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Business values dimensions: A cross-culturally developed measure of workforce values

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ABSTRACT

Using a stratified random sample drawn from 11,709 business professionals' survey responses across 26 societies, we investigated and failed to find support for the construct validity of the Schwartz Values Survey's (SVS) a priori 10-factor circumplex model of human values, originally developed from student and teacher responses. Subsequent exploratory factor analysis estimated an initial five-factor solution, the Business Value Dimensions (BVD) model. In turn, CFA supported the cross-cultural validity of this alternative configuration of values for business professionals. Internal consistency reliabilities for these five values factors are reported for the 26 societies plus an additional 25 societies that did not meet sample size criteria to be included in the analyses. As a result, findings are provided for a total of 51 societies (14,724 business professionals). We present the five-factor BVD model for use in future international research with business professional populations.

1. Introduction

The importance of understanding values held by individuals in workforces around the globe was addressed a half-century ago (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961), and it has become a much more critical topic today (Tung & Verbeke, 2010). The reason is simple. Values are both an important cause and outcome of most goal-oriented action by individuals, organizations and societies. Schein (1992) showed how the values of organizational leaders are an important influence on the values reflected in their organizational cultures. Whereas the values held by a society have typically been determined by an averaged representation of the individuals within that society (House, Hanges, Javidan, Dorfman, & Gupta, 2004), geopolitical boundaries are becoming less valid in defining groups with similar values (Ralston et al., 2014; Taras, Steel, & Kirkman, 2016). Within many societies, heterogeneity of worker values has grown at geometric rates due to worker migrations and technological advancements, particularly in transportation and communication (Tung, 2008), resulting in culturally diversified labor markets.

Thus, it is becoming more crucial to analyze these societal mosaics at the individual level as within-society values diversity challenges the relevance of society-mean scores. Accordingly, it is critical to develop construct-valid measures of individual values that drive individual goal-oriented behavior. While there will always be values unique to single

individuals (e.g., everyone has an eccentric relative whose values have never been and likely never will be replicated), the values of greatest importance and impact will be those that are common (i.e., universal) across all people of all societies. These core, common values will play the biggest role among most people. At the same time, individuals' level of adoption of each core value may vary dramatically from one individual to another.

In today's global economy, it is prerequisite that measures of individual values exhibit construct validity cross-culturally. Identifying core, common values for members of the international workforce would advance both management theory and practice by impacting recruiting, selection, and compensation practices in multinational corporations. Our objective is to contribute to the international business literature by advancing the construct valid measurement of core cross-cultural individual work values. Specifically, we extend and enhance the works of Rokeach (1973), the Chinese Culture Connection (1987), and Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, 1990) by estimating a cross-culturally validated measurement model of the values motivating business professionals, which we label the Business Values Dimensions (BVD) Model. Research to develop previous individual-level measurement models [e.g., Rokeach Values Survey (Rokeach, 1973), Chinese Values Survey (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987), Schwartz Values Survey (Schwartz, 1994a, 1994b)] used primarily students and/or K-12 teachers as their respondents. As previous research has argued, these respondents,

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particularly students, cannot be equated to business professionals (Bello, Leung, Radebaugh, Tung, & Van Witteloostuijn, 2009) and thus may not be valid for studying the values of business professionals. Further, previous studies using businesspeople as respondents (e.g., Fontaine, Poortinga, Delbeke, & Schwartz, 2008; Perrinjaquet, Furrer, Usunier, Cestre, & Valette-Florence, 2007; Ralston et al., 2014) indicated a lack of validity in Schwartz' original 10-factor measurement model underlying responses to the Schwartz Values Survey (SVS), which is not surprising given the respondents used in the SVS to norm its dimensions. Nonetheless, an as yet undiscovered common latent measurement model may drive SVS responses. The need to develop a measure that is a valid measure of the values of businesspeople working in the international context motivated the research reported below, and is the primary goal of our paper. And, to the best of our knowledge, the measurement model of values that we present in this paper, is the first individual-level model to use business professionals as respondents in a large, multi-society, instrument development study. As such, this study makes a unique and important contribution to the international business literature, as it provides IB researchers with a measurement tool designed specifically for their needs.

2. Review of existing cross-cultural oriented measures of values

The cross-cultural development of values measures can be allocated to one of two categories: the societal (ecological) level measurement of values, and the individual level measurement of values. We raise this distinction because the frame of reference for values is becoming more complex in the 21st century work world. We review the better-known efforts for both of these approaches. Specifically, for the societal-level measures we discuss the Values Survey Module (Hofstede, 1980), the World Values Survey (Inglehart, 1997) and the GLOBE project (House et al., 2004). Of these, we place the emphasis of our discussion on the GLOBE study since it is the newest. For individual-level measures we discuss the Rokeach Values Survey (RVS; Rokeach (1967)), the Chinese Values Survey (CVS; Chinese Culture Connection, 1987) and the Schwartz Values Survey (SVS; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, 1990). While these six appear to be the measures primarily used, Taras, Rowney and Steel (2009) identified a wide variety of attempts to measure culture and values. Several of the earlier measures of culture/values include those developed by England (1967), Haire, Ghiselli, and Porter (1966), Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) and Kuhn and McPartland (1954), while more recently developed measures include those developed by Maznevski and DiStefano (1995), Spector (1988) and Trompenaars (1993).

