

Vertical and Horizontal Behavior in Organizations – China and South Korea Compared

XINYI XU

Introduction

Organizations bridge individuals and individual activities with the overall society and social functions. To individuals, they exist as an order, hierarchy, framework, and procedure by which individual activities are controlled, channelled, and transmitted into collective forces or products. To the overall social system, organizations are basic units or components that discharge social functions and embody dominant ideology, culture, and institutional establishment (Hall 1991).

As far as social system is concerned, China could differ from South Korea significantly in organizations as well as inter- and intra-organizational relationships. In socialist China, the state owns all natural resources and the main means of production. It operates factories, mining or oil fields, schools, research institutions, shops, services, and all other possible types of business. Organizations are not only places for people to work and conduct business but also battlefields or tools for the state to stage or apply class struggle, communist propaganda, and social control (Xu 1994). In South Korea, although governmental bureaucracies and party organs function for political purposes, business or work organizations are mostly established for production, business affairs, and practical enterprises. Either privately or publicly owned and operated, business organizations in the capitalist context are concerned mainly with economic gains and losses or social benefits and liabilities (Amsden 1989; Park 1994).

Apparently, different social systems could give different orientations and functions to organizations in China and South Korea, which in turn could lead to different intra-organizational arrangements and patterns of interactions among organizational participants (Burawoy 1985; Smith and Thompson 1992). On the other hand, both Chinese and Koreans, as acting individuals within organizations may have similar practical wants and concerns such as survival needs and aspirations for career development. They may also be subject to similar physical environments and human networks in organizational activities. For example, a Chinese just as a

Korean automotive mechanic has to deal with cars and be specialized in maintaining and repairing them. Chinese communist officials or South Korean conservatives, as individuals in their daily lives, have to face and handle familial and social relations between the young and the old, children and parents, wife and husband, and subordinates and superiors, as well as among friends, or colleagues. These relationships are more or less determined by human nature and cultural heritage which Chinese and Koreans have shared with each other so much throughout history.

In an initial projection, both differences and similarities can be expected in organizations and organizational relations between China and South Korea. This paper utilizes surveys conducted by the East-West Center in both countries (Chu and Ju 1993)¹ and attempts to document and explain how Chinese and Koreans differ from or share with each other in vertical and horizontal relations as well as promotions within organizations.

Vertical Relations

Vertical relation refers to how people perceive and interact upward with their leaders and downward with their subordinates in their organizational environments. In practical terms, it is a matter of how to impress boss, be noticed by top management, and cultivate lower-ranking people at work (DuBryn 1993). To approach the issue at a general level, what image do Chinese and Koreans have in their respective minds about a good leader?

Image of Leader

The image of a good leader is supposedly composed of all necessary qualifications in a hierarchical order. The East-West Center surveys ask what are the three most and least important qualifications a good leader ought to have in an organization: technical expertise, being fair to workers, respected and liked by workers, serious and responsible, having good

1 The East-West Center surveys were comprehensive, with a total of 188 questions on family, work, society, culture, and cultural change. In China, it was administered in 1987 to a sample of 2000 respondents randomly drawn from metropolitan Shanghai and its neighboring county seats and villages. In South Korea, it was conducted in 1989 among a probability sample of 1456 respondents from metropolitan Seoul as well as towns and countryside around Seoul.

outside relations and knowing a lot of people, being sincere toward colleagues, decisive and resolute, having good judgement, bringing benefits to workers, seniority, and good class background.

To better understand the raw data, an index of difference is computed for each qualification between its being selected the most and least important. According to the index, the three most important qualifications for Chinese leaders are: technical expertise, being decisive and resolute, and bringing benefits to workers. The three least important are: seniority, good class background, and good outside relations and knowing a lot of people. In between from more to less important are: being fair to workers, serious and responsible, respected and liked by workers, having good judgement, and being sincere toward colleagues. To Koreans, the top three qualifications for their leaders are: being fair to workers, having good outside relations and knowing a lot of people, and having good judgement. The bottom three are: good class background, bringing benefits to workers, and seniority. In the middle in a descending order of importance are: being decisive and resolute, sincere toward colleagues, serious and responsible, respected and liked by workers, and having technical expertise.

