

Does socialization in schools matter? Differences in value priorities between managers, professionals and executives in a Singaporean firm

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This paper discusses the functionalist perspective of stratification and institutional processes of values inculcation in schools and organizations. It is assumed that students' school-to-work transition entail certain differences in life and work expectations as the education system forms the basis of cultural reproduction and values formation. A quantitative study was conducted to investigate the variations in value priorities between managers, professionals and executives in a MNC in Singapore. The questionnaire survey involved 252 participants. The findings highlight that the notion that differences in the relative value preferences between the three hierarchical groups may be a result of their previous respective educational socialization and achievements in schools.

Key words: Educational socialization and achievement; Basic individual and work values; Diversity in organizations

Introduction

In recent decades, there has been much research in the area of international human resource management in multinational corporations (MNCs) as a result of two interrelated processes; globalization (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 1989, 2000; Bartlett, Doz & Hedlund, 1990), and the apparent increasing levels of sociocultural and organizational diversity in workplaces (Erez & Earley, 1993; Jackson & Ruderman, 1995; Gomez-Mejia & Palich, 1997; Joynt & Warner, 1997; Palich & Gomez-Mejia, 1999). Management needs to address the complexities that arise as MNCs employ staff from

different sociocultural backgrounds, and consider the implications for interpersonal and organizational processes and outcomes.

This paper will address a key research concern regarding the potential variations in value priorities according to staff hierarchical positions, that is, the top, middle or lower management levels in an Asian organization. This paper will provide a discussion on the perceptions of the relative importance of two sets of value systems between the different groups of staff as a consequence of their educational achievements and hierarchical positions. The basis for this argument is that previous school socialization processes (including the impact of the different levels of education attended) have a functionalistic impact on the staff's occupational statuses, as well as a significant influence on their life and work expectations. The discourse on life and work values is drawn from the respective research works of Schwartz and his colleagues (Schwartz, 1992, 1994; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, 1990), and Elizur and his colleagues (Elizur, 1984; Elizur, Borg, Hunt & Beck, 1991). Last but not least, this paper will address the research hypotheses and

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methodology, followed by the presentation of the results and conclusion.

There are two important factors to justify this investigation. First, there are few comparative studies conducted that specifically focus on the value systems of employees in Asian organizations in the Asia Pacific economic region. Research in this particular economic region is essential in view of the fact that the political, economic and social developments that have taken place, may indeed have a significant impact on the labor market and international human resources management. The emergence of the global economy has created a new emphasis for human capacity building in Asian MNCs, as the APEC economies draw on the talents of their peoples as part of an economic and social imperative workforce (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation {APEC}, 1999, 2000, 2001). Secondly, research into value systems (Elizur, 1984; Elizur et al., 1991; Schwartz, 1992, 1994; Ros, Schwartz & Surkiss, 1999) has not adequately explored the association between functionalist perspective of stratification and institutional processes of values inculcation in schools and organizations. Thus, this is an opportunity to investigate the implications of this relationship, which potentially will allow education researchers and managers to understand and appreciate the diversity of value perceptions of staff from different educational backgrounds.

Educational achievements, hierarchical positions and variations in value priorities

A general explanation for variations in values priorities between staff from various hierarchical positions in organizations could be due to the fact that they may have been influenced by the form of education they received. In other words, the managers, professionals and executives may have acquired diverse socialized values while previously attending different levels of education prior to joining the workforce. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bourdieu (1984, 1988) strongly argued that the education system forms the basis of cultural reproduction and value formation. Cultural reproduction in schools, in conjunction with other social institutions, help perpetuate social and economic inequalities across generations. As schools inculcate and reinforce variations in the learning of values, attitudes and behaviors of students throughout the various stages of education, when the students leave the school system, these influences may have the effect of limiting the opportunities of some students, while facilitating those of others. As a matter

of fact, Davis and Moore (1945) have expressed from a functionalist perspective of stratification, that social inequality and rewards distribution are means through which societies ensure that the best qualified individuals can achieve a certain level of success based on their respective future social positions or job appointments.

