disposition also implies that people they can change, those evil can be taught to be good. Therefore:

H1 A cultural disposition to assume that humans can change (through training, etc.) would be more receptive to a learning goal orientation which assumes that one can develop and improve new skills and one can be trained to improve (Dweck and Legett, 1988).

2. The activity orientation about human nature focuses on the desirable focus of activity. This focus can be being, containing and controlling, or doing. In the being mode, individuals are predominately emotional, information is based, feeling based, and intuitive. The containing and controlling is the rational, logic-based mode that focuses on moderation and orderliness for self-development. The doing mode, which is predominant in the North American culture (Adler, 1997), may be propitiatory of a performance orientation. First, the doing mode emphasizes a pragmatic, results based mode where there is a strong focus on achievement to be recognized by *external* standards. This may focus the individual in looking for normative comparisons. One's ability is compared to external standards, and these standards are developed and compared based on the skills of others. Second, in a doing mode, there is a compulsive concern for a numerical output, where the information on outcomes is simple, operational, and rewards are results based with few, very clear indices (Lane et al. 1997), like a grade in a classroom setting, or a production quota. On the other hand, in a being orientation there is a more spontaneous concern for output, decision criteria are more emotional, and feedback on outcomes is more feeling-based, like a lengthy, more subjective comment as feedback on classroom performance, or a more intuitive, feeling-based performance appraisal (Lane et al. 1997). A doing orientation may be associated with a disposition to adopt performance goals, for example, Butler (1988) suggested that when feedback on student performance was a grade (much like the predisposition on a doing mode) students exhibited a performance orientation, whereas feedback was given through more feeling-based comments on performance (much like the predisposition on a being mode) they

exhibited a learning orientation. This may occurred because, according to Butler (1988) focus on performance goals is based on the reward, rather than on the pleasure of the activity itself, which is another characteristic of the being mode. Therefore:

H2 A doing orientation may be associated with a disposition to adopt performance goals.

3. Relationships among people (similar Hofstede, 1980)'s individualism-collectivism). The human relationships orientation looks at the responsibility one feels to have towards others. One approach assumes that individuals should take care of themselves (individualism). These cultures see relationships as open arrangements that are formed in a as-needed basis, and the nuclear family is the limit of responsibility. This focus on the self creates loosely social networks. Individuals who grow in an individualistic environment are encouraged to take care of themselves, therefore there is no strong loyalty to the group. Achievement is perceived in terms of individual success, since there is no strong in-group, and there is expectation of individual excellence (Lane et al. 1997). Individuals measure their success in terms of their own accomplishments in relation to the accomplishments of others. This tendency to normative comparison is a strong indicator of a performance orientation (Nicholls, 1984). Moreover, people's emphasis on the *I*, rather than the *we* may create a stronger focus on feelings about the self and self-worth, rather than on mastery goals that focus the good of the group (Butler, 1988; Dweck, 1988). Since an individualistic orientation focuses attention on the self in the assessment of ability (which can only be done when compared to others), it may also predispose to a performance orientation. (Butler, 1987) suggests that information that focuses attention on the self will promote a performance orientation and lower subsequent interest even if that information implies high ability.

On the other hand, a collectivistic culture focuses on the *we*, rather than the *I*. Harmony, loyalty, and group unity are emphasized, and focus on individual excellence and recognition are discouraged (Kirkman and Shapiro, 1997). In a collectivistic culture, individuals do not have to focus on the self, or on self achievement. They do not feel the need to receive favorable judgments or to avoid unfavorable judgments about their ability because outcomes are expected not on individual results, but on loyalty, team effort, and on the ability of the in-group to work together towards a common goal. Therefore:

H3. An individualistic orientation will be associated with the tendency to adopt a performance goal orientation, whereas a collectivistic orientation will be associated with the tendency to adopt a learning goal orientation.

4. Long-term Vs short term orientation or Confucian perspective (Hofstede, 1980; Hofstede & Bond, 1988). Long term orientation focuses on learning and process, short term focus on immediate results. A long-term orientation may favor learning goals because it allows for the process of learning and change (Dweck, 1989). A short term focus on results does may not allow individuals to consider the process of developing and improving new skills, rather, it may force them to draw from the ability they already have as the only source of outcome expectations (Alsua and Roberson, 1997). Therefore:

   H4. An short term orientation will be associated with the tendency to adopt performance goals, whereas a long-term focus will be associated with the tendency to adopt a learning goal orientation.

5. Power distance (Hofstede, 1980). Power distance looks at the extent to which employees agree that their boss has more power than what they have (Adler, 1997). Higher power distance may induce employees to seek favorable judgments about their ability and to try to avoid unfavorable judgments about their ability from those higher in the hierarchy (i.e.

supervisors). The tendency to heed to other's judgments about one's ability is, by definition, part of a performance goal orientation (Elliott & Dweck, 1981; Dweck & Elliott, 1983). Therefore:

H5. High power distance will be associated with the tendency to adopt a performance goal orientation.

Performance implications

The adoption of performance goals has often been associated with lower performance when individuals encounter complex tasks (Nichols, 1984; Ames and Archer, 1988). Dweck (1986) suggests that when individuals adopt performance goals, perceived ability to perform the task becomes salient. Those who have low perceived ability to perform the task will experience a maladaptive pattern, that is, they will avoid challenge, exhibit low persistence to carry out the task, and will be more likely to quit when facing challenge (Dweck, 1989). Meanwhile individuals with high perceived ability will experience an adaptive pattern, that is, they will seek challenge and experience high persistence to carry out the task.

