Towards Social Harmony

A New Mission of Asian Social Psychology

EDITED BY

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Introduction

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This book collects 17 papers being selected among several dozens of submissions to the 9th biennial conference of Asian Association of Social Psychology (AASP) held during a summer time from July 28 to 31, 2011 in Kunming city of Yunnan province, China. The authors of these papers are from several countries and regions in the Asian-Pacific area, such as China, Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, Malaysia and India, representing quite well the research activity of social psychology in the area, which provides the major sources to AASP membership.

The theme of the 9th Biennial Conference of Asian Association of Social Psychology was determined as "Towards Social Harmony: A New Mission of Asian Social Psychology", which gave a priority to a healthy dialogue between local traditions and the process of modernization as well as globalization in the area on one hand, and emphasized the dynamics of peaceful interaction among different cultures, societies and social groups.

The 9th conference has set records in the history of AASP development, in terms of more than 1,000 submissions, nearly a thousand of participants from 24 Asian-Pacific countries/regions. Since the conference was held in China, the largest delegation came from Mainland China with 398 participants, which was followed by a

delegation of 117 participants from Indonesia, then 69 from Japan and 52 from South Korea. It was not only the AASP's largest ever biennial conference, but also the largest conference of social psychology ever held in Mainland China. It was particularly note worthy that among all the participants, there were 490 students pursuing either master or doctorate degree of social psychology in their own countries/regions; and that the 3rd Summer School of AASP was held at Yunnan Normal University just immediately before the conference, in which 53 doctorate students from several countries attended to have their research capabilities built with help of several experienced professors. The records themselves imply the actual growth and the potentiality of social psychology in the Asia-Pacific area.

In the 9th AASP conference, scholars and students of social psychology in Asia and around the world were getting together to present their ideas, discuss psychology's contribution to knowledge, and to explore future collaboration. The contents of all submissions can be generally input into the following categories, which had touched the various hot issues in current social psychology regionally and internationally, such as: attitude and social cognition; belief, norm and value; interpersonal and intergroup relationship; social problems in current societies; clinical and neurocognitive problems in social psychology; affect and social behavior; environment and social behavior; social psychology in cross-cultural situations; indigenous issues in social psychology; learning and educational problem in school; life-span development; self and society; social changes and identification; health and subjective well-being; social psychology in organizational environment.

After the 9th conference, AASP executive committee decided to publish a book of collection of a dozen of papers selected from all submission to the conference. The task of paper-selection, article proofread and book publication was then given to four of us, who had been deeply involved in organizing the 9th AASP conference. More than 60 abstracts were sent to us after the first round of call for proceeding papers. A group of senior researchers was invited to help us review all the abstracts and make a selection among them based on two major principles: quality of research and consistent of the abstract to the theme of the conference. The authors of about 20 abstracts were asked to send their full text paper to us for further review, among them 17 papers were finally picked into this proceedings.

The selected 17 papers are grouped hereafter into four parts of the book according to the problems they attempted to find a solution. The first part consists of five papers focusing on the issues of how interpersonal relations are formed in the ways of harmony and trust. The second part has four papers attempting to answer problems of how a specific knowledge could be better understood in a cultural or a cross-cultural situation. The third part is composed of four papers being around the

topic of how college students in different countries recognize themselves and human products. The remaining four papers forms the fourth part concentrating on psychological phenomena happening in various social settings, such as urban roads, big cities, hospital and workplace.

Some authors of these papers are not native English speakers, and four of the editors are not native English speaker as well. In order to make the papers readable for English speakers, we had to invite some professors to do proofreading work. We felt much in debt to those who accepted our invitation because we knew that they are extremely busy in their own research and social activities. Among these professor, we would like particularly to thank very much the following three eminent professors in AASP who sincerely helped us review some of the papers and gave valuable advices to the authors on how to improve the articles. They are Professor Kwok Leung, Professor Sik Hung Ng, and Professor Noraini M. Noor. And it is much appreciated for Professor Walter Edward, who is the managing editor of Psych Journal, the first psychological journal published in English in Mainland China. He had read carefully through all the papers in this book and made important modification of them. Without their selfless help, the book could not reach the current level of readability.

Another very important event occurred at the AGM during the 9th Biennial Conference of AASP was that a majority of the representatives voted University of Gadja Madah, Indonesia to be a host of the 10th Biennial AASP Conference, which is to be held in Jogjakarta, Indonesia on 20-23 August, 2013 (a link to the conference can be found at:http://aasp2013. psikologi. ugm. ac. id/). It is our sincere hope that we can see you all in Indonesia very soon!