To appreciate the significance of value differences for the different groups of staff, one needs to understand the function of education systems from a sociological perspective (Ballantine, 2001; Ballantine & Spade, 2004). Bowles and Gintis (1976) have argued with some vigor that the education system has been manipulated by social elites and employers to accomplish two primary objectives. First, the education system is used to justify class stratification and inequality through a presumably meritocratic and rational policy for allocating individuals into economic roles in society. Weber (1978) used the concept of 'social closure' to indicate the strong tendency for certain social groups to use selected social criteria as distinctive markers to set themselves apart from others. A few essential criteria include educational qualifications and common occupations. By using such criterion to segregate themselves, members of the dominant groups attempt to monopolize resources that will enhance their economic success and social esteem. Parkin (1979) argued that in modern societies, educational credentials have emerged as one of the most important means of social closure. By achieving certain levels of educational qualifications, group members are able to gain access to certain occupations with high financial benefits, privilege and prestige, while excluding others. Wright (1979) also emphasized the fact that a major function of educational qualifications is to limit the number of people gaining entry to senior managerial positions in organizations that have greater authority, power and income. Minton and Schneider (1980) have asserted that an individual's social status tends to be closely linked to his or her level of education and occupation. In other words, people's social positions in society are positively related to their academic performance, educational and occupational aspirations, and achievement motivation (Allen, 1970; Harrison, 1969; Sewell, Haller & Ohlendorf, 1970).

Not surprisingly, education policies have influenced education administrators to adopt academic selection as a means of identifying the more academically able children from less able ones (Giddens, 1989). Furthermore, education systems tend to reinforce such inequalities by channeling students toward different educational courses that emphasize different academic learning. The purpose is to allocate the

students to different categories of jobs according to their sociocultural backgrounds or academic abilities. Bowles and Gintis (1976), and Feagin and Feagin (1978) observed that ethnic minority children, girls, children with lower socio-economic status and children with limited learning proficiency may be channeled into courses that are traditional for their group types, rather than courses for which they might be well suited and that could lead to better careers. Willis (1977) investigated the process of schooling in a field-work study and concluded it is often thought that children from the lower-class or minority backgrounds have come to perceive they 'are not clever enough' to expect to get highly paid jobs or high-status jobs in their future work lives.

In addition to occupational stratification, Bowles and Gintis (1976) asserted that the education system has been used to inculcate students, who will be joining the workforce in future, the proper forms of worker consciousness through ideological and behavioral conformity relating to the dominant beliefs and values of the social relationships of education and economic life. Illich (1973) emphasized the fact that there is a strong connection between the development of education and the economic requirements for discipline and hierarchy. He has argued with some force that schools have been developed to carry out four basic functions: 1) the provision of custodian care; 2) the acquisition of socially approved skills and knowledge; 3) the learning of dominant values; and 4) the distribution of people among occupational roles. He also stressed that the school curricula tend to inculcate in students the acceptance of the social order, and that the nature of the school procedures and structures reinforces the students' values and beliefs regarding their roles in society (Illich, 1973). Such social consequences reinforce the societal convention which Parsons (1951) emphasized that each individual has expectations of the other's action and reaction to their own behaviors, and that these expectations are derived from the accepted norms and values of the society in which they live. In addition, as the behaviors are enacted in more and more interactions and these expectations are entrenched or institutionalized, roles are being created.

Bowles and Gintis (1976) researched the institutional background of school systems and concluded that the social relationships at the different levels of the educational system reflect the social relationships at the different hierarchical levels of organizations. They contended that the different forms or levels of education in practice channel workers into different levels within the occupational structure and, correspondingly, tend towards an internal organization of

value systems comparable to the levels in the hierarchical division of labor. To elaborate, within the education system, the lower education levels such as the junior and senior high schools tend to severely restrict and channel the activities of students. At the next higher educational levels, students are given more independent activities and less overall supervision. At the top, students from colleges and universities exercise self-determination and individuality. Similarly, the lowest level in the hierarchy of the organization emphasizes rule-following, the middle level focuses upon dependability and the capacity to operate without direct and continuous supervision, and the higher level stresses the importance of internalizing the norms of the organization. In other words, students are differentially socialized at different levels of the educational system. Students from the lower educational hierarchy, who are presumed to join the lower levels of the occupational structure, are socialized with values that emphasize rule-abiding, deference to authority, dependability, and other lower-level motivational beliefs. In contrast, students with higher academic proficiencies are expected to be positioned at the higher levels of the organizational structure, and are socialized with higher-level values such as independence, creativity, commitment, achievement and other esteem beliefs. Based on the above discussions and arguments, this study has utilized the *Schwartz Value Framework* (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, 1990) and *Elizur Work Value Framework* (Elizur, 1984; Elizur et al, 1991) as means to investigate the value priorities between the staff from the different hierarchical position. A literature review of the frameworks is presented below.