Differences seem to be in dominance between the two countries. No qualification is regarded by both Chinese and Koreans as the most important. While Chinese treat 'bringing benefits to workers' as one of the top three qualifications, Koreans see it as one of the least important. There are, however, similarities. 'Seniority' and 'good class background' are both seen as the least important qualifications by Chinese and Koreans. 'Sincerity toward colleagues,' 'being serious and responsible,' and 'respected and liked by workers' are given about the same importance by both Chinese and Koreans.

Specifically with regard to similarities, the majority of Chinese (87.0%) and Koreans (81.4%) agree that 'good class background' is the least important. Few of them (Chinese 1.4% vs. Koreans 1.3%) see it as the most important. In both countries, people in rural locations, with lower education, and in higher exposure to mass media are a little less reluctant to list class background as the least important. 'Seniority' is ranked low by both Chinese and Koreans, especially by their respective younger generations and urbanites. A minor difference as regards 'seniority' between Chinese and Koreans is that the former seem to be more determined to say it is the least important (88.5% vs. 63.4%).

Both Chinese and Koreans consider 'being sincere toward colleagues,' 'serious and responsible,' and 'respected and liked by workers' of middle importance. 'Sincerity toward colleagues' is endorsed by 15.8% of Chinese as the most important qualification, compared to 30.2% of Koreans. In

China, emphasis on sincerity comes more from people of higher education, higher income, less exposure to mass media, and from cities. In South Korea, no differences are found among those groups. As for 'being serious and responsible,' while about the same percentage of Chinese (32.9%) and Koreans (32.6%) agree that it is the most important, more Chinese (25.9%) than Koreans (15.5%) consider it as the least important. In both countries, females tend to give it higher importance than males. So do more older people than their younger fellows. Finally, 'being respected and liked by workers' seems to be more of a concern for Chinese than Koreans. The index of difference is 23.4 for Chinese, compared to 12 for Koreans. In China, people of lower education tend to give it more importance than their higher-educated counterparts (37.3% vs. 18.0%), whereas a few more Koreans of higher education than their lower-educated fellows view it as the most important (23.1% vs. 19.0%).

As for the differences, the biggest is with respect to 'bringing benefits to workers.' While 39.3% of Chinese regard it as the most important, only 2.5% of Koreans agree that it is of that importance. On the contrary, 57.4% of Koreans deem it as the least important, compared to only 6.6% of Chinese who do so. As a result, 'bringing benefits to workers' becomes one of the top three qualifications for Chinese leaders, whereas it is seen as one of the bottom three in the eyes of Koreans. The variable is related to location, age, and exposure to mass media. It is particularly true in China where people of less exposure to mass media, urban residency, and younger age tend to attach more importance to 'bringing benefits to workers.'

Other considerable differences are on 'technical expertise,' 'being decisive and resolute,' 'fair to workers,' 'having good judgement,' and 'good outside relations and knowing a lot of people.' 'Technical expertise' is seen by Chinese as the most important qualification, with the index of difference as high as 67.9. Among Koreans, however, the index of difference is merely 5.7.

'Being resolute and decisive' is ranked by Chinese as the second most important qualification, whereas it ranks only fourth with Koreans. In both countries, endorsement comes more from men than women (China 42.3% vs. 36.1%; South Korea 39.5% vs. 31.2%), from people of higher than lower education (China 47.1% vs. 26.1%; South Korea 43.8% vs. 28.6%), more from urbanites than rural residents (China 44.7% vs. 25.2%; South Korea 37.8% vs. 29.4%), and people of higher than lower income (China 47.7% vs. 30.0%; South Korea 39.1% vs. 32.2%). The influence of age is not uniform in both countries. Older Chinese put more emphasis on 'decisive and resolute' than their younger fellows (42.5% vs. 31.4%), whereas

slightly more younger than older Koreans (36.1% vs. 33.3%) consider it to be the most important.

