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THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON FEEDBACK-SEEKING BEHAVIOR: AN INTEGRATED MODEL AND PROPOSITIONS

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In recent research scholars have addressed the issue of an individual's behavior in feedback-seeking activity and, except in scant studies, have virtually ignored the role of culture in this area. In this article we explore four cultural syndromes, based on past research, to form a cross-cultural model of feedback-seeking behavior. We advance propositions for the study of culture as a moderator to feedback-seeking behavior.

Feedback is a topic of significant research attention in the social sciences at the cognitive and organizational level (Ilgen, Fisher, & Taylor, 1979; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; London, 1997; Pritchard, Jones, Roth, Stuebing, & Ekeberg, 1988). Similarly, the importance of feedback as a determinant of behavior receives much attention in the management literature (Balcazar, Hopkins, & Suarez, 1985; Locke & Latham, 1990). Feedback is a resource learned about directly on the job (Hackman, 1977) and through formal performance appraisals (Larson & Callahan, 1990; Pearce & Porter, 1986). Individuals deliberately react to feedback (Taylor, Fisher, & Ilgen, 1984) and purposely seek feedback (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). People have an intuitive interest in knowing "how they are doing," especially when their job depends on it. Thus, organizations continue to assess performance and implement feedback mechanisms.

Investigations of culture as a moderating factor in organizational theories are academic regularities as questions of generalizability have become an increasing point of discussion and concern (Bond & Smith, 1996; Boyacigiller, Kleinberg, Sackmann, & Phillips, 1996; Earley & Erez, 1997; Earley & Gibson, 1998). The current trend toward considering international management implications brings with it the proposition that

U.S. techniques for managing information for evaluations (by oneself and by others) of an individual's behavior might not be universally effective across different cultures (Earley, 1986, 1989).

Evaluation of an individual's behavior and performance is a complex, multifaceted process. On the one hand, organizations create appraisal and feedback processes to provide the individual evaluative information (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). On the other hand, individuals engage in personally developed search strategies to acquire information for the purpose of self-evaluation (Sedikides, 1993). Feedback giving and feedback seeking are integral and reciprocal activities (London, 1997). Furthermore, feedback giving occurs across levels of analysis. For example, feedback can be provided at the individual level (e.g., supervisor, peers) or at the organizational level (e.g., unit reports, posted charts). Although a complete discussion would integrate all the levels of analysis and feedback-exchange activities, such an effort would be beyond the effective scope of a single paper. Recognizing this limitation, we do not attempt a comprehensive or exhaustive discussion here. Rather, we offer initial direction and propositions to spur research efforts. We focus our discussion primarily on how feedback-seeking behavior is influenced by the individual's cultural orientation. We also briefly examine how culture might affect organizational feedback giving, the recognized antecedent to an individual's feedback-seeking behavior (Ashford & Cummings, 1983: 375).

Recent discussions indicate that individual behavior cannot be partitioned from the culture in which it occurs (Earley, 1997). We identify feedback giving and feedback seeking as such activities. Researchers have found that individuals in hierarchically structured cultures (those defined as more accepting of status differences) resist supervisor's influence attempts more and are less trusting of their supervisor's feedback (Earley & Stubblebine, 1989). Because feedback giving is affected by cultural characteristics (Earley, Gibson, & Chen, 1999), the solicitation of feedback might be impacted as well. However, in scant research have scholars investigated the challenges of cultural differences for feedback-seeking behavior. Gupta, Govindarajan, and Malhotra (1996) found different determinants of feedback-seeking behavior of subsidiary presidents in multinational corporations. Differences in information seeking across cultures have been implicitly demonstrated in research on social desirability (Markus & Kitayama, 1991).

Understanding the association and implications of culture and feedback-seeking behavior is important, yet research is only in nascent stages. What serves as a feedback-exchange request by an employee born or trained in one culture might not be correctly perceived and responded to by a manager born or trained in a different culture. It might be more inappropriate to ask direct questions in Taiwan in that it may create loss of face, yet this type of activity might be normal in Rome. Therefore, how feedback seeking is generated and responded to may need to be considered within a cultural context. In this article we theorize how feedback exchange can be assessed given various cultural orientations. We first examine the emerging concept of "cultural syndromes" (Triandis, 1996), increasingly used to organize multifaceted patterns of shared values, beliefs, and attitudes around a particular theme (e.g., Brett & Okumura, 1998; Chen, Chen, & Meindl, 1998). We then differentiate the processes of organizational feedback-giving behavior and individual feedback-seeking behavior. Finally, we propose the potential effects of these cultural syndromes on feedback-seeking behavior.

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF CULTURE

Initial cross-cultural researchers used an inductive format to empirically identify, observe, and measure differences. Through comprehensive research of one multinational organization, Hofstede (1980) developed four value dimensions along which culture may vary. Although he is the most widely cited, several scholars have noted the many value and relational dimensions that can be used to classify culture (Haire, Ghiselli, & Porter, 1966; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Parsons & Shils, 1951; Ronen & Shenkar, 1985). Recently, researchers have appealed for studies stimulating a broader understanding of culture's complexity (Bond & Smith, 1996; Earley & Gibson, 1998; Osland & Bird, 2000). Mezias, Chen, and Murphy (1999) describe culture as beyond the programming of abstract values that people hold. They claim that "culture provides the *categories* by which we understand the world, and the scripts and schemes we use to guide behavior" (1999: 326; emphasis added). The concept of cultural syndromes recently has emerged as a method for researchers to examine culture as complex phenomena composed of interrelated cultural dimensions (Triandis, 1996). Syndromes can integrate and advance the field beyond lists of values presented as a simplistic and possibly misleading unidimensional continuum (Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley, & Janssens, 1995; Mezias et al., 1999; Osland & Bird, 2000).

The individualism-collectivism dimension illustrates this shift from cultural dimensions to cultural syndromes. How individuals view themselves in relationship to cultural peers is extensively researched and considered a core cultural dimension (Earley, 1997; Schwartz, 1992; Triandis, 1989; Trompenaars, 1993). Although a diversity of operationalizations exists, the broad range of findings shows some conceptual and empirical convergence. Briefly, there is a tendency to find more individualistic themes in Western and more collectivist themes in traditional Eastern cultures (Triandis, 1989, 1995). Recent research, however, has shown this dimension to be more multifaceted in structure and more complex in application (Triandis & Gelfand, 1998).