The Concept of Basic Individual Values

Theorists studying the subject of values have sought to understand and appreciate the underlying motivations of people's response to their environments. Theorists in various schools of thought have emphasized the importance of people's value priorities in understanding and predicting attitudinal and behavioral decisions (for example, Kluckhohn, 1951; Allport, Vernon, & Lindzey, 1960; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Scott, 1965; Smith, 1969). On the one hand, the concept of values is considered to be the key dependent variable in the study of sociological value orientations in social, political and business institutions in different societies (for example, Hofstede, 2001; Hall & Hall, 1990; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1998; Harris & Moran, 1999). On the other hand, the value concept serves as the central independent variable in the analyses of social

attitudes and behaviors (Rokeach, 1968, 1973, 1979).

Though past studies have presented the theoretical explanations for the concept of values, Schwartz (1994) has emphasized the fact that there has been only a limited amount of work to categorize the substantive content of societal values. In previous research, Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, 1990) sought to classify the content of individual's value systems into a universal structure of societal values. A theoretical structure of relations among motivational types of values, higher order value types, and bipolar value dimensions was developed so that contextual measurements and comparisons of the different values can be made. Based on these arguments, Schwartz (1992) proposed a structure of values comprising ten value types: 1) Power, 2) Achievement, 3) Hedonism, 4) Stimulation, 5) Self-direction, 6) Universalism, 7) Benevolence, 8) Tradition, 9) Conformity, and 10) Security. An elaboration of these values is provided in the following section.

Power is defined as an individual's need for dominance and control over other people and resources and the attainment of social status and prestige as part of interpersonal relations in society (Durkheim, 1960; Parsons, 1951;). Achievement concerns an individual's goal to achieve personal success through demonstrating competence according to prevailing sociocultural standards, and thus, attaining social approval (Maslow, 1959; Scott 1965; Rokeach, 1973). Hedonism is derived from an individual's organismic needs, and the physiological indulgence or pleasures arising from satisfying them (Morris, 1956; Freud, 1963). Stimulation stems from an individual's organismic need for variety and stimulation in life so as to sustain an optimum level of activation in the social experience (Houston & Mednick, 1963; Maddi, 1961). Self-direction is derived from an individual's organismic needs for control and mastery (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Deci & Ryan, 1985; White, 1959) and interactional needs for autonomy and independence (Kluckhohn, 1951; Morris, 1956). Universalism is derived from the apparent understanding that the survival of the individuals and groups is crucial, when people associate with others beyond the extended primary group and the realization of the scarcity of the limited natural resources (Schwartz, 1992, 1994). Benevolence relates to the interactional needs regarding the preservation and enhancement of the welfare of the people close to the individual in daily social interaction (Korman, 1974; Kluckhohn, 1951; Maslow, 1959;). Tradition refers to the symbols and practices that a society develops to represent the people's shared experiences (Parsons, 1951; Radcliffe-Brown, 1952; Durkheim, 1960). Conformity concerns

self-restraint in daily interpersonal interactions, especially with people whom one is in a close relationship (Schwartz, 1992, 1994). Security concerns the organismic and group requirements of individuals to survive physically, and avoid threats to the societal integrity (Kluckhohn, 1951; Maslow, 1959).

Concept of Work Values

Work values may be defined as qualities (Super, 1970) or preferences (Pryor, 1979, 1982, 1987) that satisfy needs and priorities (Pine & Innis, 1987) in relation to work and other activities. Work values may be broadly defined as the end-states, which people desire or feel they ought to achieve through working. In other words, work values represent beliefs about ideal ways of behaving at work and ideal work outcomes (Nord, Brief, Atieh & Doherty, 1985, 1988). Furthermore, work values have mutually causal relationships with the meanings that people attach to their work. Work values are consequences of meanings that individuals collectively assign to work. As shared interpretations of what individuals want and expect, work values are considered significant and practical components of societal reality. These values influence people's actions and behaviors, and the structure of society, including the type of work people design and assign for others to do, how people are socialized for work, and how people will relate work to other aspects of their lives (Nord et al. 1985, 1988). As a matter of fact, Harpaz (1985) raised an important point that, like any other values, work values are learned in an individual's early life, and reflect cultural norms. Therefore, society socializes individuals in what outcomes are to be expected and desired from work, and also in what one should expect and how one needs to behave or perform in their job circumstances in order to attain those desired end-states.