As for 'fairness to workers,' it is the first most important qualification for Korean leaders but is ranked fourth by Chinese. In both countries, people of higher education or with less exposure to mass media are more likely to consider it to be the most important.

'Having good outside relations and knowing a lot of people' is regarded as the second most important qualification by Koreans, while it is seen by Chinese as the third least important. In both countries, more older than younger people agree that 'good outside connections and knowing a lot of people' is the most important (China 43.9% vs. 30.8%; South Korea 90.4% vs. 76.8%). The influence of location is the opposite for the two countries. More rural than urban Chinese view it as the most important (17.5% vs. 4.2%), whereas slightly more urban than rural Koreans consider it to be the most important (42.6% vs. 38.5%).

Finally, 'good judgement' stands as the third most important qualification of Korean but only as seventh of Chinese leaders. In China, endorsement comes a little more from villagers than urban residents (26.2% vs. 22.1%). In South Korea, people of higher income are more likely to emphasize 'good judgement' than those of lower income (41.3% vs. 29.7%).

Relation with Leaders

In East Asian societies, people are known to be tied to their kinship, work organizations, and local communities and to remain obedient to their leaders (Butterfield 1990; Kearney 1991). Suppose they are off work at home and their unit leaders or company bosses ask them to help with something urgent. What would they do? Would they help, not help, or say it depends?

The majority of both Chinese and Koreans admit they would go to help (Chinese 78.7%; Koreans 61.8%). The differences between them are that more Koreans than Chinese choose not to help (11.9% vs. 9.2%) and think it rather depends (26.2% vs. 12.1%).

Location, age, and sex are relevant factors. In China, rural people seem to be more ready to help leaders than their urban fellows (88.0% vs. 75.7%). People in cities, instead, tend more to say it depends. Korean urbanites, on the other hand, seem to be a little more willing to help and are therefore less likely to say it depends than those from less urbanized areas (63.3% vs. 58.3%; 24.8% vs. 30.5%).

By age, both older Chinese and Koreans are more inclined to help leaders than their younger fellows (China 82.1% vs. 74.0%; South Korea

72.7% vs. 59.2%). The difference between Chinese and Koreans is: while more younger than older Chinese admit directly they would not help (13.0% vs. 5.7%), more younger than older Koreans think it would rather depend (27.9% vs. 15.3%).

Finally with sex, more Chinese women than men agree to help (85.2% vs. 73.0%). Chinese women are less likely than men to decline (6.9% vs. 11.1%) or say it depends (7.9% vs. 15.9%). Korean women, in contrast, are not very different from their male counterparts. They are about equally ready as men to help (61.7% vs. 62.7%), although they are a little less willing than men to decline (10.5% vs. 13.7%) and slightly more flexible about their decisions by saying it depends (28.1% vs. 23.6%).

Relation with Subordinates

Community connectedness and patriarchy in East Asian societies require not only that people be loyal to their network and leaders but also that leaders take care of their subordinates (Tai 1989). Suppose someone in a work unit or company is not qualified for a job. How would the leader handle the situation? Would the leader transfer the person to another unit, ask the person to improve first and transfer him or her to another unit if he or she does not improve, move the person to another job but keep his or her wage unchanged, move the person to a job with a lower wage, or take no action at all?

The majority of Chinese and Koreans prefer to take moderate measures. Over half of them (Chinese 58.7%; Koreans 54.9%) choose to ask the unqualified person to improve and transfer him or her to another unit only if he or she does not improve. About one fourth (Chinese 23.7%; Koreans 29.5%) decide to move the person to another job but keep his or her wage unchanged. Only a few people seem to be willing to take tougher actions such as moving the person to a job with lower wage (Chinese 4.7%; Koreans 2.4%) or transferring the person to another unit (Chinese 10%; Koreans 5.8%). The same is true as regards taking no action at all (Chinese 2.7%; Koreans 7.5%).