Scholars have recommended not only expanding the population but also the construct of research interest (Bond & Smith, 1996; Earley & Gibson, 1998; Lytle et al., 1995). Following this advice, we identify four cultural syndromes that we propose will influence feedback-seeking behavior. Triandis (personal communication)

states that a syndrome can be constructed when (1) one observes a set of cultural attributes (e.g., dimensions) that describe values, norms, attitudes, and self-construals that vary less within than across cultures, and (2) these attributes (dimensions) can be shown to conceptually and empirically share an underlying theme. Earley (1997) used this approach to consolidate existing dimensions in three syndromes (relation of the person to [1] social structure, [2] the environment, and [3] self). In doing so, he could develop a parsimonious examination of culture's effect on "face"-related issues. Using this same approach, we surfaced the following four syndromes from a comprehensive review of the literature across several disciplines: (1) specific-holistic orientation, (2) tolerance for ambiguity, (3) individualism-collectivism, and (4) status identity.

For example, we propose a syndrome called "specific-holistic." We found several existing constructs that speak to the "richness" of an individual's relationship with others. In Hall's construct he describes a high-context culture as one in which information exchange takes place through many "channels" beyond simple words (1976: 98). Hall describes the variety of cues that should inform a recipient of the sender's concerns without having to directly verbalize the issue. Hall's work is commonly interpreted to describe communication interactions. His language bears similarity to Parsons and Shils' (1951) concept of specific-diffuse cultures that differ in their expectation of the number of connections people possess within a relationship. Common examples include the extent to which Japanese and Russians expect to know the person holistically before doing business, whereas U.S. individuals significantly compartmentalize personal and professional interaction. Historically, in the social networks literature and, recently, in the trust literature (e.g., Lewicki, McAllister, & Bies, 1998) scholars use the term _multiplexity_ to describe the "bandwidth" of relationship links. Our intent is to use this syndrome to signal this common theme showing the existence of and need to understand the multitude of interpersonal connections.

Table 1 provides an extended listing of the scholars and the focus of their research that we used as the foundation for our syndromes. We do not mean our efforts be taken as an exhaustive and/or replacement model of existing research.

Rather, we seek to use emerging theory to create a consolidated yet comprehensive lens to examine the culture/feedback-seeking behavior interaction. The table presents each syndrome created for our current discussion. Underneath each syndrome, on the left, are the past works we see as sharing the underlying theme we identify. To the right we list some of the more commonly recognized cultural dimensions resulting from the listed works.

Like previous researchers (Chen, Brockner, & Katz, 1997; Earley, 1997; Peterson & Smith, 1997; Schwartz, 1992), we restrict our discussion to individual-level behavior. Naturally, this raises levels-of-analysis issues (Klein, Dansereau, & Hall, 1994)—a problem widely discussed in the cross-culture literature (Bond & Smith, 1996). For example, Hofstede focuses on the societal level of analysis, whereas Schwartz examines the individual level. In the growing "meso" approach, ways to reduce concerns in the organizational behavior field in general (e.g., Chen et al., 1998) and cross-culturally in particular (Brett & Okumura, 1998; House et al., 1995) have been discussed. Yet, although scholars recommend more meso efforts (Earley, 1997: 11), they also tend to stay within their disciplinary "comfort zone" (Earley, 1997: 21). Even so, current research supports assessing culture-level concepts vis-à-vis the individual level (Brett & Okumura, 1998; Earley et al., 1999; Lytle et al., 1995), as well as convincingly aggregated to the group level (Gibson, 1999). Given the development of and the desire for clarity of presentation, we believe this boundary is warranted.

FEEDBACK AND FEEDBACK-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

Feedback is a multifaceted term in psychology, organizational behavior, and other social science literature. Early empirical research in psychology indicated that motivation and performance are significantly influenced by feedback (Ammons, 1956). Closer analysis reveals two primary research camps that examine feedback. One looks at feedback as an organizational resource (Ilgen et al., 1979; Prue & Fairbank, 1981), addressing such issues as interventions (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996) and incentives (Ganzach, 1994). The other camp views feedback from the perspective of the individuals engaged in the behavior being evaluated (Ashford & Cum-

TABLE 1
Feedback-Exchange-Related Cultural Syndrome Characteristics

Syndrome	Characteristics
Specific-holistic orientation	
Hall (1976)	• High context/low context
Gruenfeld & MacEachron (1975); Witkin, Goodenough, & Oltman (1979)	• Field dependent/independent
Parsons & Shils (1951); Trompenaars (1993)	• Specific-diffuse
Adler, Doktor, & Redding (1986); Bloom (1981); Bond (1986); Redding (1980)	• Holistic-linear
Tolerance for ambiguity	
Chan, Gelfand, Triandis, & Tzeng (1996); Pelto (1968); Triandis (1989); Witkin & Berry (1975)	• Tight/loose
Hofstede (1980)	• Uncertainty avoidance
Chinese Culture Connection (1987)	• Confusion dynamism
Dawson, Law, Leung, & Whitney (1971)	• Traditional/modernity
Kedia & Bhagat (1988)	• Absorptive capacity
Berger (1979); Gudykunst (1983)	• Uncertainty reduction
Individualism-collectivism	
Hofstede (1980); Triandis (1989, 1995)	• Individualism/collectivism
Earley (1993); Hui (1988)	• Ingroup/outgroup
Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck (1961)	• Individualism/collaterality
Parsons & Shils (1951)	• Self-orientation/collectivity orientation
Schwartz (1992)	• Self-enhancement/self-transcendence
Banfield (1958)	• Familism
Morris (1956)	• Social restraint/self-control
Schwartz (1992)	• Autonomy/embeddedness
Status identity	
Leung (1997); Schwartz (1994); Triandis (1982)	• Hierarchy/egalitarian
Hofstede (1980)	• Power distance
DeVos & Suarez-Orozco (1990)	• Status equality
Parsons & Shils (1951)	• Achievement/ascription
Barrett & Bass (1967); Whyte (1963)	• White-collar/Pan-worker orientation
Sarnoff (1966)	• Prestige/humility
Schwartz (1992)	• Egalitarian/hierarchy

mings, 1983) and identifies them as proactive in obtaining information useful for self-assessment (Sedikides, 1993).

Feedback, as an organizational resource, is traditionally considered a stimulus manipulated to influence behavior (Stajkovic & Luthans, 1997). It is largely regarded as something transmitted to the individual to produce a desired behavior (Herold & Geller, 1977; Ilgen et al., 1979; Locke, 1980), and individuals are assumed to perceive and respond to the feedback message (Bandura, 1991; Locke & Latham, 1990; Podsakoff & Farh, 1989). Those in the field of organizational behavior continue to promote feedback as a cue for motivation, performance, and learning (Castellan & Swaine, 1977; Earley, 1988; Koestner, Zuckerman, & Koestner, 1987; Lee & Yates, 1992; Vroom, 1964). Much of this literature is concerned with showing the effectiveness of feedback on influencing future individual behavior and performance (Cusella, 1987; Guzzo, Jette, &

Katzell, 1985; Ilgen et al., 1979). Others (Balcazar et al., 1985; Goltz, Citera, Jensen, Favero, & Komaki, 1989; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Waldersee & Luthans, 1994), however, have found that not all feedback interventions result in improved performance and, in fact, may often create inconsistent results (Salmoni, Schmidt, & Walter, 1984). The combination of mixed findings relating to the effectiveness of performance feedback indicates the complexity of this issue.