Elizur (1984) and Elizur et al. (1991) made significant contributions to the understanding of the relative importance of the content of work values, and developed a structural framework of work values domain based on studies of respondents from various cultural contexts. They strongly argued that, although past studies have researched the measurement of work values and attitudes (for example, Blood, 1969; Wollack, Goodale, Wijting & Smith, 1971), little consideration has been given to the study of the basic structure of the work values domain. They contended that a definitional framework was essential, as it would enable researchers to better understand and appreciate the dimensions in the work values domain. Not only would it

help facilitate the integration of concepts, and enhance development of constructs for research and evaluation (Billings & Cornelius, 1980), it would provide an empirical basis for systematic data collection. Two essential facets for work values have been defined for the purpose of analyzing the work values domain systematically: 1) Modality of outcome, and 2) System performance contingency.

The first facet of work value, *Modality of outcome*, concerns the various work outcomes that are of a material nature. Elizur (1984) and Elizur et al. (1991) identified this class of outcomes as *Material*, or *Instrumental*, which include pay, benefits, hours of work, work conditions and security. In addition, they have also identified an additional set of work values that concerns interpersonal relations. These values include opportunities to interact with people, relations with colleagues, supervisor, and others. The nature of these values is usually considered *Affective*. A further category of work outcomes also include values such as interest, achievement, responsibility, and independence, which are classified as *Cognitive* rather than *Affective* or *Instrumental*. The second postulated facet, *System-performance contingency*, concerns system performance contingency and the relationship of outcome to task performance (Elizur, 1984; Elizur et al., 1991). Senior management is prepared to offer various kinds of incentives, which may or may not be related to task performance, in order to motivate their staff. Such incentives are usually provided before the task performance and not conditional on the outcomes. Examples of such incentives may include benefit plans, working conditions, transportation, subsidized meals, and other resources. Katz and Kahn (1966) used the term System rewards to catalogue this classification of outcomes. However, there are other outcomes such as recognition, advancement, feedback, status, and pay, which are usually provided after task performance and in exchange for it. The term Performance rewards may be used to specify this group of work outcomes, which suggest a form of outcome-performance relationship, and its elements specify whether it is a resource in the organizational environment, or it is given as a reward for performance.

Hypotheses Discussion

Two key questions are raised for hypotheses development. The first key question: Is there any relationship between an individual's academic achievement and the hierarchical position held by the person? Given the fact social researchers (Allen, 1970; Ballantine, 2001; Ballantine &

Spade, 2004; Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Harrison, 1969; Parkin, 1979; Sewell et al., 1970; Weber, 1978; Wright, 1979) have contended that education has been used to justify stratification and inequality through a seemingly meritocratic system such that individuals are assigned into specific roles in society and organization, this paper hypothesizes that an individual's organizational position in Singaporean firms will tend to be closely linked to his or her level of educational achievement. The hypothesis is given as:

Hypothesis 1: There will be a positive relationship between an individual's level of educational achievement and hierarchical position held in the firm.

The second key question to consider is: Would there be similarities or differences in priorities relating to basic individual and work values between the managers, professionals or executives in an Asian corporation? Based on the previous discussions on the education system and the socialization processes, which is translated into the job positions that people may hold and the values they may acquire, this paper postulates that there may be significant variations in how staff across the different organizational hierarchies prioritize their individual and work values. The hypotheses for the between-group analyses are given as:

Hypothesis 2: There will be significant variation in basic individual value priorities between the managers, professionals and executives as a result of the diverse socialized values they acquired while attending different levels of schooling prior to joining the workforce.

Hypothesis 3: There will be significant variation in work value priorities between the managers, professionals and executives, as a result of educational segregation leading to an internal organization of value systems comparable to the levels in the hierarchical division of labor.