Age makes a difference. In both countries, older people seem to be more patient than their younger fellows with a wait-and-see approach. More of them agree to ask for improvement first (China 62.2% vs. 58.7%; South Korea 58.0% vs. 48.4%). Less of them opt for transference to another unit. The differences between Chinese and Koreans are also noticeable. Younger Chinese show more tolerance to an unqualified employee. More of them (58.7%) than their Korean counterparts (48.4%) agree to ask

the person to improve and transfer him or her to another unit only if he or she does not improve. While both younger Chinese and Koreans seem to be reluctant to penalize an unqualified employee by moving him or her to a job with a lower wage (Chinese 3.9%; Koreans 3.3%), more younger Koreans than Chinese choose to move the person to another job with the same wage (Chinese 18.7%; Koreans 34.3%). Younger Chinese, on the other hand, are more inclined than their Korean counterparts to transfer the person to another unit (Chinese 15.0%; Koreans 5.6%).

Horizontal Relations

Horizontal relation refers to interactions among co-workers, colleagues, partners, or other roles in similar positions, ranks, professions, or work settings. Practically, it involves how to get co-workers on one's side (DuBrin 1993). In the East-West Center surveys, horizontal relations are measured with regard to duty consciousness and difference of opinion.

Relation with Co-Workers: Work Ethic

Working morale is an important dimension of horizontal relations in organizations. Suppose one of your co-workers is lazy and does not want to work, what will you do? Will you report him or her to the supervisor, talk to him or her, not work hard either, help do his or her work, or leave him or her alone?

There exist both similarities and differences between China and South Korea. As for similarities, a considerable number of Chinese (72.5%) and Koreans (42.7%) agree to talk to the lazy co-worker. Only a few choose to leave him or her alone (Chinese 7.6%; Koreans 9.3%). Fewer follow a lazy fellow and do not work hard either (Chinese 2.1%; Koreans 1.3%). As regards differences, Koreans show more tolerance and sympathy than Chinese toward a lazy co-worker. While 44.1% of Koreans are willing to help the lazy person with his or her job, only a few Chinese (7.3%) choose to do so. The majority of Chinese (72.5%) prefer just to talk to the lazy co-worker. A number of them (10.5%) even admit that they report him or her to the supervisor.

Age is a relevant factor. In both countries, more younger than older people choose to leave a lazy co-worker alone (China 10.0% vs. 2.0%; South Korea 11.5% vs. 6.8%). Younger people form the majority of those who admit they do not work hard either, which indicates that they are

more vulnerable to the negative influence of a lazy co-worker. But when they decide to do something about a lazy co-worker, younger people tend to do so in a substantive manner. In South Korea, 45.2% of younger people agree to help a lazy co-worker with his or her job, compared to 31.5% of their older fellows. Older people, on the other hand, seem to be more willing just to talk to a lazy co-worker (China 81.7% vs. 66.1%; South Korea 53.4% vs. 39.6%). Finally, while a few more younger than older Chinese admit they report a lazy co-worker to the supervisor (12.4% vs. 8.9%), it is mainly older people who choose to do so in South Korea.

Relation with Co-Workers: Difference of Opinion

Another way to measure horizontal relations among organizational members is to see how they approach differences of opinion with each other. Suppose you differ in opinion from someone in your work unit or company, how would you handle it? Would you best not say anything and let time take care, directly bring up the difference with the person, ask a third person to mediate, or ask leaders to help?

A significant difference exists between Chinese and Koreans. Chinese tend to avoid open confrontations: 28.4% of them think it best not to say anything, 22.3% turn to leaders for help, and 10.0% seek mediation from a third person. Koreans, in contrast, seem to be confident about resolving differences of opinion on their own, with 72.9% of them choosing to bring up the difference directly with their counterparts. While 12.2% feel it best to let time take care, and 11.6% prefer mediation from a third person, only 3.3% are willing to ask leaders to help.

Education has an influence. Chinese of higher education seem to be less straightforward. While more of them think it best not to say anything (37.5% vs. 20.4%), less of them are willing to ask leaders to help if differences surface (14.0% vs. 31.1%). In South Korea, however, most of those with higher education prefer to bring up the difference directly with their counterparts (75.8%). Although people of lower education tend to let time take care, nearly one fourth of them are still willing to seek mediation from a third person (23.0%).