As noted, there have been a wide variety of measures developed to assess values (see Taras et al., 2009). However, the six we specifically identified have dominated the extant international business research literature and hence are the most germane measures for discussion. Ultimately, our focus in this study is upon the SVS, due to: (1) the large number of studies examining SVS values across different societies; (2) it having been developed as an individual-level measure; and (3) its use of many RVS and CVS original items.

2.1. Societal (ecological) level measures of values

Societal-level measures have dominated the cross-cultural values literature since Hofstede (1980) introduced his survey instrument measuring four dimensions over 35 years ago. Three primary measurement efforts targeted societal-level value constructs.

2.1.1. The values survey module (VSM)

The VSM evolved out of Hofstede's work with a dataset provided to him by IBM of employee survey responses collected in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Hofstede, 1980). It is generally acknowledged as the first systematically developed, well-accepted cross-cultural measure of values that raised the international business community's awareness of

the importance of understanding the diverse values of the global workforce. Subsequent research has shown the VSM to be fraught with problems, which have led to it being labeled as seriously flawed (e.g., Oyserman, Coon, & Kemmelmeier, 2002; Spector, Cooper, & Sparks, 2001). McSweeney's (2002) critique is perhaps the most thorough in discrediting the VSM, though over the years a number of researchers took a more subtle approach to rejecting Hofstede's VSM by borrowing the VSM dimension labels (e.g., power distance), but rejecting the problematic VSM survey items and creating their own items to measure these dimension (see meta-analysis by Tihanyi, Griffith, & Russell, 2005). In sum, we refer readers not familiar with the critical assessment of the VSM to the articles by McSweeney (2002), Oyserman et al. (2002) and Spector et al., 2001, as well as others for detailed discussions of its methodological shortcomings.

2.1.2. World values survey (WVS)

Items for Inglehart's two WVS cultural values dimensions—traditional/secular-rational and survival/self-expression—were derived from general population samples, not samples of business professionals (Inglehart, 1997). As a sociologist, Inglehart's agenda was understandably different from international business scholars who study cross-cultural differences in the workforce. However, the WVS values dimensions have been used to study cross-national differences in personal moral philosophy (Forsyth, O'Boyle, & McDaniel, 2008), ethics of upward influence (e.g., Ralston et al., 2009), and corporate governance modes (Steenkamp & Geyskens, 2012).

2.1.3. GLOBE project

The GLOBE group (House et al., 2004) presented a more recent approach to a societal-level measure of values that extended the Hofstede model, using several of Hofstede's terms and dimension names, as well as a similar data collection design. As with Hofstede's VSM, the GLOBE study reported construct validation evidence for convergent and discriminant relationships estimated at only societal and across-societal levels.

Specific methods concerns underlying the GLOBE dimensions were the focus of a special issue of *JIBS* co-edited by Tung and Verbeke (2010). Peterson's (2004) earlier critique of the GLOBE methodology identified one concerning aspect of the GLOBE measures. The GLOBE survey asked respondents to report for each item "what is the current situation" (actual) and "what should be" (ideal) in a society. The GLOBE values are based on the ideal "what should be" category not on the "what is the current situation" category. This struck Peterson (2004), and us, as counter-intuitive, especially given that the 'actual' scores and 'ideal' scores were negatively correlated (Taras, Steel, & Kirkman, 2010).

We also share Peterson's (2004; Peterson & Castro, 2006) concern regarding ambiguity about the scale development process for the GLOBE societal scores. Adding to this concern, the GLOBE group has only reported the internal consistency data of their scales for either the total sample of 62 societies or the average across societies (using aggregated societal-level scores). More complete insight into the psychometric qualities of the GLOBE scales would emerge from reporting scale reliabilities for each society so that comparative assessments of measures could be made.

Additionally, GLOBE researchers surveyed only middle managers in three industries (telecommunications, financial services and food processing), regardless of whether these industries were representative of a society's business population. Society-specific sampling problems prevented collection of data in all three industries, with some societies limited to only one industry. However, specific society-industry sample availability was not reported (House et al., 2004). Further, they reported samples ranged from 27 to 1790 respondents within societies, generating an average of 251 respondents per society (House et al., 2004). Of these, an average 45 respondents came from each company yielding an average of only 5.6 companies per society, which cannot be

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