Research Method

Procedures

The sample used was selected in consultation with the human resource department of a Singaporean MNC, which assisted in distributing the survey questionnaires across the hierarchical levels of management and employees in the organization. Participants were asked to respond to the survey, which sought their perceptual responses relating to

basic individual and work values that were important to them, and those that were less important. The survey questionnaire and instructions were in English. The surveys were administered over a period of 2 months. Respondents were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

Measure

The study used the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) (Schwartz, 1992) and the Elizur Work Value Survey (EWVS) (Elizur, 1984) for the measure of basic individual and work values, respectively. The SVS consists of 57 items measured with a 9-point Likert scale ranging from "opposed to my values" (-1) to "of supreme importance" (7). These 57 value items are categorized into ten value dimensions: *Power, Achievement, Hedonism, Stimulation, Self-direction, Universalism, Benevolence, Tradition, Conformity, and Security*. The EWVS consists of 24 work value items that sought information on the extent of importance to the respondent regarding various work aspects and questions about attitudes toward tasks and assignments. The respondents were required to rate the work values using a six-point Likert scale: Very important (6), Important (5), Somewhat important (4), Somewhat unimportant (3), Unimportant (2), and Very unimportant (1). The 24 work value items were categorized into three dimensions: *Material, Affective, and Cognitive*. Generally, good reliability coefficients were reported for the SVS and EWVS. The respective reliability scores were .9612 for the SVS and .9091 for the EWVS. The high scores indicated that the SVS and EWVS were very stable instruments and have strong affirmation in the goodness in measuring individual and work values within an Asian social context.

Research setting and sample

The Singaporean MNC was selected because it plays a

vital role in the national development agenda of Singapore and is strongly committed to maintaining its business competitiveness in the Asia region. It is capitalizing on its firm-specific capabilities, and is enhancing its strategic role by placing emphasis on attracting the best professionals with skills and knowledge, both locally and internationally, to join the firm. The sample consisted of 252 managers, professionals and executives. Table 1 presents the features of the respondents, characterized by their educational achievements and the hierarchical positions. The number of graduate respondents was greater than the non-graduate employees. On the one hand, there were 175 graduate respondents, 22 of whom held managerial appointments, 150 respondents were carrying out professional functions and only three members held non-managerial assignments. On the other hand, there were 77 non-graduate respondents, of which 69 employees were involved in non-managerial activities. Only four respondents were performing minor managerial roles, and another four were engaged in some professional functions. The demographic data supports the premise that staff with higher education qualifications holds higher positions (managerial and professional appointments) in the firm, whereas staff with lower education qualifications hold lower positions in the organizational hierarchy. It also supports Hypothesis 1, in that there is a strong relationship between educational achievement and the hierarchical positions held by employees.

It is interesting to note that the difference in the number of managerial, professional and executives across the different hierarchical levels depicted the typical structure of the organization, and the ensuing developments of job designs and work structuring within the organizational system (Child, 1984; Robbins et al., 1998). There is an increasing number of professionally qualified people joining firms in the Asia Pacific Region, engaging in certain degrees of specialization in professional work such as accounts and finance, marketing, administration, human resource management, research and

Table 1. Subject: Demographic data by hierarchical positions and educational achievement of the respondents

Educational achievement	Hierarchical position			Total
	Managers	Professionals	Executives	
Graduate	22	150	3	175
Non graduate	4	4	69	77
Total	26	154	72	252

development, and other fields. In addition, the nature of the industry that the Singaporean corporation is involved in, required employees with high levels of skills and knowledge in the fields of science and information technology. Thus, this may explain the significantly large number of professionals with higher degrees joining the Singaporean company. Additionally, the size of the company may determine the nature of organizational hierarchies and how this can relate to the average span of control present in the organizational system. In the case of the Singaporean company, the fewer number of managers with larger number of subordinates

under their managerial control was typical of a flat organizational structure, with a large span of control.