Contents

Part One

Interpersonal Relations in Terms of Harmony and Trust

1. Perception and Metaperception of Leaders: Trust and Respect as Mediators

Smita Singh [*]

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Abstract

Metaperception (for self as a leader) and perception (of others as a leader) of leaders were assessed along the tenets of Construal Level Theory (CLT). As hypothesized, when "self" is projected as a leader, construal is abstract, whereas for "others" as leader, construal is more concrete. This research established perception distance as another dimension of psychological distance. In addition based on the contemporary literature of social cognition, mediators for this perception distance and leader construal were also assessed. Respect for and trust in the leader, which is, established as the fundamental dimensions of social judgment emerged as partial mediators of this perception distance and construal link.

Keywords: Construal level theory; Leadership; Metaperception; Respect and trust

Introduction

Leadership is commonly defined as the process of influencing others so as to enhance their contribution to the realization of group goals (e. g. , Chemers, 2001; Hollander, 1985). This emphasis on influence may be one of the reasons behind leadership "...being the most important topic in the realm of organizational behav-

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ior" (Lord & Maher, 1991, p. 129). Interest in this topic dates back to the writings of Plato over 2,000 years ago. A four volume *Encyclopedia of Leadership* by Goethals, Sorenson, and Burns (2004) has 1,927 pages and 1.2 million words. Yet, plethora of these studies has still not been able to reach a consensus on how to understand successful or effective leader behavior (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005).

Numerous attempts beginning from the "trait" or "great person" approach to "situation" and to the combination of them are available in the literature to explain leader effectiveness. In this research, however, this topic is approached from a comparatively different perspective. In the present research, information on leader effectiveness is mapped based on how a leader is perceived. Hence, the present research addresses how construal of leader's action is perceived in others versus in self-mainly *metaperception* (assessment of others' judgment of oneself).

In social cognition metaperception is an important tool for people in gaining knowledge of what others think of them and has an important implication on self-knowledge and self-presentation. Metaperception is explained as the awareness of others'judgments of oneself (Laing, Phillipson, & Lee, 1966). This can be considered an important method of gaining information of one's influence and social standing (e.g., Allbright & Malloy, 1999; Baumeister, 1982). In the domain of leadership this could be an important technique to assess one's social influence (Yorges, Weiss, & Strickland, 1999).

Construal level theory and social distance

Construal-level analysis resembles Vallacher and Wegner's (1985, 1987, 1989) action identification theory (AIT). AIT posits that there are high and low levels of mental representation of every action. Any goal-directed action may be construed at superordinate or subordinate levels. When indicating an action with regards to how it is performed, a means to an end, one relies on concrete means by which the act is carried out, thus rendering a subordinate action construal. The shift to a superordinate action construal occurs when one considers why it is executed, the end state, with why features offering a more general and global depiction of actions (Liberman & Trope, 1998).

However, CLT encompasses more than just actions and their means-end relationships. Specifically, it posits that representation of any stimulus can be at two levels (Trope & Liberman, 2003). Construal at the high-level includes relevant

features but excludes the irrelevant ones. Higher level construals capture the central features of an object or event. Low-level construals, in contrast, consist of more concrete features and consequently are more detailed but less parsimonious than high-level construals (Fujita et al. ,2006).

These psychological construals depend upon the psychological distance of the perceiver from the event under consideration. Studies of self *vs*. other, familiar *vs*. unfamiliar others, similar *vs*. dissimilar others, low *vs*. high status, and in-group *vs*. out-group members included instances of psychological distances categorized as social distances (Fiedler et al. , 1995; Jones, 1979; Robins, Spranca, & Mendelsohn, 1996). Perceivers made more global, dispositional attributions to others'behaviors than to their own behaviors. However, another section of CLT researches in *hypotheticality* (Sherman et al. , 1985) and *probability* (Liberman, et al. , 2002; Wakslak, 2005) dimensions of psychological distance, suggests that if distance increases from reality, construal would be more abstract than concrete. In addition, imagining oneself in someone's else role and observing an activity from a third-person perspective (as in the case of "you are the boss") may again produce more abstract and less detailed reports than imagining the same activity from a first-person perspective (Libby & Eibach 2002). These findings hence suggests that perhaps in the case of perception distance (perception versus metaperception), like in the current research, we may find self when portrayed as a leader could be metaperceived at an abstract level.