The effectiveness of any single type of feedback is influenced by individual differences in performance level, ability, and emotion (Arvey & Ivancevich, 1980). Feedback, it is suggested, should be prudently modified to fit the receiver to whom it is addressed in order to maintain appropriate levels of effort and performance (Ackerman, 1987). We suggest culture also deserves attention as a criterion for modifying the nature of feedback given to individuals for evaluation purposes. Although in few studies (e.g.,

Earley & Stubblebine, 1989; Markus & Kitiyama, 1991) have researchers explored the relationship between culture and the nature of feedback given, there are a few items that hold the most promise for initiating this investigation. For example, quality and quantity feedback have shown great efficacy for the evaluation and improvement of behavior and performance (Locke & Latham, 1990; Stajkovic & Luthans, 1997). We know the United States, where these findings are based, is a low-context culture (Hall, 1976) that focuses on specific criteria-relevant (task, social fit) information to the exclusion of feedback context and other implied information. High-context cultures perceive additional feedback cues from nonverbal behaviors, feedback setting, and actor status. Thus, culture might affect the way feedback is given, and such differences might influence if and how potential feedback-seeking behavior occurs. However, our objective in this article is to first understand *how* people seek feedback before we begin to understand *what* kind of feedback they seek.

Ashford and Cummings (1983) pioneered the concept of feedback-seeking behavior as the interest an individual has in obtaining information key in developing his or her self-concept (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992; Morrison & Bies, 1991; Sedikides, 1993; Swann, Pelham, & Krull, 1989; Swann, Stein-Seroussi, & Giesler, 1992) and performance (Morrison & Cummings, 1992; Northcraft & Ashford, 1990; Trope, 1975; Trope & Neter, 1994; Wayne & Liden, 1995). This seminal work on feedback-seeking behavior (Ashford & Cummings, 1983) was formulated, in part, by the authors' recognition of the need to customize feedback quantity and quality to the individual—a need often not met by the organization. Theoretically important, feedback was said to be not only an organizational resource but also an individual resource.

Feedback-seeking decisions involve evaluating three types of cost: (1) *effort costs*: the effort necessary for the feedback search; (2) *face costs*: the evaluative effects of others on the individual for seeking; and (3) *inference costs*: the implications of inferential errors resulting from inaccurately interpreting feedback (Ashford & Cummings, 1983). Coupled with the cost of the feedback-seeking decision is the concept of uncertainty reduction. It is the existence of evaluative uncertainty that makes feedback valuable (Festinger, 1957; Trope, 1975, 1980). When indi-

viduals experience information uncertainties (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Kramer, 1994; Miller & Jablin, 1991), they will be motivated to seek feedback (Ashford, 1986; Brett, Feldman, & Weingart, 1990; Callister, Kramer, & Turban, 1999; Feldman & Brett, 1983). There is ample evidence to show that people not only have different tolerance levels at the individual level (Budner, 1962; Festinger, 1957; Norton, 1975) but also as a result of their cultural background.

Several distinct strategies exist for seeking feedback (Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Fedor, Rensvold, & Adams, 1992; Feldman & Brett, 1983; Larson, 1989; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Tsui, Ashford, St. Clair, & Xin, 1995). Through inquiry, individuals directly solicit others' perceptions and evaluations (Morrison & Bies, 1991; Northcraft & Ashford, 1990; Vancouver & Morrison, 1995). Through monitoring, individuals interpret any action or lack of action by others as a form of feedback (Feldman & Brett, 1983), vicariously observing how selves and others are responded to and reinforced (Ashford, 1986; Bandura, 1977). In research on organizational newcomers, Miller and Jablin (1991) introduce an additional strategy of indirect inquiry (comprising indirect questions, third parties, testing limits, and disguising conversation tactics). The intent of indirect strategies is to maximize the feedback function while minimizing the costs. To illustrate, in a culture in which asking questions of superiors is not common practice, individuals might feel hindered from using direct inquiry because the evaluative costs might be too high. Such generic discussions of expectations and historical examples may provide the desired information without either side needing to admit implications for the specific individual.

Individuals also engage in feedback-seeking source choices (Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Callister et al., 1999; Levy, Albright, Cawley, & Williams, 1995). Based on the premise that they are motivated by the drive to know, individuals are compelled to seek comparison information from referent others (Festinger, 1954; Suls & Wills, 1991). This facilitates an understanding of how they rank in relation to others (Wheeler, 1966), especially those who are perceived to rank higher (Gruder, 1977). Sources from whom individuals can obtain this information include their superiors, their peers, and/or their subordinates. Accessibility of the source, its credibility, and the possible affective sign of the information may

influence source selection (Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Morrison & Bies, 1991; O'Reilly, 1983; Vancouver & Morrison, 1995). In organizations individuals frequently look for information to formulate attitudes for behavioral actions (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978), and they may obtain performance-enhancing feedback through sources apart from their supervisor (Morrison, 1993; Ostroff & Kozlowski, 1992).

Coupled with the cost of seeking feedback is the notion of individual motives in the feedback process. Evaluative costs may lend themselves to a self-focus in an individualist culture but a group focus in a collectivist culture. Indeed, research has shown self-enhancement, ego defense, and impression management to be affective concepts in feedback seeking (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992; Brown & Dutton, 1995; Edwards, 1995; Vancouver & Morrison, 1995; Wood, 1989). Additionally, the feedback context is an important determinate of feedback-seeking behavior (Levy et al., 1995; Northcraft & Ashford, 1990). Feedback context determines the nature and boundaries of the environment in which feedback is sought and received. For example, in a low tolerance for ambiguity culture, there might be organizational structures implemented to help define the context of the organization. In a holistic culture much of the message meaning is in the environment. Therefore, a less threatening context may reduce feedback-seeking costs.

TOWARD A CULTURAL TAXONOMY OF FEEDBACK-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

We adopt a contingency perspective (e.g., Chen et al., 1998; Gibson, 1999) that feedback-exchange foci, strategies, sources, structure, and provider will differ across cultures. It is not our intention to delineate every feedback-seeking interaction across each cultural dimension. Rather, our purpose is to begin research efforts by showing the topic's rich potential. Here we discuss and propose those culture/feedback-seeking behavior interactions that are demonstrated by or can be derived from existing literature. We present these propositions in Table 2. The empty cells represent propositions that could not be resolved by (e.g., competing evidence) or grounded in existing literature. That said, in the rest of our discussion, we examine how the identified syndromes might affect the feedback-seeking process. We consider

if and to what degree contextual considerations (situational and cultural) affect an individual's feedback seeking. We then consider culture's impact on perceptions of feedback-seeking behavior costs and how one chooses to seek feedback (e.g., direct inquiry, indirect inquiry, or monitoring strategies). Finally, we analyze who it is that individuals determine is the best source of information (subordinates, peers, or supervisors).