Location also makes a difference. Chinese urbanites seem to be less straightforward than villagers by choosing not to say anything (32.1% vs. 18.9%). Villagers, on the other hand, are more dependent than urbanites upon leaders to resolve differences (31.4% vs. 18.3%). In South Korea, people in cities are slightly more confident than those from rural areas in bringing up differences directly with their co-workers (73.8% vs. 69.5%).

Slightly less of them think it best not to say anything (11.5% vs. 14.4%). Compared to Chinese, Korean urbanites seem to be more open and honest toward the difference they have with their co-workers. While, compared with their Chinese counterparts, less of them are willing to let time take care (11.5% vs. 32.1%), more of them agree to bring up the difference directly (73.8% vs. 39.1%).

Promotions

How important are vertical and horizontal relations to individuals within organizations in terms of their motivation for upward mobility and overall career objectives? How are individuals and individual activities judged by the organizational authority as relevant and important to the collective goals and accomplishments of organizations? Promotion is obviously a prime site to view these issues in a comprehensive way.

In the East-West Center surveys, people are asked to select what they consider as the most and least important criteria for promotion, being diligent and hard working, of outstanding performance, having good collegial relations, good relations with superiors and subordinates, being eager to help others, studying politics seriously, and seniority.

The results are presented in Table 1 for China and Table 2 for South Korea. The major difference is with respect to 'being eager to help others.' While it is regarded as the second most important criterion for promotion by Chinese, it is seen as least important in the eyes of Koreans. With respect to similarities, 'diligent and hardworking' and 'outstanding performance' are both considered as important, whereas 'seniority' is deemed unimportant, by both Chinese and Koreans.

Specifically, 'being diligent and hardworking' is considered by the majority of Chinese as the most important criterion for promotion (87.2%). Only 2.1% of them see it as the least important. Koreans concur with Chinese in not treating it as the least important (2.6%). But not so many of them as Chinese endorse it as the most important (57.4%).

'Outstanding performance' is the third important criterion for promotion to Chinese, with 34.3% of them considering it as the most important and 11.7% the least important. Koreans, in contrast, regard it as the most important for promotion, with 72.8% expressing this opinion and only 6.4% considering it the least important. In both countries, performance seems to be more stressed by people of older than younger age (China 38.5% vs. 27.8%; South Korea 73.2% vs. 71.3%), with higher rather than lower education (China 46.3% vs. 27.0%; South Korea 77.0% vs. 72.7%),

and from cities as opposed to rural areas (China 38.4% vs. 26.1%; South Korea 75.4% vs. 68.4%). Among Chinese, slightly more women than men view performance as the least important criterion for promotion (13.9% vs. 9.8%).

Table 1: China: Promotion Criteria

	Most Important	Least Important	Net importance
Diligence	87.2	2.1	85.1
Help Others	33.3	9.9	23.4
Performance	34.3	11.7	22.6
Political Study	9.3	29.1	-19.8
Collegial Relations	10.3	37.9	-27.6
Up-Down Relations	13.1	49.3	-36.2
Seniority	7.8	46.9	-39.1

Table 2: South Korea: Promotion Criteria

	Most Important	Least Important	Net importance
Performance	72.8	6.4	66.4
Diligence	57.4	2.6	54.8
Collegial Relations	23.2	8.0	15.2
Up-Down Relations	18.0	28.1	-10.1
Seniority	14.0	32.8	-18.8
Political Study	10.4	33.9	-23.5
Help Others	1.1	83.4	-82.3

'Good collegial relations' is regarded as the third important criterion of promotion by Koreans but the third unimportant by Chinese. While 23.2% of Koreans see it as the most important, 37.9% of Chinese think it least so. In both countries, more younger than older people agree it is the most

important (China 13.3% vs. 4.4%; South Korea 26.3% vs. 18.3%). Among Koreans, more people from less urbanized areas feel that collegial relations are the least important (11.5% vs. 4.5%).