Results

Variations in individual value priorities

Table 2 presents the results of the ANOVA and ranking of importance for the ten individual value dimensions for the managers, professionals and executives. The results revealed

Table 2. ANOVA of individual value dimensions based on staff hierarchical positions

Individual Values	Managers (N=26)		Professionals (N=154)		Executives (N=72)		F ^a	P Sig.
	Group means (Std dev)	Mean rank ^b	Group means (Std dev)	Mean rank ^b	Group means (Std dev)	Mean rank ^b		
Conformity	4.54 (1.03)	5	4.77 (1.12)	4	4.89 (1.10)	2	1.956	0.163
Tradition	4.04 (0.95)	9	4.07 (1.19)	8	4.29 (1.12)	8	0.849	0.358
Benevolence	4.71 (0.82)	3	4.84 (1.03)	3	4.84 (1.00)	3	0.316	0.575
Universalism	4.37 (1.06)	6	4.58 (1.06)	6	4.64 (1.03)	5	1.256	0.264
Self direction	4.56 (1.21)	4	4.75 (1.09)	5	4.62 (0.96)	6	0.062	0.804
Stimulation	4.09 (1.63)	8	3.78 (1.32)	9	4.01 (1.29)	9	0.060	0.806
Hedonism	4.15 (1.30)	7	4.24 (1.39)	7	4.34 (1.05)	7	0.407	0.524
Achievement	4.96 (1.06)	1	4.86 (1.10)	2	4.75 (1.06)	4	0.746	0.389
Power	3.97 (1.27)	10	3.65 (1.24)	10	3.97 (1.04)	10	0.000	0.992
Security	4.89 (0.82)	2	4.92 (1.02)	1	5.15 (0.95)	1	1.382	0.241

^a df= 1

^b This method to investigate value ranking between groups is adapted from "Value hierarchies across cultures: Taking a similarities perspectives." by S. H. Schwartz and A. Bardi, (2001). *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 32(3), p. 275.

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

that there were no statistically significant differences between the managers, professionals and executives on all of the individual value dimensions. The findings seem to suggest that the managers, professionals and executives shared similar value preferences, regardless of the positions they might hold in the organization. Although the ANOVA results presented no substantial significant differences, an alternative approach to investigate variations in the relative importance for the value dimensions was to examine how the different hierarchical groups of respondents prioritized the value dimensions in certain rank order, based on the group mean scores ($\bar{\chi}$). The method to investigate value hierarchies between groups was consistent with the research procedure used by Schwartz and Bardi (2001).

Several interesting observations can be made regarding the outcomes of the staff's perceptions of the relative importance for the individual values dimensions. First, there seems to be some similarities in the ranking of the value priorities between the managerial and professional staff. The managers and professionals considered the value dimensions of *Security*, *Achievement*, *Benevolence* and *Self-direction* most important in their lives. In other words, not only were they committed to achieving personal success through competence (*Achievement*) and the exercise of independent thought and action (*Self-direction*), they also sought to create a sense of balance and equality in the organizational hierarchy, by demonstrating concern for the welfare of other people (for example, their immediate subordinates) with whom they were in frequent contact (*Benevolence*), and

maintaining harmony and stability in work relationships (*Security*).

In contrast, the managers and professionals considered the dimensions of *Power*, *Tradition*, and *Stimulation* as least important. This could suggest that they aspired to disassociate themselves from the constraints of the traditional customs and ideas (*Tradition*) that may impinge on their pursuit for success and independence. In addition, their commitment to maintaining benevolent attitudes and securing stability in their lives could suggest that the managers and professionals were unwilling to exercise control or dominance over people (*Power*), and were not eager for excitement, novelty or challenge in life (*Stimulation*).

Second, the executives seemed to have a more conservative pattern in their value preferences and thus, placed more emphasis on *Security*, *Conformity*, and *Benevolence* rather than *Stimulation* and *Power*. This could suggest that they had a greater need to preserve stability in their lives and most probably, maintain secure jobs and livelihoods (*Security*), accentuate subordination of self in favor of socially imposed expectations (*Conformity*), and exercise normative behaviors that promote close companionship (*Benevolence*). Conversely, the executives were not eager for excitement, novelty or challenge in life (*Stimulation*) and were not in the position to exercise control or dominance over people (*Power*).

Variations in work value priorities

Table 3 presents the results of the ANOVA and ranking

Table 3. ANOVA of work value dimensions based on staff hierarchical positions

Work Values	Managers (N=26)		Professionals (N=154)		Executives (N=72)		F ^a	Sig.
	Group means (Std dev)	Mean rank ^b	Group means (Std dev)	Mean rank ^b	Group means (Std dev)	Mean rank		
Material	4.63 (0.48)	3	4.94 (0.59)	2	5.04 (0.57)	2	9.470	0.002**
Affective	4.99 (0.39)	1	5.08 (0.53)	1	5.07 (0.55)	1	0.446	0.505
Cognitive	4.85 (0.43)	2	4.91 (0.52)	3	4.91 (0.57)	3	0.238	0.626

^a df = 1

^b This method to investigate value ranking between groups is adapted from "Value hierarchies across cultures: Taking a similarities perspectives." by S. H. Schwartz and A. Bardi, (2001). *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 32(3), p. 275.