The Impact of Specific-Holistic Orientation on Feedback-Seeking Behavior

The focus of the specific-holistic syndrome involves the manner in which a culture "understands" the richness of relationships. This syndrome also addresses how one cognitively and contextually processes information. Mezias et al. (1999) allude to this when they suggest that a larger network of actors and their complexity of relations must be considered in the multinational, multicultural workplace.

The specific-holistic theme surfaces across cultural models (Adler et al., 1986; Bloom, 1981; Bond, 1986; Gruenfeld & MacEachron, 1975; Redding, 1980) and is closely associated with the idea of field independence (Gibson, 1999; Witkin et al., 1979). Some cultures, such as that of the United States, tend to conceptualize life quite specifically, viewing interactions through an effect/outcome-oriented focus. Specific-oriented cultures compartmentalize areas of life experiences (job, family, and education), commonly avoiding overlap between areas. Conversely, the Chinese understanding of and reliance on *yuan* implies that the Chinese read the meanings and signs in their environment. Holistic-oriented cultures blend areas of life, seeing them as interdependent, rather than separate. They rely less on taking control of the environment (Yang & Ho, 1988; Yang & Tsai, 1996), especially in organizations.

This syndrome includes contrasting interactions that occur in communication. Hall (1976) describes variation of focus on "code and context" as a difference between high-context and low-context culture. Low-context cultures use explicit and direct messages in which meanings are contained primarily in transmitted communication (Singelis & Brown, 1995). In contrast, high-context cultures use indirect and implicit messages in which meanings are embedded in

the person and the sociocultural context (Gudykunst, Matsumoto, Ting-Toomey, Nishida, Kim, & Heyman, 1996). Although people in any culture use both high- and low-context communication, one form is favored over the other in most cultures (Hall, 1976). Communication interactions transpiring in a holistic culture commonly involve nonlinear message transaction. Interactions in a specific-oriented culture are more linear and involve instrumental transfer of information.

Specific-holistic is also directly related to the cultural relational construct of specific-diffuse (Parsons & Shils, 1951; Trompenaars, 1993). People from diffuse cultures view the business-personal interrelatedness as important in revealing character and in developing trust. Investing time in establishing relationships and revealing personality is fundamental and at times might supersede the actual business deal. The belief that one's public and business behavior should be separate or different from private behavior would be inconceivable in a culture that adheres to quan xi (Schermerhorn & Bond, 1991). Specific-oriented cultures tend to isolate their relationship perspective to those elements directly involved in the exchange.

Organizations provide feedback to their members (Funderburg & Levy, 1997; Ilgen et al., 1979; London, 1997) and across societies (Earley, 1997; Earley & Stubblebine, 1989). Societal norms shape the feedback process and impact the exchange of information. Contextual issues also become salient features of providing feedback in both holistic and specific cultures. In a highly holistic culture, however, where a high degree of message meaning exists in the organizational context, feedback also might be derived by the physical context and nonverbal cues. In some cases the setting itself may be a message, without a need for verbal interaction. Thus, we offer the following propositions.

> *Proposition 1a: Organizations operating in a holistic-oriented culture will convey feedback more through context, using indirect and implicit messages.*

> *Proposition 1b: Organizations operating in a specific-oriented culture will convey feedback more through information exchanged by direct messages.*

When organizational feedback is inadequate for self-assessment, individual feedback seeking occurs. The cost of such activity, however, influences whether this intent becomes action. Researchers have found that over time, individuals seek less feedback in public contexts (Ashford & Northcraft, 1992) and that seeking in private and semi-private contexts slightly increases (Levy et al., 1995). Scholars have used these results to advance the notion that feedback-seeking costs diminish feedback-seeking behavior. However, these studies were conducted in the United States—a highly specific culture (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998).

In holistic cultures much time is taken establishing relationships and behaving in ways to avoid losing face (Earley, 1997). In recent discussions researchers detail the notion of multiplex and deep trust relations (Lewecki et al., 1998). In a holistic-oriented relationship it is also extremely difficult to not take things personally. Thus, given the importance of developing an exchange relationship and remaining nonconfrontational (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998), individuals will go to great extremes to save face. They do not want to disrupt the harmony of the relationship. Face costs, therefore, would be a significant consideration in determining if one should seek information. Indeed, the feedback may be used to evaluate the relationship.

People from a specific-oriented culture may view transactions with others from diffuse-oriented cultures as time consuming and unfocused (Trompenaars, 1993). Given "business is business," they would not expect feedback, or the seeking of it, to have personal consequences for the parties beyond its job-relevant evaluative potential. Put differently, social courtesies would not be required before "getting to the point." In a specific cultural context, decisions to seek feedback most likely would be based on inference and effort costs. That is, the resources necessary versus the potential for interpretation error (Ashford & Cummings, 1983) would be the dominant considerations. Given this, we advance the following propositions.

> *Proposition 2a: Feedback-seeking behavior by individuals shaped by a holistic-oriented culture is more likely to be influenced by face costs.*

TABLE 2
Summary Chart of Propositions

Feedback Activity	Cultural Syndrome			
	Specific-Holistic Orientation	Tolerance for Ambiguity	Individualism-Collectivism	Status Identity
Feedback providing	Proposition 1a: Organizations operating in a holistic-oriented culture will convey feedback more through context, using indirect and implicit messages. Proposition 1b: Organizations operating in a specific-oriented culture will convey feedback more through information exchanged by direct messages.	Proposition 4: Organizations operating in a low tolerance for ambiguity culture will use more formal rules, procedures, and structure for providing feedback than cultures depicted by a high tolerance for ambiguity.	Proposition 7a: Organizations operating in an individualistic culture will provide more individual-focused feedback. Proposition 7b: Organizations operating in a collectivist culture will provide more group-focused feedback.	Proposition 9a: Organizations operating in a higher status identity culture will convey feedback more frequently through a top-down feedback process. Proposition 9b: Organizations operating in a lower status identity culture will convey feedback more frequently through an interactive feedback process (i.e., 360 degrees).
Feedback-seeking behavior		Proposition 5: In high-uncertainty contexts, individuals shaped by low tolerance for ambiguity cultures will engage in greater feedback seeking.		
Cost of seeking feedback	Proposition 2a: Feedback-seeking behavior by individuals shaped by a holistic-oriented culture is more likely to be influenced by face costs. Proposition 2b: Feedback-seeking behavior by individuals shaped by a specific-oriented culture is more likely to be influenced by effort and inference costs.	Proposition 6: In high-uncertainty contexts, individuals shaped by low tolerance for ambiguity cultures will be less influenced by feedback-seeking costs.		Proposition 10: Individuals shaped by a higher status identity culture will see feedback-seeking costs as greater than individuals from a lower status identity culture.