'Good relations with superiors and subordinates' is ranked low among both Chinese and Koreans. Relatively, it seems to be even less important to Chinese than Koreans, with 49.3% of Chinese versus 28.1% of Koreans saying it is least important. In both countries, people of higher income show more concern over up-down relations than those of lower income (China 13.6% vs. 11.5%; South Korea 20.7% vs. 8.2%). In China, higher-educated people seem to be less concerned with relations with superiors and subordinates than their lower-educated counterparts, with more of them saying it is the least important (61.5% vs. 42.5%). By age, younger Chinese tend to show more endorsement than their older fellows of good relations with superiors or subordinates (14.3% vs. 6.3%). In South Korea, only sex is an influencing factor, with more males than females saying that 'relations with superiors and subordinates' is the most important criterion for promotion (21.2% vs. 14.5%).

'Being eager to help' is treated differently by Chinese and Koreans. To Chinese, it is the second most important promotion criterion (33.3% vs. 9.9%). For Koreans, however, it plummets to the bottom as being the least important (83.4% vs. 1.1%). In both countries, more people of higher than lower income agree that 'being eager to help' is the least important (China 10.5% vs. 8.0%; South Korea 86.8% vs. 79.8%). In China particularly, while more younger than older people view 'being eager to help' as the least important (12.0% vs. 5.8%), more women than men (36.1% vs. 30.8%) and more of those with higher education endorse it as the most important criterion for promotion.

'Studying politics seriously' is what most Chinese cannot afford to neglect in their life, even though it might be ambiguous as to what it means to Koreans. Nevertheless, it is apparently given a similar unimportance by both Chinese (29.1% vs. 9.3%) and Koreans (33.9% vs. 10.4%). In the two countries, more older than younger people (China 30.0% vs. 18.8%; South Korea 36.3% vs. 29.0%), more urban than rural residents (China 32.9% vs. 20.1%; South Korea 34.6% vs. 29.6%), and more of those with higher than lower education (China 36.6% vs. 19.8%; South Korea 38.5% vs. 30.2%) consider 'studying politics seriously' as the least important criterion for promotion.

Finally, 'seniority' ranks lowest in the eyes of Chinese (7.8% vs. 46.9%). Among Koreans, it enjoys a relatively higher order but is still unimportant (14.0% vs. 32.8%). In China, more villagers than metropolitan residents see seniority as the least important (51.7% vs. 43.0%),

whereas in South Korea it is the other way around (36.2% vs. 28.9%). Also, more higher- than lower-educated Chinese think that seniority is the most important criterion for promotion (12.7% vs. 5.2%) whereas more Koreans of lower education consider this to be so (18.0% vs. 9.9%).

Discussion

It is clear from the facts reported that there are differences as well as similarities between Chinese and Korean experiences of various relations within organizations. This section attempts to explain these and to better understand the issue by a cross-national comparison.

Similarities

Chinese and Koreans share with each other in five major areas. First, they both agree that class background and seniority are the least important qualifications for leaders. Class background has different meanings under different social systems. In socialist China, it is a political term in the communist party's ideological and organizational catechism (Butterfield 1990). In capitalist South Korea, it is an economic guideline which differentiates people into various scales of wealth or poverty. Nevertheless, both Chinese and Koreans deem it least important. It is partly because class background is ascribed rather than achieved and partly due to the fact that leaders from economically lower or politically alienated classes are more likely to be familiar with the desire and concern of their subordinates. Seniority, on the other hand, is a traditionally valued quality in East Asian societies. Its denial signals an important cross-generation change along with modernization. In China, most senior officials are revolutionaries from the communist uprisings. Their knowledge and experience are basically incompatible with those needed for modernization. Replacing them by well-educated younger technocrats has been a thorny and hot issue in economic reform. In South Korea, the economic miracle owns a great deal to the quick learning and renovation of younger generations (Amsden 1989). Seniority increasingly becomes an inadequate qualification for a person who leads a company or business through tough competition. In all, both Chinese and Koreans seem to have recognized that the creative forces for invention and innovation possessed by the younger generation are more essential than seniority to a modern society of change, competition, and progress.