* p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

of importance for the three work value dimensions for the managers, professionals and executives. The ANOVA results revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the three hierarchical groups on the *Material* work value dimension ($F=9.470, p<0.01$). There were no significant differences on the *Affective* ($F=0.446, p =0.505$) and *Cognitive* ($F=0.238; p =0.626$) value dimensions. The outcome of the staff perceptions suggested that the managers, professionals and executives, on the one hand, have differing views regarding basic work benefits and incentives (*Material*) accrued to them. On the other hand, they did not have any differing perspectives regarding building interpersonal relationships in the organization (*Affective*) and intrinsic rewards related to the nature of the job (*Cognitive*).

Based on the group mean scores ($\bar{\chi}$), in-depth analyses of the pattern of the ranking for the three groups were conducted to determine other plausible inherent variations in staff perceptions. Two interesting observations could be made. First, all three hierarchical groups considered the *Affective* work dimension as most important, in which they have placed the utmost importance in building relationships in the workplace. Second, both the professionals and executives prioritized the *Material* and *Cognitive* dimensions in a similar manner, while the managers have differed in this aspect. In other words, the professionals and executives considered extrinsic remunerations (*Material*) more important than intrinsic incentives at work, such as job interest, achievement, responsibility and independence (*Cognitive*), while the managers considered otherwise.

Analysis of Covariance

Further in-depth investigation, based on the analysis of

covariance, was conducted to assess the strength of the relationships between the work values and basic individual values of the respondents. Table 4 presents the ANCOVA results which assessed the main effects and interaction of the respondents’ educational backgrounds, after the work value dimensions scores were adjusted for differences associated with the individual value dimensions.

The results revealed several interesting findings regarding the relationship between basic individual and work values. First, there were significant relationships between the individual value dimensions of *Tradition, Hedonism, Security* and work value dimension of *Material*. The associations between the two sets of values suggested that the respondents’ desire for certainty, self-centered satisfaction and stability in life (*Tradition, Hedonism* and *Security*), meant they were extrinsically motivated to strive for work outcomes that were of a material nature such as job security and income (*Material*) which would provide people with the essentials required to achieve general sense of security and self-assurance, as well as satisfaction and enjoyment in their lives. On the basis of the respondents’ hierarchical positions, the ANCOVA results indicated no main effect ($p >0.05$) for the *Affective* ($F=0.488$) and *Cognitive* ($F=0.613$) work values, however, there was a significant main effect on the *Material* ($F=4.078; P<0.05$) work value. In other words, the hierarchical position of the staff has no significant influence on how they might perceive the *Affective* and *Cognitive* work value dimensions in relation to the individual value dimensions. However, their hierarchical positions accounted for significant relationships between the individual value dimensions and the *Material* value dimension.

Table 4. ANCOVA of individual and work value dimensions

Basic Individual Values	Work Values	F	Staff background	Work Values	F
Conformity	Cognitive	4.375*	Hierarchical level	Material	4.078*
Tradition	Material	9.667**		Affective	0.488
Hedonism	Material	7.456**		Cognitive	0.613
	Cognitive	4.146*			
Achievement	Affective	9.574**			
	Cognitive	29.001***			
Security	Material	6.352*			