Strategy for seeking feedback

Proposition 3a: Individuals shaped by a specific-oriented culture will more frequently use direct-inquiry feedback-seeking strategies.

Proposition 3b: Individuals shaped by a holistic-oriented culture will more frequently use monitoring and indirect-inquiry feedback-seeking strategies.

Proposition 8a: Individuals shaped by an individualistic culture will more frequently use direct-inquiry feedback-seeking strategies.

Proposition 8b: Individuals shaped by a collectivist culture will more frequently use monitoring and indirect-inquiry feedback-seeking strategies.

Proposition 11a: Individuals shaped by a lower status identity culture will use more direct-inquiry feedback-seeking strategies.

Proposition 11b: Individuals shaped by a higher status identity culture will use more monitoring and indirect-inquiry feedback-seeking strategies.

Source for seeking feedback

Proposition 12a: Individuals shaped by a higher status identity culture will seek feedback from peers more than from superiors and subordinates.

Proposition 12b: Individuals shaped by a lower status identity culture will seek feedback from superiors and subordinates more than from peers.

*Proposition 2b: Feedback-seeking be-
havior by individuals shaped by a
specific-oriented culture is more likely
to be influenced by effort and infer-
ence costs.*

Once the decision to seek feedback is made,
culture will influence the method by which it is
sought. Specific-oriented individuals prefer to
"get to the point" and to "ask a question up
front." In the United States (a specific-oriented
culture) individuals will immediately ask ques-
tions in business transactions to clarify particu-
lar points (Johnson, 1996). Information seeking is
salient in both cultures, but specific-oriented in-
dividuals will favor a more intensive direct-
inquiry approach. The holistic-oriented individ-
ual, interested in the feedback interaction as
much as the feedback itself, will prefer more
indirect inquiry and intensive monitoring strat-
egies.

Implications of this syndrome can be found in
recent research on newcomers in U.S. organiza-
tions. In this work researchers note that informa-
tion acquired must be assimilated quickly be-
cause, typically, especially in American
companies, impressions are formed very rapidly
about an organization member's capabilities
(Callister et al., 1999; Johnson, 1996). The impli-
cation is that the only interaction that matters is
the professional relationship. Thus, one will
likely be motivated to obtain job-related infor-
mation quickly and unambiguously. The infor-
mation exchange is specific to the business at
hand and, as such, direct questions are appro-
priate to glean information. In holistic-oriented
cultures, evaluations involve more than just the
specific task behaviors. Instead, the evaluation
also involves long-term implications, including
one's ability to "fit in." Judgments are less obvi-
ous (again, the context is as important as the
content) and slower to materialize. Given this,
we propose the following.

*Proposition 3a: Individuals shaped by
a specific-oriented culture will more
frequently use direct-inquiry feed-
back-seeking strategies.*

*Proposition 3b: Individuals shaped by
a holistic-oriented culture will more
frequently use monitoring and indirect-
inquiry feedback-seeking strategies.*

The Impact of Tolerance for Ambiguity on Feedback-Seeking Behavior

The cultural syndrome tolerance for ambigu-
ity refers to the extent to which ambiguous sit-
uations are seen as threatening. The need to
reduce uncertainty is a relevant consideration
across several levels of analysis, from the indi-
vidual to the cultural level (Dawson et al., 1971),
and encompasses the notion of an uncertainty
comfort level. Festinger (1957) refers to this con-
cept in his work on individual cognitive disso-
nance. Tolerance for ambiguity also includes
the degree to which society members are open
to change and innovation (Kedia & Bhagat,
1988). This syndrome includes the uncertainty
avoidance cultural dimension of the Hofstede
model (1980) and is highly associated with for-
malization (Shackleton & Ali, 1990) and uncer-
tainty reduction (Berger, 1979). In low tolerance
for ambiguity cultures, managers take fewer de-
cision-making risks, and there is extensive reli-
ance on rules and procedures. High tolerance for
ambiguity cultures are more accepting of uncer-
tainty (Earley & Stubblebine, 1989), and individ-
uals are not threatened by opinions and behav-
iors different from their own (Berger, 1979).

A related dimension of culture is "tight versus
loose" (Chan et al., 1996; Earley, 1997; Pelto, 1968;
Triandis, 1996), which delineates how rules and
norms exist in and are enforced by a society
(Pelto, 1968; Witkin & Berry, 1975). Low tolerance
for ambiguity (tight) cultures are characterized
by many rules. Individuals are expected to con-
form to standard practices (Triandis, 1989), and
deviations are discouraged. In such cultures sig-
nificant formal information systems are incorpo-
rated into organizational structures (Earley,
1997). These systems are designed to reduce am-
biguity, deviant behavior, and possibly the need
for seeking feedback. In high tolerance for am-
biguity (loose) societies, a wide range of alter-
native channels exist through which norms are
relayed, and the culture is more flexible in im-
posing norms (Triandis, 1989). Adherence to for-
mal organizational procedures is less enforced,
and values such as stability, solidarity, and du-
ration are not accentuated. In addition, manag-
ers have a stronger interpersonal style in their
interaction with subordinates, employees tend
to be more ambitious, and work tends to be less
structured (Earley, 1997).

Based on this syndrome, we advocate a cultural contingency model (Chen et al., 1998) for understanding the feedback process. This argument is consistent with the perspective that cultural variables might moderate macrolevel factors, such as organizational structure (Child, 1981; House, Rousseau, & Thomas-Hunt, 1995). Other research shows that organizational structure and technology might affect the feedback process by creating settings in which feedback is differentially provided to individuals (Ashford, 1986). In the United States, a high tolerance for ambiguity culture, the feedback process is less focused on formal structure (Shackleton & Ali, 1990). In low tolerance for ambiguity cultures, the feedback process is focused on the formal structure to create a method of ego defense (Shackleton & Ali, 1990). In practice, low tolerance for ambiguity cultures have successfully employed the use of quality-control circles to stabilize environmental uncertainty (Hofstede, 1980). On the basis of these considerations, we propose the following.