Second, both Chinese and Koreans remain ready to answer calls from their leaders. Only a few of them turn their back on their superiors. East Asian societies have long been under the influence of Confucianism which stresses loyalty, devotion, and contribution from subordinates to superiors (Tai 1989). In this connection, the survey results may mean that traditional values still remain effective in guiding how people interact with their leaders. From an institutional point of view, however, it may also indicate that leaders wield much control over their subordinates. As a result, employees have to depend upon their employers to meet survival needs and fulfill personal ambitions.

Third, Chinese concur with Koreans in hesitating to take harsh measures toward unqualified employees. The majority of them prefer to ask an unqualified worker to improve, transfer him or her to another unit or job only if he or she does not improve, and keep his or her salary unchanged in the case of transference. Leaders thus seem to be quite lenient and considerate toward their employees. In East Asian societies, according to both traditional values and public sentiment nurtured by community connectedness, leaders are supposed to be generous, broad-minded, and ready to forgive minor mistakes made by their subordinates. People are, in return, expected to show trust in, respect to, and support for their leaders. In the contemporary contexts of either Chinese work units or Korean business establishments, reciprocal vertical relations have been characterized as leaders' image-making and employees' concern with collective well-being and are publicly promoted as an important resource for organizational solidarity, effectiveness, and competitiveness in the changing social environment (Ministry of Labor 1983; Smith and Thompson 1992).

Fourth, Chinese are like Koreans in being willing to help their co-workers who behave irresponsibly at work. They both refuse to follow a lazy co-worker in not performing their work well. Apparently, neither the 'big rice pot' in socialist China nor the 'alienated' production process in capitalist South Korea has reduced people's consciousness of duty and obligation toward their work. It looks instead as if Chinese and Koreans still uphold much of their historical legacy and social custom in helping each other and working together for the common good.

Finally, Chinese align with Koreans in viewing diligence, hard work, and performance as the most and seniority as the least important criteria for promotion. It seems that both Chinese and Koreans have developed their common-sense assumptions about what should be accomplished with a particular kind of job. They are both oriented to the substance of work, with focus on the accomplishment of objective work tasks and goals.

Differences

The main differences between Chinese and Koreans are also reflected in five aspects. First, different leadership qualifications emphasized by Chinese and Koreans show that they have different ideal-type leaders in their minds. An ideal Chinese leader seems to be knowledgeable about production or professional affairs, resolute in making decisions, and concerned with the welfare of workers. Through economic reform, Chinese mass media are beginning to report how a business goes bankrupt because its leaders lack technical expertise and are slow in response to market changes or how educated, experienced, and decisive managers save a factory from failure and restore it to prosperity (Chu and Ju 1993). New images of qualified and capable leaders are thus created and take shape in the public mind. Also, in general, people are becoming more practical and expect their leaders to bring tangible benefits to their life and work. They tend to ask: what is the use of a knowledgeable and decisive leader if he or she is devoted only to production and upper authorities and pays no attention to employees?

An ideal Korean leader, in contrast, appears to be fair to workers, have good outside relations, and maintain good judgement. South Korea has been in continuous contact with the capitalist world economy and has generally no dramatic generation gap in the managerial leadership – unlike China with her guerrilla revolutionaries and educated technocrats. Technical expertise is a taken-for-granted quality which, in general, is not lacking in the managerial leadership. Concern is, therefore, shifted to other qualities like fairness, networking, and good judgement. Unlike in China where networking often involves back-door dealings by illegal means, public relations in South Korea mean broadening the view of a business and increasing its access to opportunities and resources. A good leader has obviously to develop his or her public-relations skill to run business successfully in the face of tight competition. Fairness to workers, likewise, is understandably more important in capitalist South Korea than in socialist China. The central Chinese state fixes wages and controls personnel. A manager may bring out-of-wage benefits to workers but can do little about their salaries and ranks. In South Korea, however, business owners and managers usually have complete discretionary power to decide how much to pay to workers and who is to be promoted. As a result, people hope that their leaders or bosses have good judgement and are fair to them.