Warmth and competence dimension: trust in and respect for the leader

Warmth and competence have emerged as the two fundamental dimensions in social perception (Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007; Fiske et al. , 2002; Judd et al. , 2005; Wojciszke, 2005). Evidence from both the old (Asch, 1946) and new experimental paradigms in social psychology, cross cultural psychology, and group perception has shown that people organize their cognitions of others along these two dimensions. As Fiske et al. (2007) stated, "...studies of social cognition firmly established that people everywhere differentiate each other by liking (warmth, trustworthiness) and by respecting (competence, efficiency) " (p. 77). Further, people infer intent of others from the information about their *warmth cues* and ability from the information about their *competence* cues (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2008).

Morality, friendliness, helpfulness, sincerity, trustworthiness traits constitute

the warmth dimensions; intelligence, skill, creativity, and efficacy, in contrast, form the competence dimension. Singh et al. (2009) noted that there are so many names "for the same two dimensions in the literature" (p. 1021) and that the warmth and competence dimensions can be equated with Peeters and Czapinski's (1990) *other-profitable* and *self-profitable* dimensions, respectively. The purpose for this position was to provide a functional perspective on traits. Traits forming other-profitability are good for others around the target; traits forming self-profitability are good for the target himself or herself. Stated simply, *other-profitable traits* and *self-profitable traits* are substitutes of *warmth* and *competence*, respectively.

The foregoing view is also consistent with Fiske et al.'s (2007) position in which warmth indicates *intent* of the person, but competence indicates *agency* of the person to carry out that intent. Moreover, there is supremacy of intent over competence in any interaction. In a study where participants responded on interpersonal attraction based on traits given about other-profitability or self-profitability, Singh et al. (2009) showed that the effect of other-profitable traits on attraction was solely mediated by trust, and that the effect of self-profitable traits on attraction was mediated more strongly by respect than trust.

Although the foregoing study was in the area of evaluations of peers, not organizational leaders, it does serve as a guide to what may mediate the effect perceptual distance and leader construal. In Singh (2010) study, status difference (high level/top boss versus low level/immediate boss) among leaders was investigated. Competence or respect for the top boss emerged as a partial mediator of psychological distance-construal link. Warmth measured in terms of trust in the leader was reported to be equally important for both top and immediate boss. Although this opposed Fiske et al.'s (2007) position that people first look for intention and then the ability to act on those intentions in evaluations of others, it is however supported from organizational literature on trust and leadership. Seeing merit in Singh's (2010) study, the present research proposes *trust in* and *respect for* leader should be explored in mediating perceptual distance (perception versus metaperception) and construal link.

Trust. Trust in organizations occupies a prominent place: "where there is trust, there is feeling that others will not take advantage of me." (Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975, p. 497) It is found to be imperative for interdependent group relations (Cottrell, Neuberg, & Li, 2007), and in impression formations (Abelson

et al. , 1982). In addition to consisting of a key feature of security, trust carries an important dimension of *benevolence*. A person, who is seen trustworthy, is considered as *benevolent*. Organizational literature shows that benevolence is the basis of trust in organizations (Burke et al. , 2007). Wojciszke, Abele, and Baryla (2009) measured trust by items such as whether the target is "a person who does much for other; ...is good for others; and (whose) actions are beneficial for other people". Clearly, their operationalization of benevolence matched not only with that of trust in organizational and social literature (Gambetta, 1988; Holmes, 1989) but also confirmed the result of Singh, et al. (2009) , where trust mediated the effect of other-profitable traits on evaluations.

Rousseau and Parks (1993) pointed out that trust is important for leadership because it determines the kind of *psychological contract* between individuals. Kramer and Cook (2004) explain trust between leader and subordinates as "contingent in *no small* measure upon the availability of opportunities for supervisors to interact with and train their subordinates" (p. 6). So trust is contingent on interaction and exchanges between leader and follower, and it is important and universal for any kind of relationship.

In Singh et al. (2009) , both measures of *trust in* and *respect for* the partner were taken. What differed was the valence of traits that were either other-profitable or self-profitable. Results showed that trust, respect, and attraction were conceptually separable, distinct constructs. Trust mediated the effects of both types of traits on attraction. However, respect was stronger than trust as the mediator of the effect of self-profitable traits on attraction.