> _Proposition 4: Organizations operating in a low tolerance for ambiguity culture will use more formal rules, procedures, and structure for providing feedback than cultures depicted by a high tolerance for ambiguity._

However, these embedded systems might not be adequate to satisfy people's need for self-evaluation; thus, some uncertainty will remain. The underlying premise of research on feedback seeking is the important informational role feedback plays in reducing uncertainty and achieving goals (Morrison, 1995). One's capacity to cope with ambiguity will influence motivation to perform an information search (Ashford & Cummings, 1985), and culture is a determinant of this capacity (Trompenaars, 1993). The propensity for low tolerance for ambiguity cultures is to avert risk and uncertainty, and feedback-seeking behavior is one such activity for this. High tolerance for ambiguity cultures are more accepting of and less threatened by risk and uncertainty. Support for this premise is found in research at the individual (Ashford & Cummings, 1985; Fedor et al., 1992) and cultural level (Earley, 1997, or Erez & Earley, 1993), showing that individuals who are intolerant of ambiguity seek more information relative to individuals who are tolerant of ambiguity. Although we pro-

pose an apparent parallel, Bond and Smith (1996) caution against operationalizing or generalizing across levels of analysis. Our intent here is to point out the observation of similar effects at different levels and the need for research to bridge the gap. Given this, we propose the following.

> _Proposition 5: In high-uncertainty contexts, individuals shaped by low tolerance for ambiguity cultures will engage in greater feedback seeking._

Ashford (1986) argues that uncertainty should be positively correlated with how much an individual values feedback and how much culture influences perceptions of value (Dawson et al., 1971). Value is one's expected degree of return, compared to the cost of action. Given that feedback-seeking behavior is affected by costs (Ashford & Cummings, 1983) and value is affected by culture, we infer that culture—in particular, tolerance for ambiguity—will affect feedback seeking through the differing perceptions of cost. The more one is threatened by ambiguity, the greater one will feel the drive to reduce uncertainty and inference costs (greater return). Thus, an individual with lower tolerance for ambiguity will perceive effort (and face) as less costly, given the benefit (Berger, 1979). Based on these considerations, we offer the following proposition.

> _Proposition 6: In high-uncertainty contexts, individuals shaped by low tolerance for ambiguity cultures will be less influenced by feedback-seeking costs._

The Impact of Individualism-Collectivism on Feedback-Seeking Behavior

All cultures have characteristics broadly defining their social identity. Social identity is defined as the relation of the person to the whole (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) and is a universal principle. Although the effect is universal, the meaning is specific to culture (Pepitone & Triandis, 1988). Social identity comprises such concepts as face saving (Earley, 1997; Goffman, 1959; Triandis, 1990; Yang & Tsai, 1996) and achievement purposes (Katakis, 1976). Cross-cultural researchers have tended to focus on the issue of cultural social identity through a construct

scholars have labeled "individualism-collectivism" (Erez & Earley, 1993; Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998). Cited as the most widely studied cultural dimension, the recent conceptualization of individualism-collectivism as a syndrome has led to greater sophistication in its investigation and implications (Chen et al., 1998; Triandis, 1996). Often presented as opposing points on a continuum (Earley, 1989; Hofstede, 1980), individualism-collectivism recently has been shown as two independent factors (Triandis, 1995) and has been conceptualized as a multidimensional and multilevel construct (Earley & Gibson, 1998; Earley et al., 1999; Schwartz, 1990; Triandis, 1995).

In an individualistic culture there is an intrinsic belief in individual decisions (Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961), and, thus, individual goals become the primary focus of behavior (Triandis, 1990). Individualism corresponds to the primacy people place on themselves over their aggregate social group. In studies conducted predominantly in the United States, considered a highly individualistic culture, researchers found individuals to be concerned with self-accuracy (Fedor et al., 1992; Swann et al., 1989), self-assessment (Vancouver & Morrison, 1995), and self-regulation (Ashford & Tsui, 1991).

Collectivism exemplifies a societal situation in which people belong to groups or collectivities that share a reciprocal concern for each other (Triandis, 1995). Such cultures emphasize the priority of the group over an individual, including how a person's behavior impacts the group (Brockner & Chen, 1996; Earley, 1993; Hui, 1988). For the collectivist there exists an intrinsic belief in group decisions, and, thus, the focus becomes that which benefits the goals of the group.

In collectivist cultures information pertaining to the group should be more valued than knowledge pertaining to the individual. Individualist cultures should value feedback directed to each person (Greenwald & Pratkanis, 1984; Triandis, 1989). The scant empirical research shows mixed results. Although some studies show a clear distinction between individualism-collectivism and focus of information (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1989), others show less distinctive results. For example, Earley et al. (1999) found collectivist societies value both types of feedback, although these scholars urge caution

given the limited sample and potential lack of psychological realism. We propose the following.

> *Proposition 7a: Organizations operating in a individualistic culture will provide more individual-focused feedback.*

> *Proposition 7b: Organizations operating in a collectivist culture will provide more group-focused feedback.*

We postulate that individuals shaped by both cultures engage in feedback-seeking behavior. The difference is whether the benefit is provided to the group or the individual. In an individualistic environment individuals will be more interested in feedback due to effects on self-concept (Swann & Read, 1981). They will likely seek feedback as a means of personal impression management (Morrison & Bies, 1991; Wayne & Liden, 1995) or ego protection (Larson, 1989), since looking after one's self is paramount. Such impression management concerns also exist at the group level, in the form of social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Thus feedback-seeking behavior will still be observed in collectivist cultures, yet the emphasis will be on the betterment of the group through improving accuracy and understanding the task (Trope, 1975, 1982). We do not expect differences in inclination to seek feedback, but we do expect there to be a cultural influence on how it is sought.

A culture with a high collectivist orientation will not encourage direct-inquiry behavior since it might bring too much individual attention to a person or the group. In such environments indirect inquiry and monitoring may be a preferred mode of seeking feedback. Cultures with more of a collective identity favor behavior in harmony with the group (Earley, 1993; Hui, 1988; Triandis, 1990). Members would be more likely to ask, "How are we doing?" Further, this behavior reflects honor to the group and sacrifice of self. Individual notoriety is less important than in cultures with more of an individual identity; in fact, individual notoriety might be disruptive to the collective (Parsons & Shils, 1951; Schwartz, 1992). Given this, the following propositions are advanced.

> *Proposition 8a: Individuals shaped by an individualistic culture will more frequently use direct-inquiry feedback-seeking strategies.*

Proposition 8b: Individuals shaped by a collectivist culture will more frequently use monitoring and indirect-inquiry feedback-seeking strategies.

The Impact of Status Identity on Feedback-Seeking Behavior

The cultural syndrome of status identity embodies the notion that cultural members are stratified into categories or a hierarchy based on culturally salient criteria. This syndrome is composed of myriad cultural values, beliefs, and behaviors (DeVos & Suarez-Orozco, 1990). DeVos emically describes status inequality, a component of status identity, best "as modalities of expected behavior reinforced externally by formal or informal sanctions and expectations, and internally by the predisposing personality propensities set up by prior socialization" (1990: 28). Identity begins early in cultural development, involves a "selective permeability" to social experience, and relies on structural mechanisms of internalization that differentiate individuals within a society (Barrett & Bass, 1967). Status encompasses concepts of age, gender, class, caste, and ethnic behavior. It involves the experience of intentionality, power, and causality occurring within as well as external to the individual (DeVos, 1990).