Under a performance orientation individuals are less likely to increase effort when they encounter difficulty because they assume that if they do not possess the ability to solve the situation, an increased effort will do little to help. It will only show others that they lack the necessary ability, as their goal in a performance orientation is to avoid negative judgments about their ability. This lack of effort when facing challenge is likely to depress their performance (Nichols, 1984).

On the other hand, when individuals adopt learning goals, perceived ability to perform the task is not as important because the task itself is viewed as a process that will help improve ability (Ames and Archer, 1988). Thus, Dweck, (1986, 1989) suggest that under a learning goal orientation individuals will experience an adaptive pattern regardless of their perceived ability,

they will seek challenge and persist when facing challenge because they understand that difficulty will foster learning. Moreover, under a learning orientation, individuals are more likely to increase effort when encountering difficulty since they see effort as a way to improve their ability. This higher effort when facing challenge is likely to increase performance (Nichols, 1984). Thus, the adoption of a learning goal orientation seems preferable because it is associated with higher performance when individuals face challenging situations, as it occurs in most managerial tasks.

The disposition to adopt a performance goal orientation, however, does not *always* imply lower performance. This is due to two reasons: first, because the two dimensions of the goal orientation construct are not mutually exclusive and second, because strong learning orientation cues in the situation may offset a dispositional performance goal orientation. Since performance and learning goals are two separate dimensions which are not mutually exclusive (Nichols, 1984), it is possible for an individual to exhibit both high performance and learning goals, that is, one may to strive to develop and demonstrate one's skills simultaneously and still reap the benefits of a strong learning orientation. Ames and Archer (1988) suggest that it is not necessarily the adoption of a high performance orientation which may be detrimental to performance, but the lack of a high learning orientation. Moreover, the adoption of performance and learning goals may also be cued by the situation. VandeWalle and Cummings (1997) affirm that dispositions will direct behavior only when the situation does not suggest the adoption of either learning or performance goals. This, is supported by a great wealth of empirical studies that have successfully manipulated situational goal orientation (Butler, 1987, 1988, 1993; Alsua and Roberson, 1997).

Conclusion and caveats

This paper looked at the need for further study on the effects of cultural dimensions on intrinsic motivation and goal orientation. It is important to look at how culture affects mid-range theories like goal orientation because inasmuch as cultural dimensions represent different value orientations of individuals across different cultural groups (Tryce and Beyer, 1992), these theories will be affected by variations of the cultural dimensions (Adler, 1997). Thus, cultural dimensions may influence personality, and therefore affect an individuals' disposition to adopt either performance or learning goals when carrying out a task, and this disposition may have performance implications.

The propositions presented in this paper assume that motivation in an achievement context, such as goal orientation, is a construct that exists in most cultures. Some suggest, however, that this may not be so. For example, McClelland (1961) affirmed that not all cultures had a need for achievement, and this explained differences in different societies' performance. Accordingly, some cultures with high achievement motivation had a strong desire to produce (high achievement here was considered in terms of what we would call today high career success and high uncertainty avoidance). McClelland defined production (performance) in terms of a US based definition of achievement, which is "a competition with some [US] standard of excellence [i.e. production and materialism]" McClelland et al. 1953, p. 38). Even though this definition of the construct may not cross-culturalize well, this does not mean that motivation to achieve may not be found in all cultures when performance is defined on the basis on each culture's own standards of what performance is. Maehr (1974) affirms that the desire to achieve is often confounded in a way that one may have all the characteristics of motivated behavior and decision to achieve, but directed at different ends (different interpretation of performance from the standard). What may not be an appropriate measure of performance in one culture may it be in another, since "Individuals do not achieve in a social vacuum. They achieve as members of a

social group, and in such behavior as choosing and persisting they are influenced by the guidelines, expectations, and values of the groups that are significant to them (Maehr, 1974, p 890)." Thus, the drive to achieve may be common to most cultures, it is the definition of what achievement represents what may be culture specific.

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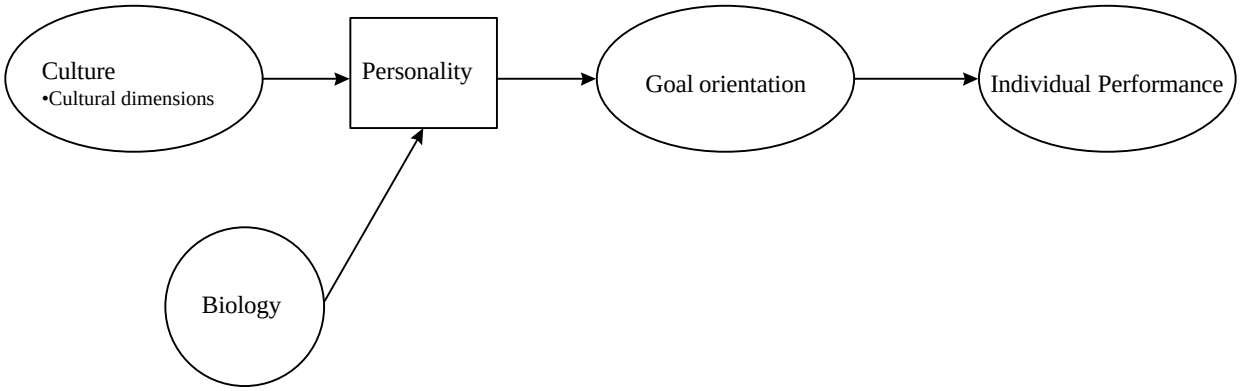
Figure 1


Culture
•Cultural dimensions
Personality
Goal orientation
Individual Performance
Biology