Second, Koreans are not so ready as Chinese to answer calls from their leaders. This is obviously related to the different institutional arrange-

ments in which people work. Chinese work in state-owned work units. They live on the premises and depend upon work units for all their survival needs. It is not uncommon for leaders to ask work unit members and for work unit members to ask each other to help with public or private matters (Whyte and Parish 1984; Xu 1994). Perhaps it is what the officially-proclaimed socialist caring and sharing are all about. In South Korea, work or employment is generally separated from individual life. It is rare that a person back home from work is requested by his or her leader for urgent help. If it happens, it must be something extremely important, which explains why the majority of Koreans think they would go to help out. But as such an occurrence is unusual or unfamiliar to them, a good number of Koreans prefer not to say yes or no until they know specifically the request of their leaders.

Third, Chinese differ from Koreans in their concrete measures taken toward a lazy co-worker. While most Chinese resort only to lip service, a considerable number of Koreans would go further to help a lazy co-worker with his or her work. It is not clear what prompts Koreans to take such an action since helping others with their work has multiple implications. Is it a collective plot against management? Does it nurture interdependency among co-workers and collective apathy toward work? Is doing a favour to co-workers an important element of group loyalty and solidarity? Do people just want to protect their co-workers from regular monitoring and scrutiny at work? Normally, as work is more tightly organized and frequently monitored in South Korea than in China, if a worker does not perform his or her duty properly or as quickly as required, his or her co-workers probably have to help out in order to keep the pace of production and avoid the intervention from a supervisor.

Fourth, Chinese are less confident than Koreans about resolving a difference of opinion with their co-workers. Chinese tend to either avoid the difference or ask their leaders to mediate it. It seems that interpersonal relations have not fully recovered from the past class struggles and political movements (Butterfield 1990). People are still sensitive to the political implication of different opinions and tend to think it best either not to say anything or have the authority make a judgement when differences surface. In South Korea, however, without any political ramification, people feel it natural to bring up a difference with their counterparts and resort to explanation and discussion for a solution.

Lastly, Chinese are apparently at odds with Koreans in their views on mutual help and collegial relations. While 'being eager to help' is regarded by Chinese as one of the most important criteria for promotion, it is considered by Koreans as the least important. On the other hand, collegial

relations are included by Koreans in their top three criteria for promotion. Collegial relations obviously do not exclude mutual help among co-workers. The face differences between Chinese and Koreans show that they view reciprocal relations from different perspectives but both emphasize them as an important factor in their respective organizational life. Chinese tend to focus on help, while Koreans may see the term in a broader spectrum.

Conclusion

In general, Chinese and Koreans not only share with but also differ from each other in work, life, and organizational relations. The similarities between them are, directly or indirectly, related to the common origin and evolutionary process of East Asian history, culture, social norm, custom, and institutions, the common features of modern production and work arrangement, as well as the common concerns of human beings in life, work, and collective activities. The differences, on the other hand, are somehow due to the relative lack of diplomatic and civil contacts between the two peoples since the Korean War as well as the different social systems adopted, different alliances forged with other nations in the world, and different levels of development achieved, by the two countries.

China and South Korea have recently established diplomatic relations with each other. Civil contacts between Chinese and Koreans are now frequent through investment, tourism, post, telecommunications, and various other channels. There are joint and whole ventures owned and operated by South Koreans in China. How do Chinese workers in Korean ventures feel about their organizational life and deal with various vertical and horizontal relations at work? There are also Koreans working for Chinese interests in South Korea. How do Koreans feel about their Chinese bosses and manage their daily contacts in a Chinese-controlled working environment? It seems that Chinese and Koreans have more and more opportunities to exchange their respective experience of organizational life and, therefore, influence each other in organizational relations across national boundaries. Essentially, however, Chinese are Chinese, and Koreans are Koreans. They will doubtless continue to differ from each other in various aspects of life, work, and organizational experiences.

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