This syndrome also encompasses many aspects of achievement-ascription relational cultural orientation (Parsons & Shils, 1951; Trompenaars, 1993). Some societies accord status to people on the basis of achievements, whereas other cultures determine status partially through the respect and loyalty given a person because of such factors as birthright, gender, and so forth. Status differentials are assigned. Societies characterized by achievement are labeled "lower status identity cultures"; societies characterized by ascription are labeled "higher status identity cultures."

Also included in this syndrome is how the value of hierarchy versus egalitarianism creates assumptions about how power and status are perceived in a culture (Brett & Okumura, 1998; Leung, 1997; Triandis, 1982). Hierarchical cultures favor differential social status, implying distribution of social power. Higher-status members have a degree of social responsibility to lower-status members of the society. Lower-status members concede respect to higher-

status members (Brett & Okumura, 1998). In egalitarian cultures social status differences exist, but individuals are less receptive to power differentials (Leung, 1997). Egalitarian cultures prefer equal power and engagement in social interaction; hierarchical cultures, however, expect unidirectional interactions (Triandis, 1982).

The notion of status identity is also seen in research on power distance (Earley, 1997; Hofstede, 1980): the extent to which power is distributed across members of a culture. A low power distance culture is characterized by a society of people having equal rights, exemplified by cooperation across the powerful and powerless. Notably, a lower status identity culture environment presents a more equal sharing of power and, thus, information between organizational members. A higher status identity culture distributes power unequally, with those individuals in higher-power positions allowed special privileges not afforded the less powerful (DeVos & Suarez-Orozco, 1990; Triandis, 1990). In a study on influence tactics, Hong Kong respondents (high power distance) were less likely to use ingratiation with their superiors than were their U.S. counterparts (low power distance) but were more likely to use assertiveness, especially with subordinates (Schermerhorn & Bond, 1991). Ingratiation is less frequent, some suggest, because the Chinese strongly foresee reprisals for infringing on the implied high-status culture environment. U.S. respondents used assertiveness tactics more often because they expect greater resistance in their egalitarian culture. Based on these arguments, we advance the following propositions.

Proposition 9a: Organizations operating in a higher status identity culture will convey feedback more frequently through a top-down feedback process.

Proposition 9b: Organizations operating in a lower status identity culture will convey feedback more frequently through an interactive feedback process (i.e., 360 degrees).

This has several implications for feedback-seeking behavior. First, single-source feedback systems are not as information rich as multiple-source systems (London, 1997). As such, feedback given in higher status identity cultures is likely to be less adequate than feedback given

in lower status identity cultures, thus contribut-
ing to inference costs. Second, the act of solicit-
ing feedback, especially vertically, is likely to
be interpreted differently based on status iden-
tity. In a higher status identity culture, inter-
action can bring great gain or great loss. For
example, seeking information might be seen as
an insult in higher status identity cultures—an
indirect criticism of the superior's or the organi-
zation's effectiveness. Thus, face costs may be
more severe. Finally, the social distance that
exists is likely to create differences in the effort
required to obtain sufficient feedback for self-
evaluation. In the United States (proposed to be
a lower status identity culture) managers were
found to more actively seek feedback from su-
periors (Ashford & Tsui, 1991). The equal power
distribution in lower status identity cultures
might allow workers to move more easily up the
organization pyramid, or throughout the organi-
zation network, when engaging in feedback-
seeking strategies. We propose perceived status
identity differences will result in different cal-
culations of feedback-seeking costs. Given this,
we suggest the following.

> *Proposition 10: Individuals shaped by
> a higher status identity culture will
> see feedback-seeking costs as greater
> than individuals from a lower status
> identity culture.*

By extension, status identity differences also
will affect the strategies employed to obtain
feedback. In their research on power distance,
Earley and Stubblebine (1989) found that cul-
tures such as that of the United States evoke
cooperation and an openness to discourse
across organizational levels. Direct-inquiry
feedback-seeking strategies might be encour-
aged in such an environment. Ashford (1986)
found that even when people had negative be-
liefs about goal attainment, they frequently en-
gaged in inquiry strategies. If the information is
critical and they can cope with the self-esteem-
related costs, individuals have even been
shown to seek negative information at the ex-
pense of their immediate positive mood (Trope &
Neter, 1994). In higher status identity cultures,
where image management concerns are of
greater importance, we would not expect to see
a person risk the potential "loss of face" from
engaging in inquiry strategies to the same de-
gree as in a lower status identity culture. For

instance, in an organization in India, it may not
be appropriate to solicit information; thus, a
monitoring strategy might be a more preferred
form of feedback seeking. Therefore, the follow-
ing propositions are offered.

> *Proposition 11a: Individuals shaped
> by a lower status identity culture will
> use more direct-inquiry feedback-
> seeking strategies.*

> *Proposition 11b: Individuals shaped
> by a higher status identity culture will
> use more monitoring and indirect-
> inquiry feedback-seeking strategies.*

In a higher status identity culture, people may
be especially reluctant to seek information from
a superior because of the earlier proposed costs.
Higher-status employees traditionally are more
distanced from managers (Earley & Stubblebine,
1989); thus, upward inquiry might not prove ap-
propriate. By extension, individuals will not
seek downward inquiry because of the impor-
tance of maintaining distance. Therefore, in
higher status identity cultures, feedback-
seeking behavior may be more lateral. In lower
status identity cultures, differentials are not as
dramatic, so there should not be as much of an
ego threat. Research in the United States has
shown the willingness of individuals to solicit
feedback from their superiors (Ashford & Tsui,
1991; Callister et al., 1999). Indeed, managers
might see such behavior as "assertive" and
"competent" (Ashford & Cummings, 1985). Addi-
tionally, the value of obtaining information from
peers tends to decline over time (Callister et al.,
1999; Morrison & Bies, 1991). For these reasons,
we propose the following propositions.

> *Proposition 12a: Individuals shaped
> by a higher status identity culture will
> seek feedback from peers more than
> from superiors and subordinates.*

> *Proposition 12b: Individuals shaped
> by a lower status identity culture will
> seek feedback from superiors and sub-
> ordinates more than from peers.*

CONCLUSION

We have now reviewed the potential for cul-
tural characteristics to impact the feedback-
seeking process. We presented a theory-based

model in which we identified the syndromes of specific-holistic orientation, tolerance for ambiguity, individualism-collectivism, and status identity. We also offered propositions of the potential relevance to feedback-seeking behavior that are rooted in existing cultural contributions (Bond & Smith, 1996), seminal studies (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1988, 1995), and relational issues (Chen et al., 1998; Earley, 1997; Erez & Earley, 1993; Mezias et al., 1999) in the management literature. Although varied constructs of culture have been conceptualized (Schwartz, 1990, 1994; Smith, Dugan, & Trompenaars, 1996) and alternative explanations to culture have been postulated (Peterson & Smith, 1997; Van de Vliert & Van Yperen, 1996), the topology we have developed is an initial attempt to build a model for the specific task of integrating culture and feedback-seeking behavior (Earley & Gibson, 1998; Earley & Singh, 1995; Lytle et al., 1995). In doing so, we follow the call by many to move away from grand theories and to pursue research that is problem focused (Aquino, 1998; Bigley & Pearce, 1998) and in which specific cultural contexts are examined (Osland & Bird, 2000).