Respect. Closely linked to the dimension of competence is *respect*; we admire highly competent people for their ability and high status (Fiske et al. , 2002). As De Cremer (2002) defined *respect*, "a social construct ...that is symbolic of one's position within the group" (p. 1336). In terms of the organizational literature, the concept of *respect* resonates more closely with the *cognition-based trust* (McAllister, 1995). It develops on the knowledge of competency of the individual, like how they have carried their role-related duties, responsibilities and what have been their prior successful performances (McAllister, 1995). Further, Burke et al. (2007) , and Cook and Wall (1980) considered *ability* as an important feature of this category of trust. Ability has been defined as, "that group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence" (Mayer, Davis, & Schoor-

man, 1995, p. 717). This conceptualization corresponds with a person of higher authority as it incorporates *influence* and *competencies*. In fact, the term *competence* is equated with trust in a leader in organizational sciences (Butler, 1991; Mishra, 1996).

Singh et al. (2009) and Singh (2010) distinguished *trust in* from *respect for* the partner and leader. As indicated by Singh (2010), I argue this research will also show that *respect* corresponds with the *cognition-based trust* (McAllister, 1995) in organizations and hence should be the crucial variable in the construal of leaders varying along perceptual distance. This research therefore shows whether for self as a boss meta-perception would be high on the dimension of respect and trust and whether these dimensions would mediate the difference in perception distance and leader construal.

Present Research

In the present research, to extend the scope of CLT and a different variation of psychological distance was used. Psychological distance was varied in terms of *you are the boss* (self as the boss) versus *your boss*. First hypothesis tested was that when *self* is projected as the leader, construal will be at an abstract level (high-level construal), whereas for *others* as a leader, construal will be at concrete level (low-level construal) (Hypothesis 1).

Fiske et al. (2007) stated, "...studies of social cognition firmly established that people everywhere differentiate each other by liking (warmth, trustworthiness) and by respecting (competence, efficiency)" (p. 77). Hence, respect *for* and *trust in* the leader, were tested for probable mediators of perception and meta-perception-construal link (Cottrell et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2002) (Hypothesis 2).

In addition, with respect to the discussed literature on probability and hypotheticality dimensions of psychological distance, discrepancy is expected in the given context of perception of other as a boss versus meta-perception of self as a boss on the measures of trust and respect (Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Jones, 1979; Jones & Nisbett, 1972). Other support for this understanding comes from a recent literature which highlights that better than average effect is stronger for important issues

(Brown, 2012). Hence, it was hypothesized that respect for and trust in self as boss (you are the boss) will be higher than in perception of other boss (other boss condition) (Hypotheses 3a & 3b). Further, social cognitive literature also claims that interpersonal relations is driven first by trust (Fiske et al., 2007; Singh et al., 2009a), hence it is further hypothesized that trust would be considered more important than respect for both self as a boss and your boss condition (Hypotheses 4a & 4b).

Method

Participants and design

120 (16 women; 104 men) Indian management students, having work experience (in months) ($M = 39.07$, $SD = 23.17$), were randomly assigned to one of the four cells of a 2 (order of response measurement: construal level (trust and respect *vs.* trust and respect→construal level) x 2 (social distance: socially distal-meta-perception (you as a boss)) *vs.* socially proximal (your boss) between-participants factorial design ($ns = 30$ per cell).

Materials

Leader Behavior Construal Scale (LBCS). As used by Singh (2010) 23-item LBCS was used for the study to assess a leader's construal. LBCS was patterned after Vallacher and Wegner's (1989) Behavior Identification Form (BIF). These leader behavioral items for LBCS were randomly selected from leader behavioral questionnaires and leader-effectiveness assessment tools, earlier used in various studies to demonstrate the attributes associated with a leader (Bass, 1990; Den-Hartog et al., 1999; Lord et al., 1984; Yukl, 2001, 2006). Each item of the LBCS was followed by two alternative descriptions, consisting of one high and one low construal re-description of leader's behavior (e.g., for a leader behavior like *emphasizing goals*, the low level construal was *repeating key tasks at hand during meetings* and the high construal level re-description was *motivating to stay focused*).

Leader Opinion Questionnaire (LOQ & LOQ-I). 20-item LOQ and LOQ-I was patterned after the measures of *respect for* and *trust in* the partner (Partner Opinion Questionnaire) as used by Singh et al. (2009). *LOQ* assessed perception of the