* $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$, *** $p<0.001$

Discussion

In general, an explanation for the variations in value priorities between the managers, professionals and executives could be a consequence of the distinct socialized values these different groups of individuals have acquired while attending disparate levels of education prior to joining the workforce. Bourdieu and Passeron (1977) and Bourdieu (1984, 1988) have argued consistently and with some vigor that schools inculcate and reinforce the learning of values, attitudes and behaviors of students throughout schooling, and when they leave the education system, the school socialization process indeed has a significant impact on their life and work values and expectations. Ilich (1973), and Bowles and Gintis (1976) affirmed that the social relationships at the different levels of the educational system reflect the social relationships at the different hierarchical level of organizations. They contended that workers joining the different levels within the occupational structure tend to display an internal organization of value systems comparable to the levels in the hierarchical division of labor. For example, students with higher academic proficiencies are expected to be positioned at the higher levels of the organizational structure, and are socialized with higher-level values such as independence, creativity, commitment, achievement and other esteem beliefs. In contrast, students from the lower educational proficiencies, who presumably join the lower levels of the organizational hierarchy, are socialized with values that emphasize rule-abiding, deference to authority, dependability, and other lower-level motivational beliefs. The analyses of value perceptions between the managers, professionals and executives verified the above arguments that staff at the higher hierarchy of the organization (that is, managers and professionals) seemed to place higher emphasis on self-enhancing values such as achieving personal success through competence (*Achievement*), the exercise of independent thought and action (Self-direction), the need for job responsibility, personal growth and use of abilities (*Cognitive*), and other intrinsic motivational values. In contrast, the executives seemed to emphasize more on people-oriented and conservative life values such as *Benevolence*, *Conformity* and *Security*, and other extrinsic motivations and rewards such as *Material* work values.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analyses of the relative importance for

the individual and work values between the managers, professionals and executives have revealed some inherent variations in their value systems. The rationale for such variations could be due to the socialization effects upon the individuals during their developmental stages at schools. The fact is that as societies socialize and train their young through the educational institutions, there will be distinctive consequences in terms of how the beliefs, attitudes and values of students are being inculcated in schools, which eventually are transferred to the workplace context. Such perspectives reflect the functionalists view of schooling that entails teaching and preparing young people for life in the adult world, and that the various forms of educational exposure have consequential effects upon the students such that their value systems are molded to conform to the expectations of the society and institutions. On this basis, there are some implications for management to ensure that there is greater awareness and appreciation of employees' educational backgrounds and the value "baggages" they bring into the organization. Essentially, senior management needs to 'de-construct' the perception of universal values in society, and look beyond applying a universalistic or parochial approach in their organizational policies and strategies. They have to be sensitive so as to minimize any assumptions of over-generalizing management practices and overlooking the diverse workforce in the workplace. Policies and practices in diversity management should take into consideration the implications of schools in socializing students into future functional roles, attitudes and behaviors based on their educational abilities, and how they will be integrated into the social structure. Consequently, there will certainly be a transfer of the internalized values and norms from schools to the workplaces for the different types of students. Hence there must be some understanding and appreciation of the social perspective that organizational differences (or inequality) are inevitable because education has allowed for certain meritocratic stratification such that individuals with different educational achievement will fill the most functionally "appropriate" positions in the organization. Given the fact that the different groups of staff have differential perspectives as a consequence of their societal predisposition, this may have certain effects on organizational processes and configurations, for example, supervisor-subordinate relationships, leadership and decision-making styles, span-of-control and communication, team management, staff motivation, staff recruitment, selection and development, and other managerial functions. This will certainly be a challenge for managers to endorse diversity management practices.

A notable aspect of the research is that probable inferences can be derived, to describe the general workforce values in Singapore, based on the sample population of an Asian company. The application of the theories and research methods employed in this study will set the foundation and creates opportunities for extending empirical research in the area of education and social stratification processes in comparative perspectives in the Asia Pacific region. Results from future studies may allow researchers to have a more comprehensive view of the balance between school socialization processes, stratification and hierarchical positions in which the education system is being used to organize the transition of students into the labor force. The education-hierarchical relationship will also allow researchers to potentially conduct mapping of the different value priorities of the different groups of employees. Presumably, research findings will enable management to be in a better position to formulate personnel policies for the preparation and training of staff, recommend skills sets and managerial competencies for effective human resource and diversity management.

Limitations and future research recommendations need to be noted. First, although the study is limited to a Singaporean MNC, the information may provide some insights into the complex value systems of staff in organizations. This could provide directions for future comparative studies involving other multinational corporations from other countries. Second, although the company involved in the research is from a specific industry, namely the information technology industry, further studies involving a wider range of MNCs in other industries, may serve to present more in-depth information and broader perspectives to the nature of staff values in different industries. Third, this research has employed a quantitative approach. Extension of the research using a qualitative method will further extend understanding of the scope of value variations in organizations. A combined quantitative-qualitative or triangulation approach will present a more comprehensive analysis of unique value differences.

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