With integrative, multinational organizations more prevalent in today's global economy, we need to develop methods to assist culture-spanning managers (Adler, 1991). Understanding culture is important for comprehending differences in individual behavior—one difference being the complicated way information is provided to and sought by organizational members (Klich & Feldman, 1992; Levy et al., 1995; Maurer & Tarulli, 1994; Sedikides, 1993; Swann et al.,

1989; Vancouver & Morrison, 1995). For example, one culture may promote seeking feedback laterally, and another culture may demand feedback seeking only from vertical sources. Galbraith (1977) states that different buffers are necessary in designing a system appropriate for addressing obstacles to effective information processing. Organizational roles integrated across cultures might prove one such challenge, both in how an individual seeks or how the organization provides feedback. We do not claim to be exhaustive in our efforts here. Rather, we seek to inspire future efforts in this potentially rich area.

Figure 1 provides a summary of our discussion. In it we provide a stage model of how culture impacts feedback-seeking behavior. At the left of the figure, research shows how culture affects feedback giving. Here we show the syndromes and propositions we have associated with this antecedent of feedback-seeking behavior. Next, we propose how the tolerance for ambiguity syndrome may moderate the perceived adequacy of the organization's effort. Again, we are not exhaustive here, since in future research scholars may identify other syndromes that also have an effect. Moving to the right, we illustrate in the figure how the syndromes identified might individually impact considerations of feedback-seeking costs, strategies, and source. Although we discussed the syndrome impacts independently, others have found that interactions across dimensions may present a further challenge (Earley et al., 1999; Gudykunst, 1983; Hofstede, 1980; Osland & Bird,

FIGURE 1
Stage Model of Cross-Cultural Influences on Feedback-Seeking Behavior
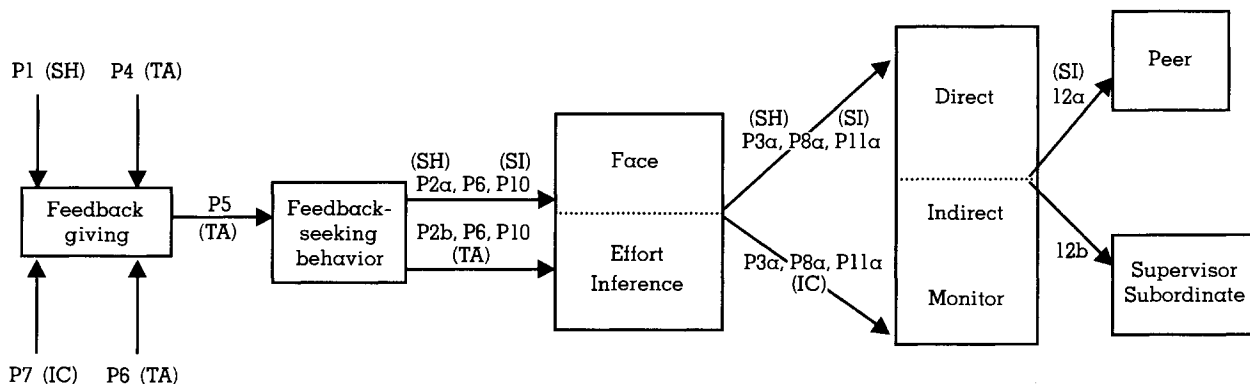
Key: SH = specific-holistic; TA = tolerance for ambiguity; IC = individualism-collectivism; SI = status identity.

2000; Triandis, 1995). Indeed, the multiple propositions on a single arrow suggest these interactions might occur within a stage as well as across stages.

For example, China's high holistic orientation intermingles with its collectivistic characteristics to create a rich.clan. Of interest to us, the group-focused nature combined with overlapping life experiences may create more frequent use of observational or monitoring feedback-seeking strategies. Similarly, the interaction of tolerance for ambiguity and status identity might be significant. Individuals shaped by a lower tolerance for ambiguity culture may be compelled to seek feedback more frequently than individuals from higher tolerance for ambiguity cultures. However, if these same individuals also have high status identity characteristics, they also may not feel compelled to directly ask questions of superiors in the organization. Thus, there may be a tradeoff consideration between desires to reduce uncertainty versus desires to minimize face costs. These complexities represent a challenge for researchers and practitioners. We must be aware that behavior is not only affected by specific differences on a single dimension but is also complicated by interactions across dimensions. Indeed, this is why research efforts have moved toward syndromes as an integrated system of cultural values.

Traditionally, researchers have focused on the impact of individual and cultural differences originating *within* the person. Beyond understanding individual variation in feedback-seeking behavior, we see further challenges arise in attempting to comprehend the dynamics of feedback interactions involving individuals from different cultures. In some disciplines (e.g., communication) attention is shifting to an examination of the impact of differences *between* actors. For example, a recent conflict management study showed how the gender combination (called "gendered transaction") of the supervisor-subordinate dyad moderated ratings of the supervisor (Glomb & Hulin, 1997). Our discussion here is limited, but in future research scholars should investigate the ramifications of a feedback seeker with one cultural profile interacting with a feedback provider with a different cultural profile (what we will call "cultured transactions"). Managers born or trained in a specific-oriented culture may attempt more direct delivery of feedback to employees and

expect their utilization of direct-inquiry feedback-seeking strategies. However, if these employees originate from a holistic-oriented culture, furnishing feedback in this manner and expecting this use of strategies may potentially contribute to misunderstanding or conflict between superiors and subordinates.

In closing, seeking out information in organizational settings assists employees in formulating attitudes and behaviors (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978). Furthermore, the extent to which individuals adapt and even succeed may depend upon their ability to acquire and use evaluative information. This feedback-seeking activity is not conducted in cognitive isolation but brings with it all the features of the culture from which the organizational member originates. Individuals may obliquely monitor and indirectly or directly inquire to glean informational feedback (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Herold & Parsons, 1985), and we propose these actions are greatly shaped by culture. Anticipating differences in feedback seeking, effective managers should ready themselves for the task of appropriately providing performance feedback. Developing an understanding of how cultural forces influence the way individuals seek information can help us address these increasing international management concerns. We hope the model and propositions presented here provide a framework and forum for future research.

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